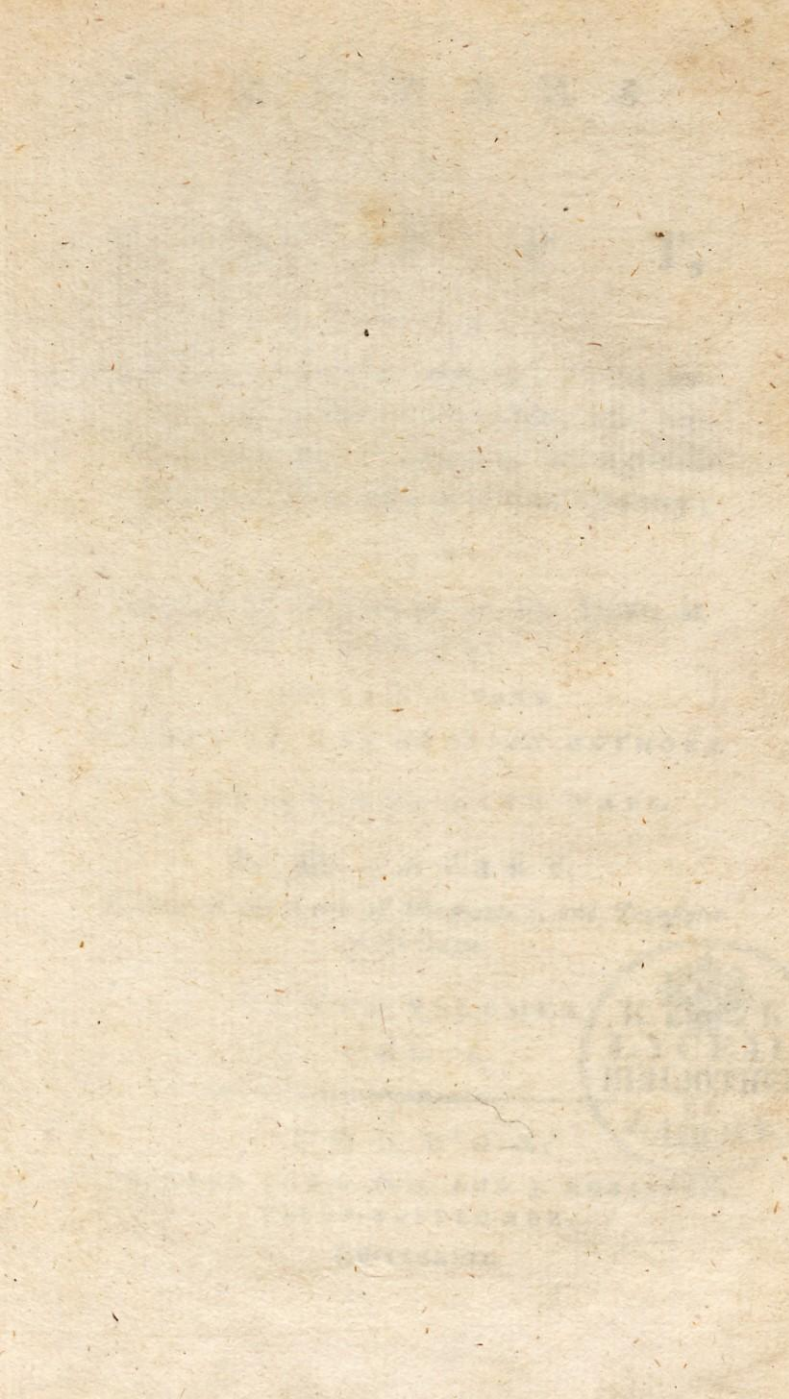
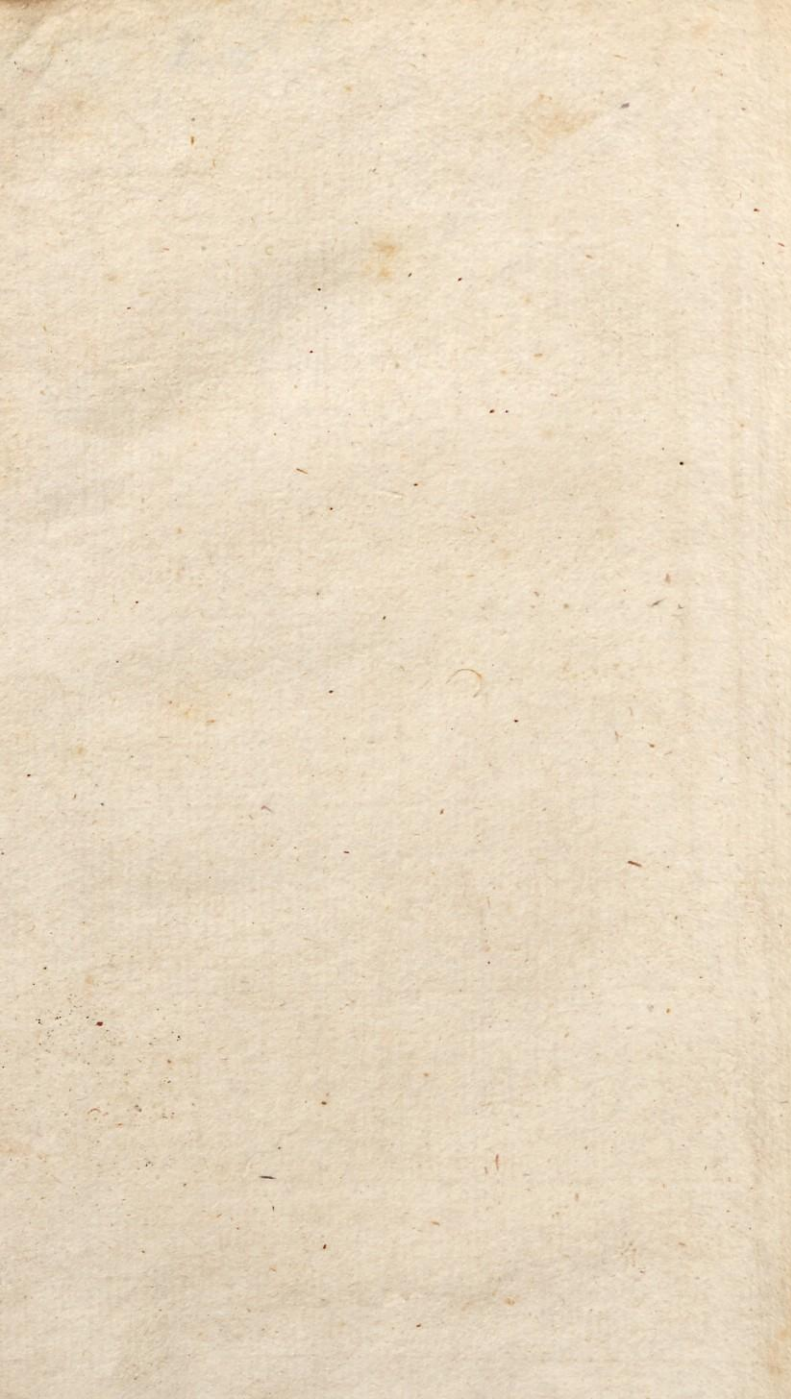






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L E T T E R S
O N
E G Y P T,
W I T H A

Parallel between the Manners of its an-
cient and modern Inhabitants, the pre-
sent State, the Commerce, the Agricul-
ture, and Government of that Country ;

A N D A N
Account of the Descent of St. LEWIS at
DAMIETTA :

EXTRACTED FROM
JOINVILLE, AND ARABIAN AUTHORS.

ILLUSTRATED WITH MAPS.

BY MR. SAVARY,
Author of the LIFE of MAHOMET, and *Translator*
of the Coran.

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.



L O N D O N :
PRINTED FOR G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON,
PATER-NOSTER-ROW.

MDCCLXXXVI.

LETTERS

ON

THE GUY P. T.

WITH A

Parallel between the Manners of the an-
cient and modern Inhabitants, the pre-
sent State, the Commerce, the Agricul-
ture, and Government of that Country;

AND AN

Account of the Delicacy of St. Lewis at

DAMIANITA:

EXTRACTED FROM

JOINTLIES AND ARABIAN AUTHORS.

ILLUSTRATED WITH MAPS.

BY MR. S. A. V. A. R. Y.

Author of the *Life of Mahomet*, and *Travels*

of the *Arabians*.

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MDCCLXXXVI.

T O
M O N S I E U R,
Brother to the King of
F R A N C E.

MONSEIGNEUR,

THE favourable reception with which
you have honoured my former
works, encourages me to publish the ob-
servations I had an opportunity of making
in the course of my travels. If your High-
ness will deign to permit me to prefix your
name, my wishes will be complete. I
shall esteem that favour as an assurance
a 2 of

of the public approbation, and shall the less regret those obstacles, which suspended my zeal at the moment that I was about to undertake more important inquiries.

I am,

With the most profound respect,

Your Highness's most obedient,
and most humble servant,

SAVARY.

P R E-

P R E F A C E.

TRAVELS are the most instructive school of man. It is by travelling that he acquires a knowledge of his fellow creatures; it is by living amongst different people, by studying their manners, their religion, and government, that he finds a point of comparison which enables him to judge of the manners, the religion, and government of his own country. Surrounded by the prejudices of education, enslaved by custom, until he quits his native country, he views other nations only through an opaque medium, which, varying their forms and colours to his sight, must necessarily induce a false judgment of the objects. He will be astonished at their errors, although he himself pays a tribute to others, to the full

as striking; he will laugh at the absurdity of their customs, himself a slave to as great extravagancies.

But after examining with deliberate attention, the manners and the genius of different people, after calculating the precise influence of education, laws, and climate, on their natural and moral qualities, he will extend the sphere of his ideas, reflexion will throw off the yoke of prejudice, and break the bonds with which custom has enchained his reason. It is then that, looking towards his own country, the bandage will drop from his eyes, the erroneous opinions he has there formed will vanish, and every thing will bear a different aspect.

Before he sets out on his travels, it is necessary that he should be thoroughly acquainted with geography and history. The former will point out the local theatre of great events, the latter will recall them to his memory. Enlightened by this two-fold luminary, in travelling through the eastern world, the scene of the most astonishing revolutions, which have more than once changed the surface of the globe,

globe, every object will be animated under his footsteps. The marbles, the ruins, the very mountains will speak to his understanding and his heart. Here, under a rude bed of brambles, he will read the following words, with which his country honoured the manes of a hero: *Sta, Viator, Heroem calcas*. That rock, whose precipice projects over the profound abysses of the sea, will recall to his memory the unhappy fate of that despairing lover, whose sublime and animated verses deservedly procured her the title of the tenth muse. Those ruins, the sad remains of two celebrated republics, will revive the recollection of man, ennobled by the love of liberty, his enlarged soul, and all the faculties of mind and body in the highest state of perfection. What multiplied comparisons between the past and present situation of human affairs will recur to his imagination! How immense the chain of events he has to pursue! But he will content himself with marking the great leading features, and with laying before his reader those striking circumstances, wherein

wherein the past and the present are illustrated, and brought into contact, without being confounded together.

At the sight of those superb monuments that Egypt still possesses, his reflections will turn on the character of a people, whose works alone, of all the ancient nations, have braved the ravages of time. What must have been that people, who seemed to have laboured only for immortality, and from whom Orpheus, Homer, Herodotus, and Plato, went in search of those different branches of knowledge, with which they enriched their country? He will regret, that all the efforts of the learned have proved ineffectual to lift up the veil of the numerous hieroglyphics dispersed through that rich region. The knowledge of these characters would illustrate ancient history, and furnish a ray of light perhaps to penetrate that darkness which covers the first ages of the world.

Become a citizen of the universe, he will rise superior to partiality and opinion, and, in describing cities and countries, his pen will adopt no other guide than truth.

But

But above all, let him not, like too many travellers, make himself the principal figure in his paintings, nor throw a glare of light around himself, whilst he leaves in the shade the other personages on the canvas. Let him appear without affectation, whether with respect to knowledge of his subject, or for the purpose of giving weight to his narrative. Such are the requisites for the man who would profit by his travels. Such are the principles he should deem essential.

To the necessary information, and to the genius of observation, he must unite also that lively, profound, and penetrating sensibility, which alone can make his remarks or writings interesting. If he is not affected on beholding the spot where the great Pompey was assassinated on his landing near Pelusium; if the wonders of Egypt have not struck him with astonishment and admiration; if he has not lamented over the august ruins of Alexandria, and over the irreparable loss of 400,000 volumes, devoured by the flames; if he has not felt his breast inflamed by

the noble fire of enthusiasm, at the sight of the ruins of Troy, of Sparta, and of Athens, let him not think of writing. Nature never formed him to transmit to his fellow-creatures those great impressions, which are inspired only by such great objects.

I presume to think, that I have experienced such feelings as to render travels interesting; but the public must judge, of the execution. Should the reader of these letters accompany me with pleasure; should he be struck with the accuracy of the descriptions, and derive instruction from the geographical and historical details; should the memorable events I recall to his remembrance appear to him to be judiciously disposed; should the parallel of ancient and modern manners seem to be traced with judgment and reflection, my wishes will be fulfilled, and I shall esteem the fatigues, the dangers, the labours, I have undergone, only as a subject of consolation.

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* * * All the Measures here given are French. The French foot is to the English foot as 135 to 144. A French toise is six French feet, or six feet and three-eighths English.

L E T-

L E T T E R S
O N
E G Y P T.

LETTER I.

A general description of Egypt, and of the changes which it has undergone from the most remote antiquity to the present time. The reader will here find an account of the topography of the country, and a detail of the labours of the ancient kings in confining the channel of the Nile, with the original formation of the Delta, and its gradual enlargement.

To Mr. L. M.

Alexandria, the 24th July, 1777.

YOU complain, Sir, of my silence; you call upon me to make good my promise. "Where," say you, "are those portraits of the Oriental manners that I expected from your taste for observation? What! for

three years have you been travelling in Egypt, without writing me one word of that most celebrated of all the countries in the world ?”

Such are your reproaches. Recollect the advice you gave me on quitting Paris ; you will there find my justification. “ Young Man, you are going into a foreign country, where you will see new men. Observe the influence of climate, the power of religion, the imperious law of ancient customs, and the operations of despotism on weak mortals ; from them you will discover the history of their vices and their virtues ; to facilitate this study learn the Oriental languages, converse with the Greeks, the Turks, and the Arabs ; live amongst them, and, to see them as they really are, leave your prejudices behind you in France. Try to paint the people you see after Nature. Let the Turk strictly resemble himself, and do not give us a representation of Paris at Grand Cairo.”

Such were the precepts dictated by your wisdom ; your reason made me adopt them ;

your

your friendship rendered them dear to me, and they have remained engraven on my memory. Three years travels, attended with many difficulties and much labour, have been consecrated to my desire of reducing them to practice. By writing to you sooner, I should have been less obedient to those precepts.

It appears to me proper first to give you an account of the limits of Egypt, and of such revolutions as time and the labours of man have produced in that country. The map that accompanies this letter, will serve you as a guide, and I have added my own observations to the authority of the ancients, and to the discoveries of Father Sicard, of Pocock, of Nieburh, and of Danville. This last geographer, whose learned criticism could distinguish the truth amidst the numerous contradictions of travellers, has often been of great service to me. I never quit him but in places where it is impossible not to go astray without having been a personal spectator.

Egypt is bounded on the north by the Mediterranean, on the south by a chain

of mountains which separates it from Nubia; the Red Sea, and the Isthmus of Suez form its eastern limits; and it is terminated to the westward by the deserts of Lybia, in the midst of which stood the temple of Jupiter Ammon. Its greatest length is from Sienna, situated under the tropic of Cancer, to cape *Burlos*, which, forming the most advanced point of the Delta, almost terminates the 32d degree of latitude. This distance is about two hundred and twenty five leagues.

Its greatest breadth is sixty-eight leagues, drawing a right line from the ruins of *Pelusa*, to the tower of the Arabs, formerly called *Taposiris*. This measure agrees with that of the ancients (*a*), which made the
breadth

(*a*) Diodorus Siculus and Strabo allow the base of the Delta, which extended from Pelusium to Canopus, now called *Alboukir*, 1300 furlongs, which may be estimated at 54 leagues; add to this 14 leagues from Canopa to the tower of the Arabs, you will have 68 leagues. Herodotus reckons 60 schenes, or 80 leagues from Mount Casius to the gulph of Plintina, where *Taposiris* was situated. Mount Casius is 12 leagues to
the

breadth of the Delta fifty-four leagues from Pelusium to Canopus, and fourteen from Canopa to Taposiris.

Egypt is divided into Upper and Lower ; the first is only a long valley, which begins at Sienna, and ends at Grand Cairo. Two chains of mountains, which take their rise from the last cataract, form the vast contours of that country. Their direction is from south to north, until they reach the latitude of Cairo, where separating to the right and left, one of them takes the direction of mount *Colzoum*, the other terminates in banks of sand near to Alexandria. The former is composed of high and steep rocks, the latter of sandy hillocks, over a bed of calcareous stone. Beyond these

the eastward of Pelusa ; by subtracting this number from the former, there will equally remain 68 leagues from Pelusa to Taposiris. It is evident that the two geographers have measured the same extent of country in a right line, and not in following, like Herodotus, the base of the Delta ; for, from the time of Herodotus to their days, that part of Egypt had already increased by the immense quantity of sand accumulated by the Nile ; and if they had followed the sea coast, they would have found a considerable augmentation.

mountains, are deserts bounded by the Red Sea on the east, and on the west by Africa; in the midst of them is that long plain which is no more than nine leagues broad, where it is the widest. It is there that the Nile flows between two insurmountable barriers. Now, smooth and tranquil, he slowly pursues the course traced out by nature and by art; now, an impetuous torrent, reddened with the sands of Ethiopia, he swells, and breaks over his boundaries, and overflows the country, which he covers with his waters for the space of two hundred leagues. It is in this celebrated valley, that mankind first lighted the torch of the sciences, whose radiance diffusing itself over Greece (*b*), has successively illuminated the rest of the world. This valley is still as fertile as in the best days of

(*b*) Herodotus, Strabo, and Diodorus Siculus, say precisely that the Greeks derived the greatest part of their knowledge from Egypt. It was from thence that Orpheus brought mythology, the daughters of Danaus, and the mysteries of Ceres. It was there that their philosophers studied astronomy, and their legislators the principles of government.

Thebes;

Thebes; but it is less cultivated, and its famous cities are laid level with the dust. Despotism and ignorance seated on the throne of laws, and arts, keep them buried and in ruins.

Lower Egypt comprehends all that country between Cairo, the Mediterranean, the Isthmus of Suez, and Lybia. This immense plain presents on the borders of its parching sands, a strip of lands cultivated along the canals of the river, and in the middle the triangular island, to which the Greeks gave the name of the Delta. It is formed by the two branches of the Nile, which separating at *Batn el Bakara, the Cow's Belly*, fall into the sea below Damietta and Rosetta. This island, the most fertile in the world, has lost much of its extent, since it was formerly bounded by Canopa and Pelusium (*c*). The ravages of its conquerors having overthrown the eastern bulwark of Egypt, the cultivators of the lands, too much exposed to the inroads of the Arabs, have withdrawn into the inte-

(*c*) Strabo, lib. 17.

rior parts of the country. The canals which used to convey fertility with their waters, are now filled. The earth, no longer watered, and continually exposed to the burning ardour of the sun, is converted into a barren sand. In those places where formerly were seen rich fields, and flourishing towns (*d*), on the Pelusiatic, the Tanitic, and the Mendesian branches, which all strike out from the canal of Damietta, nothing is to be found at this day but a few miserable hamlets, surrounded by date trees, and by deserts. These once navigable canals (*e*) are now no more than a vain resemblance of what they were; they have no communication with lake Menzall, but what is merely temporary, on the swelling of the Nile; they are dry the remainder of the year. By deepening them, by removing the mud deposited by the river since the Turks have made themselves masters of Egypt, the country they pass

(*d*) Bubasta, Pelusium, Phacusa, and all the towns which were in the eastern part of the Delta, are totally destroyed.

(*e*) The Pelusiatic, the Tanitic, and Mendesian branches were formerly navigable.

through

through would again be fertilized, and the Delta recover a third of its greatness.

Now that you have a general idea of Egypt, Sir, fix your attention on that rich country, and pursue the revolutions it has undergone. Beyond those times, of which history has preserved us any epoch, a people descended from the mountains near the cataracts, into the valley which is overflowed by the Nile (*f*): it was then an impenetrable morass, covered with canes and reeds. After multiplied, and often fatal attempts, they at length discovered some salutary plants, amongst which they particularly distinguished the lotus (*g*), which Hero-

dotus

(*f*) Herodotus, p. 40. Euterpe; Diodorus Siculus, lib. 1. and Strabo, lib. 17. ascertain the same fact.

(*g*) The lotus is an aquatic peculiar to Egypt, which grows in the rivulets, and on the sides of the lakes; there are two species of it, the one with a white, the other with a blueish flower; the calix of the lotus blows like a large tulip, and diffuses a sweet smell, resembling that of the lily; the first species produces a round root like that of a potatoe; the inhabitants of the banks of lake Menzall feed upon it. The rivulets in the environs of Damietta are covered with

this

dotus calls the lily of the Nile, the reed we call the sugar-cane, and which has preserved in that country its primitive name of the *cassab* reed (*b*), the colocassius (*i*), the onion, and

this majestic flower, which rises upwards of two feet above the water. Mr. Paw asserts that it has disappeared in Egypt, and gives a description of that plant which bears no resemblance to it, in his *Recherches sur les Egyptiens & les Chinois*, page 150; but it is not wonderful that this learned author should be mistaken, since the greatest part of the travellers who have visited Egypt, have never seen the lotus, which is not to be found on the great canals of the Nile, but in the rivulets that pass through the interior part of the country.

(*b*) Some authors have said that the sugar-cane was brought out of India into Egypt. Perhaps the manner of cultivating it only has been brought from thence. It appears to me to be a native of a country which produces several different species of reeds, and where it grows without any cultivation. Its very name induces this belief.

(*i*) The colocassius is a plant well known in botany. The inhabitants of Damietta pay particular attention to its cultivation; one sees in the neighbourhood of that town immense fields covered with its large leaves; its root is of a conical form, and thicker than that of the lotus. It is not so insipid as a potatoe.

the

the bean. Many years elapsed before they thought of cultivating these native plants. Necessity awakened their industry. He who by dint of hazard or reflection, made some useful discovery, became a king, or a God (*k*). Osiris taught men, who were at that time cannibals, to feed on the fruits of the earth, instead of human flesh. Isis, the same with Ceres, taught them to cultivate corn, and were elevated to the rank of deities. Hercules the Egyptian, the most ancient of the heroes who have borne that name, delivered Thebais from the monsters which ravaged that country, and had altars erected to him. Whilst the people of Upper Egypt were contending for their vast morasses with savage beasts (*l*), the sea, according to ancient accounts, bathed the feet of these mountains where the pyramids are built, and advanced on the side of the tower of the Arabs very far into Lybia. It covered a part of the Isthmus of Suez;

(*k*) Diodorus Siculus, p. 24.

(*l*) Herodotus, Strabo, Diodorus Siculus, who gives the opinion of the Ethiopians on this subject.

and every part of what we now call the Delta, formed a great gulph. I pass over ages, and come to that period when the Egyptians, under the domination of a religious worship, and of laws, formed canals to carry off the stagnant waters of the Nile, opposed strong dykes to its ravages, and, tired of dwelling in the caverns of the rocks, built towns on spots elevated by art or nature. Already the river was kept within its bounds; the habitations of men were out of the reach of inundations (*m*); experience had taught them to foresee and to announce them. Geometry, measuring the lands newly risen out of the river, or diminished by its impetuosity, secured the possessions of the inhabitants. A large city had sprung up in the middle of Thebais, and several kings had made it their glory to embellish it. Such was the magnificence of its public monuments, that its remaining ruins at the end of upwards of four thousand years leave us impressed with admiration and respect. Thebes flourished for many ages,

(*m*) Herodotus, p. 40. Euterpe.

and Rome was not in existence. Separated from the rest of the world by deserts, by mountains, and the sea, the Egyptians peaceably cultivated the arts and sciences; the constancy of their labours every day extended the limits of their empire, either by protecting with banks the new lands they had acquired, or by cutting deep drains to dry up the marshy grounds (*n*). One of the kings of Egypt, foreseeing possibly what must happen, undertook to change the course of the river. After running one hundred and fifty leagues between the barriers I have mentioned, meeting with an

(*n*) The priests said that Menes, the first king of Egypt, threw a bridge over the Nile, near Memphis. Before this prince's time, the river, overspreading its banks at Mount Psammis, ran to the southward of that town, and diffused itself through the deserts of Lybia. At a hundred furlongs from Memphis he formed a dyke to stop its course, and forced it to return between the mountains; by this means the original bed was left dry. Since the Persians have become masters of Egypt in our time, they keep in repair, at great expence, the dyke that shuts the ancient channel. Every year they add new works to it, and have placed troops to look after its preservation. *Herodotus, Euterpe, p. 55.*

insur-

insurmountable obstacle to the right, it turned precipitately to the left, and taking its course to the southward of Memphis, it spread its waters through the sands of Lybia. The prince had dug a new bed for it to the east of Memphis, and by means of a large dyke, obliged it to return between the mountains, and discharge itself into the gulph that bathes the rock on which is built the castle of Cairo. The ancient bed of the river was still to be seen in the time of Herodotus, and the dyke which barred its entrance. The Persians preserved it with the greatest care. At the moment I am writing, this channel is not unknown; it may be traced across the desert, and passes to the westward of the lakes of Natrum. Petrified wood, masts, lateen yards, the wreck of vessels which have formerly navigated there, still mark its ancient traces. The Arabs still bestow the name of *Babr Bela ma* (o), sea without water, on this channel, which is almost choaked up.

(o) The Arabs call the great rivers *Bahr*, or sea.

It is to the labours of the monarch who finished this great work, that Egypt is indebted for the Delta. The enormous weight of the waters of the Nile, which throw themselves into the bottom of the gulph, occasions a reflux of the sea. The sands and mud that are carried along with them collected together in heaps, so that the isle of the Delta, very inconsiderable at first, arose out of the sea, of which it has repelled the limits. It was a gift of the river. Improvement has since come in aid to defend it against the attacks of the water, by raising dykes around it. In the time of Moëris, who lived five hundred years before the Trojan war, the Delta then appeared in its infancy (*p*). Eight cubits was then sufficient to overflow it in all its extent. Boats passed over it from one extremity to the other, and its towns, built on artificial elevations, resembled the islands of the Ægean sea (*q*). When Herodotus visited Egypt, fifteen cubits were necessary

(*p*) Herodotus, p. 41. Euterp.

(*q*) Strabo, lib. 17, p. 1136.

to cover all the Lower Egypt, but the Nile then overflowed the country for the space of two days journey, to the right and left of the Delta. Under the Roman Empire, sixteen cubits produced the same effect. In the time of the domination of the Arabs, their writers speak of seventeen cubits as the most favourable height. Eighteen cubits at this day is the measure of abundance; but the inundation no longer extends over the Lower Egypt, but its progress is stopped at Grand Cairo, and in the neighbouring country. The Nile however sometimes rises to two-and-twenty cubits. The mud accumulated for so many years on the island, which arose from out of its bosom, is the cause of this phenomenon. Art has also contributed greatly towards it, either by the banks raised to protect the lands the most exposed to the action of the river, or by multiplying its outlets, and by cutting a great number of canals, which give a free passage to the waters (*r*). During my stay in Egypt, I have

(*r*) Strabo, lib. 17. says that the Bolbitine and Sebennitic branches have been formed by the hand of man.

twice made the tour of the Delta, in the time of the inundation. I have even crossed it by the canal of *Menouf*. The river flowed in full streams in the great branches of Rosetta, and Damietta, and in those which pass through the interior part of the country; but it did not overflow the lands, except in the lower parts, where the dykes were pierced, for the purpose of watering the plantations of rice. Here then, in the space of 3284 years, we see the Delta elevated fourteen cubits (*s*). We must not imagine however, as several travellers pretend, that this island will continue to rise, and that it will become unfruitful. As it owes its increase to the annual settling of the mud, conveyed thither by the Nile, when it ceases to be overflowed, it will no longer increase

(*s*) To render this calculation minutely exact, we must know whether the Grecian, the Roman, and the Arabic cubit be the same measure, and even be acquainted with the variations it may have undergone amongst these different people, &c. which would be extremely difficult to prove. This degree of precision not being essential to the subject I treat of, I shall content myself with quoting the testimonies of the authors, and the facts.

in height, for it is demonstrated that culture is not sufficient to raise land.

The Delta is at present in the most favourable situation for agriculture. Washed on the east and west by two rivers formed by the division of the Nile, and each of which is as large and more deep than the Loire, intersected by innumerable rivulets, it presents to the eye an immense garden, all the different compartments of which may easily be watered. During the three months that the Thebais is under water, the Delta possesses fields covered with rice, barley, vegetables, and winter fruits. It is no longer, as in former times, the Ægean sea with the Cyclades; rich harvests now cover that plain whose extent is only bounded by the horizon; it is now covered with groves of date-trees, of oranges, and sycamores; here are perpetually running streams, and a verdure that is constantly varied and renewed; it is, in short, a picture of abundance, that delights the eye, and astonishes the imagination. By losing the inundation, this isle has gained every year the three months during which the Thebais is under water.

water. It is also the only part of Egypt where the same field produces two crops of grain within the year, one of rice, the other of barley.

You will naturally imagine, Sir, that it has increased in length as well as height. Amongst several facts we derive from history, I shall select only one (*t*). Under the reign of Psammeticus, the Milesians, with thirty vessels, landed at the mouth of the Bolbitine branch, now called that of Rosetta, where they fortified themselves. They there built a town which they called *Metelis*, the same as Faoûe, which, in the Coptic vocabularies, has preserved the name of *Mesfil*. This town, formerly a sea-port, is at present nine leagues distant from it; and this is the space the Delta has lengthened, from the time of Psammeticus to our day.

Homer, that sublime painter of people, and of countries, Homer (*u*), whose geographical details are the most precious monument of that kind, transmitted to us by

(*t*) Strabo, lib. 17.

(*u*) Odyfsey, book 4th.

antiquity, puts these words into the mouth of Menelaus, landed in Egypt. “ In the
 “ stormy sea which washes Egypt, there is
 “ an island called Pharos. Its distance
 “ from the shore is such, as that a vessel
 “ with a fair wind, may make the passage
 “ in a day.” (*x*) Proteus, instructing Menelaus, says to him; “ Destiny forbids thee
 “ to see again thy friends, thy palace, and
 “ thy native land, until thou returnest to
 “ the banks of the river Egyptus, (*y*)
 “ which derives its source from Jupiter,
 “ and until thou hast offered up hecatombs
 “ to the immortal gods He said,
 “ and this order, which obliged me to traverse a second time the vast and stormy
 “ sea that separates the Pharos from the
 “ Egyptian continent, rent my heart with
 “ grief.”

Homer, who had travelled (*z*) in Egypt,

(*x*) *Odyſſey*, book 4th.

(*y*) The Nile was called Egyptus until the time of Nileus, one of the ſucceſſors of Mendes, who, making great works to contain it, and prevent its ravages, gave it his name. *Diod. Sic. lib. i.*

(*z*) *Diodorus Siculus*.

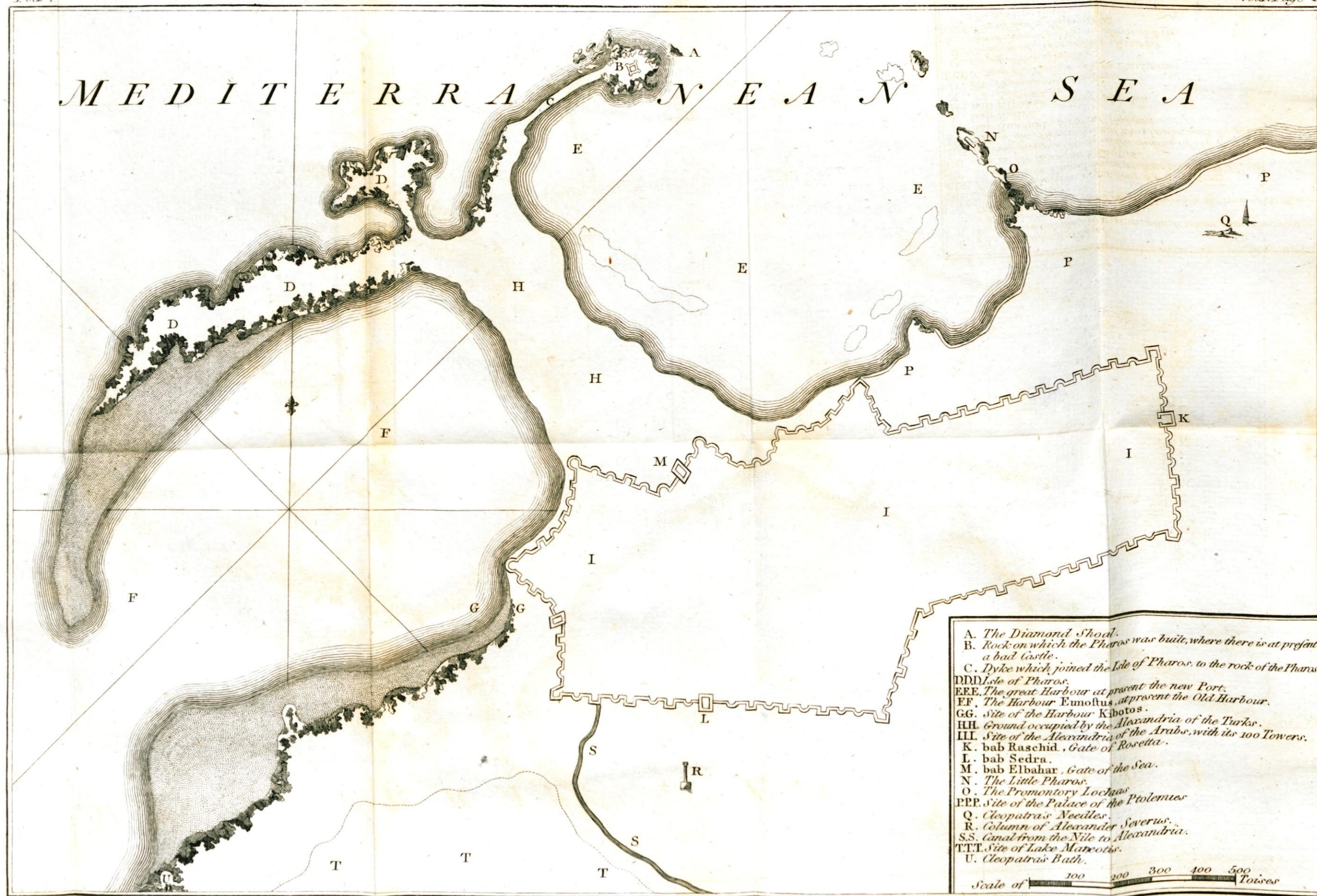
where

where he had learnt from the priests that mythology which he makes such brilliant use of in his poems, represents to us the island of Pharos, which forms the present port of Alexandria, as at the distance of at least twenty leagues from the coast of Egypt, and in this sentiment concurs with that of the most remote antiquity.

What prodigious changes great rivers occasion on the surface of the globe ! how incessantly they repel the sea, by accumulating sand on sand ! how they elevate at their mouths islands which become at length large portions of the continent. It is thus that the Nile has formed almost all the Lower Egypt, and created out of the waters the Delta, which is ninety leagues in circumference. It is thus that the Meander, constantly repelling the waves of the Mediterranean, and gradually filling up the gulph into which it falls, has placed in the middle of the land, the town of Miletis, formerly a celebrated harbour. It is thus that the Tigris and the Euphrates, let loose from the Armenian hills, and sweeping with them in their course the sands of Mesopotamia,

tamia, are imperceptibly filling up the Persian gulph.

You have now before you a general picture of Egypt, and of the principal physical revolutions that have happened in that country: I shall next enter into particular details, which you will probably find more interesting. It is from the center of Alexandria, struck with astonishment at the sight of her monuments, which the ravages of time, and of her conquerors, have not been able to destroy; weeping over the ruins of her columns, the obelisks that decorate her public places, and her temples, that I shall speak to you of the City of Alexander, of the Alexandria of the Arabs, and of the rubbish on which the Turks presume to bestow that pompous title. Barbarians! who have stifled in their vast empire, the arts, the sciences, the cities, the kingdoms. Nothing now remains but the name of so many noble works, which their ignorance has suffered to perish, or which their fanaticism has destroyed. I have the honour to be, &c.



23

LETTER II.

A description of Alexandria, ancient and modern, and of its antiquities, and three ports; with an account of the various revolutions it has experienced in falling successively under the dominion of the Ptolemies, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, and the Ottomans. The description is accompanied with a topographical chart of the city and its environs, delineating both its former and present state.

To Mr. L. M,

Alexandria,

ALEXANDRIA, Sir, merits your attention. The rank it held amongst the most celebrated cities (*a*), the learned men it produced, the monuments which still testify

(*a*) Diodorus Siculus, who wrote at Rome under Augustus, says, that Alexandria was the first city in the world, lib. 17.

its past glory at the end of two thousand years, have a claim on your curiosity. It was to satisfy that curiosity that, for the last three months, I have visited the places where it has stood; it is from reading the Greek, Latin, and Arabian authors, that I learn where to look for it, in the midst of those ruins under which it now lies buried; it is by comparing their writings with the objects before my eyes, that I am enabled to trace out its plan to you. Acknowledge that it is painful to search for a celebrated city, within its own walls.

Asia Minor being already subdued, and the pride of Tyre humbled, Alexander marched towards Egypt, groaning under the Persian yoke. He became master of it without a battle, because the people, happy to break their chains, welcomed him as a deliverer, and received him with open arms. To preserve this conquest, so distant from his own dominions, it was necessary to have a fortress, with a port capable of receiving numerous fleets. Egypt had no such inestimable advantage; Alexander

ander created it. A compact country between Lake Mareotis, and the beautiful harbour formed by the isle of Pharos (*b*), appeared to him adapted to his purpose. He there traced out the walls of a great city, on which he bestowed his name, and went himself to visit the wonders of Upper Egypt, whilst his engineer Dinocrates laboured to carry his plan into execution. This journey lasted upwards of a year. On

(*b*) Homer, as I have quoted him, represents the isle of Pharos to us as at the distance of a day's navigation from the coast of Egypt, because Lake Mareotis then joined the sea, and formed a Gulph there. In the space of five hundred years from the time of the poet to the foundation of Alexandria, canals were cut in Lower Egypt; Lake Mareotis, which was the receptacle of the waters of Thebais, retreated a little, and the tongue of land on which Alexander built this city, appeared. When Cæsar, Strabo, and Diodorus Siculus wrote, it washed the walls. In the time of the Arabs, it was already half a league from it. Under the destructive empire of the Ottomans, it has totally disappeared. A traveller who should see this part of Egypt in our days, and had only read Homer, would be apt to say with Madame Dacier, Pope, and other learned persons, that his description of Pharos is a mere sport of the imagination.

his

his return, Alexandria was almost finished (*c*). He peopled it with the inhabitants of the neighbouring towns, and pursued the course of his exploits.

Alexandria was a league and a half long, by one third in breadth, which made the circumference of its walls about four leagues (*d*). Lake Mareotis bathed its walls on the south, and the Mediterranean on the north. It was intersected lengthwise by straight parallel streets. This direction left a free passage to the northerly wind, which alone conveys coolness and salubrity into Egypt. A street of two thousand feet wide began at the gate of the sea, and terminated at the gate of Canopus. It was decorated by magnificent houses, by temples, and by public the buildings. In this extensive range, eye was never tired with admiring the marble, the porphyry, and the obelisks,

(*c*) Quintus Curtius, vit. Alex. lib. 4. chap. 8.

(*d*) Quintus Curtius makes them 80 furlongs, or 3 leagues and a half. Pliny, 15000 Romans, or 5 leagues. Strabo 76 furlongs, or 3 leagues and an eighth. Diodorus Siculus, 96 furlongs, or 4 leagues.

which

which were destined at some future day to embellish Rome (*e*) and Constantinople. This street, the handsomest in the universe, was intersected by another of the same breadth (*f*), which formed a square at their junction of half a league in circumference. From the middle of this great place, the two gates were to be seen at once, and vessels arriving under full sail, from the north and from the south.

A mole of a mile in length (*g*) stretched from the continent to the isle of Pharos, and divided the great harbour into two. That which is to the northward preserved his name. A dyke drawn from the island to the rock whereon was built the Pharos, secured it from the westerly winds. The other was called *Eunostos*, or the Safe Return. The former is called at present the new, the latter the old harbour: a bridge

(*e*) Every body knows that the obelisks at Rome have been brought from Alexandria.

(*f*) Diodorus Siculus. Strabo, lib. 17.

(*g*) This mole was called *Hepta Stadium*, because it was 7 furlongs, or a mile long.

that joins the mole to the city, served for a communication between them. It was raised on lofty pillars sunk into the sea, and left a free passage for ships. The palace, which advanced beyond the promontory of *Lochias*, extended as far as the dyke, and occupied more than a quarter of the city (*b*). Each of the Ptolemies added to its magnificence. It contained within its enclosure, the museum, an asylum for learned men, groves, and buildings worthy of royal majesty, and a temple where the body of Alexander was deposited in a golden coffin (*i*). The infamous Seleucus Ciby- osaces violated this monument, carried off the golden coffin, and put a glass one in its place. In the great harbour was the little island of Anti-Rhodes, where stood a theatre, and a royal place of residence. Within the harbour of Eunostos, was a smaller

(*b*) Strabo, lib. 17. says it occupied one-third of it.

(*i*) Perdikkas undertook to convey the body of Alexander to the Temple of Jupiter Ammon, agreeable to the will of that prince. Ptolemy, son of Lagus, carried it off, and placed it in the palace of Alexandria.

one, called Kibotos (*k*), dug by the hand of man, which communicated with Lake Mareotis by a canal. Between this canal and the palace was the admirable temple of Serapis (*l*), and that of Neptune near the great place where the market was held. Alexandria extended likewise along the southern banks of the lake. Its eastern part presented to view the gymnasium, with its porticoes of more than six hundred feet long, supported by several rows of marble pillars. Without the gate of Canopus was a spacious circus, for the chariot races. Beyond that, the suburb of Nicopolis ran along the sea shore, and seemed a second Alexandria. A superb amphitheatre was built there with a race-ground, for the celebration of the quinquennalia (*m*).

Such is the description left us of Alexandria by the ancients, and above all by Strabo. This city, whose foundation is 333 years prior to our æra, was successively held in subjection by the Ptolemies, the

(*k*) *Kibotos*, the harbour of the Arch.

(*l*) Strabo, lib. 17.

(*m*) Feasts celebrated every five years.

Romans, and the Greek emperors (*n*). Towards the middle of the sixth century, Amrou *Ebn el Aas*, Omar's general, took it by storm, after a siege of fourteen months, and with the loss of twenty-three thousand men. Heraclius, then emperor of Constantinople, did not send a single ship to its assistance. This prince affords an example very rare in history; he had displayed some vigour in the first year of his reign, and then suffered himself to be lulled into idleness and effeminacy. Awakened suddenly from his lethargy by the noise of the conquests of Cosroes, that scourge of the east, he put himself at the head of his armies, distinguished himself as a great captain from his very first campaign, laid waste Persia for seven years, and returned to his capital covered with laurels: he then became a theologian on the throne, lost all his energy, and amused himself the rest of his life with disputing upon Monotheism,

(*n*) The tenth year of the *Hegyra*, the year 651 of our era, according to Abulfeda, 994 years after its foundation. The word era, as I have observed in the *Life of Mahomet*, comes from *Arkha*, which in Arabic signifies an *Epoch*.

whilst

whilst the Arabs were robbing him of the finest provinces of his empire. Deaf to the cries of the unfortunate inhabitants of Alexandria (*o*), as he had been to those of the people of Jerusalem, who defended themselves for two years, he left them a sacrifice to the fortunate ascendant of the indefatigable Amrou. All their intrepid youth perished with their arms in their hands.

The victor, astonished at his conquest, wrote to the Caliph (*p*) “ I have taken
“ the city of the west. It is of an immense
“ extent. I cannot describe to you how
“ many wonders it contains. There are
“ 4000 baths, 12000 dealers in fresh oil,
“ 4000 Jews, who pay tribute, 400 co-
“ medians, &c.”

(*o*) Omar led all the forces of Arabia against Jerusalem. The inhabitants defended themselves with admirable constancy. They sent several times to conjure Heraclius to furnish them with some assistance. Their prayers were of no avail, and they saw themselves compelled to surrender after a siege of two years, without having been able to obtain a single soldier from an Emperor, who sacrificed his time and his treasures to procure the triumph of a new sect.

(*p*) Elmacin, life of Omar, p. 30.

The

The library, wherein more than 400,000 manuscripts had been collected by the zeal of the Ptolemies, excited the attention of the conqueror. He demanded the Caliph's orders. "Burn these books, replied the furious Omar: if they contain only what is in the Coran they are useless, and dangerous if they contain any thing else." A barbarous sentence, which reduced to ashes a great part of the labours of learned antiquity. What a quantity of knowledge, how many arts, what a number of capital works have disappeared from the earth by this fatal conflagration! It is perhaps from this melancholy epocha that we must date that ignorance which has covered with a veil those countries, formerly the cradle of the sciences. If three-fourths of the works that Europe is possessed of, were annihilated in an instant; if the art of printing did not exist, and an unlettered people were to take possession of that beautiful part of the globe, it would return to that barbarism from whence it has scarcely been rescued by the labour of so many ages. Such has been the hard fortune of the eastern world.

Alexandria

Alexandria under the domination of the Arabs gradually lost its splendor. The distance of the caliphs of Bagdad did not allow them to give any effectual encouragement to the arts and commerce. Population diminished every day. In the year (*q*) 875 of our æra, the old walls were pulled down, its enclosure contracted to the half of its ancient size, and those walls were built which exist at the present day. Their solidity, their thickness, the hundred towers with which they were flanked, have preserved them against the efforts of man, and the ravages of time. This second Alexandria, which may be called that of the Arabs, was still a flourishing city in the thirteenth century (*r*). The disposition of its streets presented the form of a chequer. It had preserved a part of its public places, and of its monuments. Its

(*q*) This event happened under the empire of *Elmetouak kel*, the tenth Caliph Abassid, and the one-and-thirtieth from Mahomet. *Elmain Ebn Toulon*, then governor of Egypt, and who had the project of becoming independent, built them.

(*r*) Abulfeda, Geograph. Descrip. of Egypt.

commerce extended itself from Spain to India; its canals were still supported; its merchandize mounted into Upper Egypt by Lake Mareotis, and was conveyed into the Delta by the Canal of Faoué (*f*). The Pharos, built by *Sostrates* of *Cnidos*, still existed. This miraculous tower, as it is called by Cæsar, had several stories, and was surrounded by galleries supported on pillars of marble. Its elevation was near four hundred feet (*t*). On its summit was placed a large mirror of polished steel, so disposed as to enable the beholder to perceive the image of distant vessels before they became visible to the eye. This admirable edifice served them as a signal. Fires were lighted on it during the night, to warn the mariner that he was near the coast of Egypt, which is so low, that there is great danger of running ashore before it can

(*f*) It was built under Ptolemy Philadelphus.

(*t*) Abulfeda in his description of Egypt speaks of this mirror, which several Arabian authors also mention. He says that it was destroyed by the artifices of the Christians, under the reign of *Oualid*, son of *Abd el Melec*.

be distinguished. Alexandria in its decline still preserved an air of grandeur and magnificence that excited admiration.

In the fifteenth century the Turks became masters of Egypt (*u*), and this was the term of its glory. Astronomy, geometry, poetry, and grammar were yet cultivated there. The rod of the Pachas expelled these remains of the fine arts. The prohibition of exporting the corn of the Thebais, gave the mortal stab to agriculture. The canals filled up; commerce languished; the Alexandria of the Arabs was so depopulated, that not a single inhabitant was to be found in all its vast enclosure. They had abandoned large buildings that fell into ruins, which nobody dared to repair under a government where it is a crime to appear rich, and built wretched habitations on the sea-coast. Already was the Pharos destroyed, one of the seven wonders of the

(*u*) In 1517, Sultan Selim made the conquest of Egypt, and the first care of this barbarous conqueror was to hang under the gate *Bab Zouilé*, Thomambie, the last king of the Mameluks, whose government had subsisted for near 300 years.

world, in the room of which they built a square castle, without taste or ornament, and unable to withstand the fire of a single vessel of the line. At present, in the space of two leagues, enclosed by walls, one sees nothing but marble columns, some of them overturned in the dust, and sawed into stumps, (for the Turks make millstones of them) and others erect, and still firm upon their bases, from the enormity of their weight. Nothing is to be seen but the remains of pilasters, of capitals, of obelisks, and whole mountains of ruins heaped one upon another. The sight of these ruins, the memory of those famous monuments they represent, excite regret in the mind, and draw tears from the eyes of the beholder.

The modern Alexandria is a small town of little extent, scarcely containing 6000 inhabitants (*x*), but very commercial, an advantage it owes entirely to its situation. It is built on the spot which was former-

(*x*) The ancient Alexandria contained 300,000 free persons under Augustus. Add to this at least double the number of slaves, you will have 900,000 souls. What a prodigious difference!

ly the old harbour, left uncovered by the retreating of the sea. The mole which joined the continent to the isle of Pharos, is enlarged, and is now become a part of the main land. The island of Anti-Rhodes is in the middle of the present town. It is discoverable by an eminence covered with ruins. The harbour *Kibotos* is choked up. The canal which conveyed the waters of Lake Mareotis has disappeared. This lake itself, whose banks were covered with papyrus and date-trees, is no longer in existence, because the Turks have neglected to preserve the canals which conveyed the waters of the Nile (y). *Belon*, an accurate observer, who travelled in Egypt some years after the conquest of the Ottomans, assures us, that in his time Lake Mareotis was only at half a league's distance from the walls of Alexandria, and that it was surrounded by forests of palm trees. At the moment I am writing, it is entirely

(y) Belon, description of Alexandria. He travelled in Egypt fifteen years after the conquest of Selim, now 250 years ago.

occupied by the sands of Lybia. These deplorable changes must be attributed to the destructive government of the Turks.

The canal of Faoüé, the only one which at present communicates with Alexandria, and without which that town could not subsist, since it has not a drop of fresh water, is half filled with mud and sand. Under the Roman empire, under the domination even of the Arabs, it was navigable all the year, and served for the conveyance of merchandize. It diffused its fecundity in the plains through which it passed. Its banks were shaded with date-trees, covered with vineyards, and adorned with country houses (z). In our days, there is
no

(z) The following passage of Abulfeda will confirm what I have advanced: "Nothing can be seen
" more beautiful than the canal of Alexandria. The
" two banks lined with gardens, and shady groves,
" are covered with perpetual verdure, which *Dafard*
" *el Hadad* has expressed in these beautiful verses.

" What amity reigns on the banks of the canal of
" Alexandria. The prospect they offer diffuses joy
" over the soul. The groves with which they are
" shaded, present to the navigator a canopy of ver-
" dure. The hand of Aquilon (the north wind),
" spreads

no water in it till towards the end of August, and it hardly remains long enough to fill the cisterns of the town. The fields through which it spreads abundance, are deserted. The groves, the gardens that surrounded Alexandria have disappeared with the water to which they owed their fertility. Without the walls, one perceives only a few scattered trees, some sycamores, and fig-trees whose fruit is delicious, some date and caper-trees, and kali, that hide the burning sands which would otherwise be insupportable to the sight.

“ spreads freshness over them, whilst it furrows up the
 “ waters, and plays with its surface. The superb
 “ date-tree, whose pliant head languidly reclines, like
 “ that of a handsome woman overcome with sleep,
 “ is crowned with pendent clusters.

*Oua khalig Elefscanderié ellati iatiha men el Nil
 men ahfan el mentezhat laenno daiiak Makdar el janebin,
 bel Besatin oua fih iecoul Dafar el Hadad :*

Ou achié achadet l'aïnak menzara

Ja esserour bo le calback ou afda

Roud le mekadder cladar oua gedaoual

Nacachet aleih id ech chemal mebareda

Oua-l-Nakhl Kelrhid el hassan tezainet

Oua lebes men atmarhen calaïda.

Abulfeda, Description of Egypt.

Still however, every sign of the ancient magnificence of Alexandria is not effaced. The reservoirs vaulted with much art, and which extend under the whole town, are almost entire at the end of two thousand years. Towards the eastern part of the palace (*a*), are two obelisks, vulgarly called Cleopatra's needles. They are of Thebaic stone, and covered with hieroglyphics: one is overturned, broken, and lying under the sand; the other is on its pedestal. These two obelisks, each of them of a single stone, are about sixty-feet high, by seven foot square at the base. Towards the gate of Rosetta, are five columns of marble on the place formerly occupied by the porticoes of the Gymnasium. The rest of the colonnade, the design of which was discoverable a hundred years ago (*b*), has since been destroyed by the barbarism of the Turks.

(*a*) Mr. Pocock thinks they were placed before the temple of Neptune, but this temple was near port Eunostus, and these obelisks are half a league from it, near the promontory of Lochias, the spot assigned by Strabo for the palace.

(*b*) Maillet, Description of Egypt.

What

What most engages the attention of travellers, is the pillar of red granite, situated at a quarter of a league from the southern gate. The capital is corinthian, with palm leaves, and not indented. It is nine feet high. The shaft and the upper member of the base are of one piece of ninety feet long, and nine in diameter. The base is a square of about fifteen feet on each side. This block of marble, sixty feet in circumference, rests on two layers of stone bound together with lead, which however has not prevented the Arabs from forcing out several of them, to search for an imaginary treasure. The whole column is one hundred and fourteen feet high. It is perfectly well polished, and only a little shivered on the eastern side. Nothing can equal the majesty of this monument; seen from a distance, it overtops the town, and serves as a signal for vessels. Approaching it nearer, it produces an astonishment mixed with awe. One can never be tired with admiring the beauty of the capital, the length of the shaft, nor the extraordinary simplicity of the pedestal. I am persuaded,

suaded, that if this column were transported before the palace of our kings, all Europe would come to pay its tribute of admiration to the most beautiful monument on the face of the globe.

Learned men and travellers have made many fruitless attempts to discover in honour of what prince it was erected. The best informed have concluded that it could not be in honour of Pompey, since neither Strabo nor Diodorus Siculus have spoken of it. They have remained in doubt; it appears to me that Abulfeda could have extricated them from it; he calls it *the pillar of Severus (c)*. And history informs us that this emperor visited Egypt *(d)*,
gave

(c) "Oua escanderié ala chat bahr elroum, oua beha elmenarat el machhoura, oua beha *Aamoud Severi*.

"Alexandria is built on the sea coast; it possesses "a famous Pharos, and the *column of Severus*." *Abulfeda*, Description of Egypt.

(d) The Emperor Severus visited the city of Alexandria. He granted a senate to its inhabitants, who until that time, under the subjection of a single Roman magistrate, had lived without any national council, as under the reign of the Ptolemies, when the will of the prince was their only law. Severus did not confine

his

gave a senate to Alexandria, and deserved well of its inhabitants. This column was a mark of their gratitude. The Greek inscription, half effaced, which is visible on the west side when the sun shines upon it, was legible, no doubt, in the time of Abulfeda, and preserved the name of Severus. Nor is this the only monument erected to him by the gratitude of the Alexandrians. One still sees in the midst of the ruins of Antinoë, built by Adrian, a magnificent pillar, the inscription on which is still remaining, dedicated to Alexander Seveurs.

At half a league's distance to the southward of the town, is the descent into the catacombs, the ancient asylum of the dead. Winding passages lead to the subterraneous grottoes, where they were deposited. The suburb of Necropolis (*e*), extended so far. In going along the sea-coast, there is a large basin cut out of the rock, that lines the shore; on the sides of this basin, two]

his benefactions there; he changed several laws in their favour. *Spartian, chap. 17. Life of the Emperor Severus.*

(*e*) The city of the dead, wherein there were gardens, temples, and superb mausoleums.

beautiful

beautiful saloons are hewn out by the chisel, with benches that run across them. A canal made zig-zag, for the purpose of stopping the sand by its different windings, conveys into them the water of the sea, as pure and transparent as crystal. I have bathed in this place. Seated on the stone bench, the water rises a little above the waist; the feet softly repose on a fine sand. The waves of the sea are heard roaring against the rock, and foaming in the canal. The swell enters, raises you up, and leaves you; and thus alternately entering and retiring, brings a continual fresh supply of water, and a coolness which is truly delicious, under a burning sky. This place is vulgarly called the bath of Cleopatra. Some ruins announce that it was formerly ornamented.

I cannot quit this city, Sir, without reminding you of some of those memorable events of which it was the theatre. Near this eminence, Cæsar, in destroying the arsenal of the Alexandrians, burnt a part of the Ptolemean library. At the end of that harbour, repulsed by his enemies, he threw himself

himself in full armour into the waves, and always master of himself, foreseeing that the crowd of fugitives must sink his ship, he swam to another, at a greater distance. This presence of mind saved him, for his vessel was swallowed up with every person who had taken refuge in it. There, Cleopatra, celebrated for her beauty, her talents, and her art, entangled him in her net, chained his unconquerable activity, and lulling him to rest in the bosom of voluptuousness, led him in her suite in a voyage on the Nile, when he should have set sail for Rome, whose gates might have been for ever shut against him in consequence of this complaisance. Near to those columns, sad remains of the gymnasium, the haughty queen of Egypt, seated on her golden throne, received in the presence of the universe, the title of spouse to Antony, who sacrificed to her all his glory. Having lost the opportunities of victory by a blind devotion to pleasure, she destroyed herself by the bite of a viper, and he fell upon his sword, holding out by their death a great example to posterity.

The

The Museum, the rubbish of which points out the spot where it stood, was the asylum of the sciences. Appian, Herodian, Euclid, Origen, Philo, and a crowd of other learned men, cultivated them at Alexandria. At present ignorance and barbarism have smothered the fine arts; a great revolution is necessary to restore them to life.

This letter, Sir, is very long: I will not add any observations on the manners, and commerce of the Alexandrians. Such details will come in their turn. I am impatient to quit a place where one lives in the midst of ruins; where every object inspires melancholy; where the inhabitants are a mixture of Moors and Turks, whose crimes have driven them from their country; where the Bedouin Arabs come to rob you in broad day; where nature, in short, dead for eleven months in the year, is decked with verdure for an instant, only to leave you a long regret.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T.

L E T T E R III.

The route from Alexandria to Rosetta, across the Desert, with a description of Aboukir, anciently Canopus ; of the famous Temple of Serapis ; of the festivals which were celebrated at this place ; of the dangers which occur in travelling over the sands ; and of the beautiful environs of Rosetta.

To Mr. L. M.

Rosetta.

TRAVELLERS, Sir, who go from Alexandria to Rosetta by land, leave the canal of Faouïé to the right, pass near the ruins of the great circus, and fall in on their left with the remains of Nicopolis. This suburb was embellished by Augustus after his victory over Antony. For two leagues there are nothing but heaps of rubbish, which cover the precious relics of antiquity. One then coasts along the beach of the sea. The view on one
side

sive extends over the waters, and on the other over a sandy country. Some date-trees scattered here and there, interrupt the melancholy uniformity of these parched plains. The Bedouin Arabs feed their flocks there in the winter; in the summer they collect the soda (*f*) in heaps, which they burn, and sell the ashes to the Alexandrians, who carry it into Syria, and the isle of Crete, where it is used in making soap. These wandering tribes, on the first rumour of a revolution in Egypt, mount their horses, infest the high-roads, and strip the travellers. At six leagues from Alexandria, one falls in with *the Madié* (*g*), where there is a ferry. It is the extremity of the Canopic branch. It begins at Faoûié, crosses the lake of *Behiré*, which is seven leagues round, and falls into the sea near to *Aboukir* (*h*). This small town is the

(*f*) The Soda, or *Kali*, is a creeper that grows in the sand, and produces a pure *alkali*.

(*g*) *Madié* in Arabic signifies the passage of a lake or river.

(*h*) This place is known amongst mariners, by the name of *Bekier*.

ancient

ancient Canopus; its distance of six leagues from the Pharos, its situation on the banks of the sea, agree perfectly with the description the ancients give us of Canopus. Pliny, who had collected the testimonies of antiquity, says, that it was formerly an island. Its local appearance makes this credible. The grounds around it are so low, that the sea still covered a part of them in the time of Strabo(*i*). The town, built upon a rock, which forms a handsome road for shipping, was out of the reach of inundations.

(*k*) Canopus received its name from the pilot of Menelaus, who died there; his tomb was still to be seen in the age in which St. Epiphanes wrote. The advantages of its situation, its temple of Serapis, the industry of its priests, rendered it one of the most famous pilgrimages of Egypt. The people flocked thither in crowds, from the

(*i*) Strabo, lib. 17.

(*k*) Strabo, lib. 17. Diodorus Siculus. St. Epiphanes, lib. 4. chap. 3. These testimonies confirm the opinion of Homer, who makes Menelaus land in Egypt. Odyssæy, lib. 4.

most distant provinces, and, above all, from Alexandria. Licentiousness presided at these feasts; the worshippers of the God were brought thither, more by pleasure than religion. The priests were no less consulted as physicians, than as interpreters of the oracle. Expert in restoring the relaxed organs of their patients, by perfumed baths, in repairing the worn out state of their stomachs, by a lenient diet, full of juice, and mixed with aromatics, in exciting their imagination by voluptuous descriptions, they succeeded in restoring sensations to those who had lost them. These cures, the honour of which they attributed to Serapis, were inserted in a register, which dazzled the eyes of the people, and supported their celebrity. Never had any divinity more worshippers; never did priests receive larger offerings (1).

Strabo

(1) Canopus has a temple consecrated to Serapis, where there is a peculiar worship for that God. The persons of the greatest honour put faith in it. The priests are occupied in writing the marvellous cures performed there. But what is most astonishing, is

Strabo assures us, that the canal which goes from Alexandria to Canopus, was filled night and day with boats full of pilgrims, whose songs and dances presented a picture of the most extravagant joy, and of the most unbounded licentiousness. At this day the canal is dry a part of the year, and the town in ruins, offers nothing to the eye but wretched habitations, and a castle with some pieces of cannon to defend the road.

After passing the ferry of *Madié*, the traveller finds a caravansary, the only asylum against the extreme heats of a burning sky, in a journey of fourteen leagues.

is the prodigious concourse of people, who collect there from all parts, at the feasts of Serapis, and who descend the canal of Alexandria. Night and day it is covered with boats, filled with men and women, who sing and dance with an extreme licentiousness. Strabo, lib. 17.

These pilgrimages, in use in the time of Herodotus, still exist in our days. The Pagans went to the temple of Serapis. The Turks go to the tomb of their fantons. The Coptis to the churches of their saints. The one and the other give themselves up to joy: and even the Turkish gravity has not been able to abolish songs and dances full of licentiousness, which seem to have taken rise with the Egyptians.

Beyond that is a barren plain, where the eye perceives neither tree, nor shrub, nor verdure. The sight is fatigued by a torrent of light ; the skin is burnt by the ardour of the sun. Eleven columns, placed at different distances, serve as a direction for the traveller across the desert, wherein the wind drives before it the hillocks of sand, like the waves of the ocean. Unfortunate he who is surprised by a whirlwind at noon, in the middle of that solitude ! If he has not a tent in which he can take shelter, he is attacked by torrents of burning dust, which, filling his eyes and his mouth, deprive him of respiration and of life. The most prudent method is, to make this journey by night ; at break of day the traveller discovers the palm-trees and the sycamores(*m*), which crown the banks

(*m*) The sycamore of Egypt produces a fig, that grows on the trunk of the tree, and not at the extremity of the branches. It is eatable, but rather dry. This tree becomes very thick and bushy ; it seldom grows straight ; in general it bends, and becomes crooked. Its branches, extending horizontally, and
very

banks of the Nile, and he arrives at Rosetta, bathed in sweat and dew.

When after a long abode, in the midst of ruins, and a very fatiguing journey, one finds one's self in a cheerful town, surrounded with groves and verdure, the soul expands, and one is more disposed to enjoy all the beauties of nature. Such is the situation of the traveller who has just quitted Alexandria to reside at Rosetta. Escaped from the horrors of the desert, he thinks himself transported into a new Eden, where every thing presents the image of abundance.

Rosetta, called *Raschid* by the Arabs, is situated on the ancient Bolbitine branch, to which it gives its name. It was founded in the eighth century (*n*). The heaps of sand

very far, afford a beautiful shade. Its leaf is divided, and its wood, which is impregnated with a bitter juice, is not liable to be worm-eaten. The sycamore lives many ages.

(*n*) Father Sicard, Pocock, Nieburh, and the other travellers have not settled the period of the foundation of Rosetta. *Elmacin*, p. 152, tells us that it was built during the reign of *Elmetouakkel*, Caliph of

sand which the Nile is continually accumulating, no longer permitting vessels to reach as far as Faoüé. This town was built at the mouth of the river, but it is already two leagues from it. Abulfeda tells us that it was very inconsiderable in the thirteenth century (o). Two hundred years after it was not much encreased. But when the Ottomans added Egypt to their conquests, they neglected the support of the canals. That of Faoüé ceasing to be navigable, Rosetta became the emporium of the merchandize of Alexandria and Cairo. Commerce soon made it flourish, and it is at this day one of the handsomest

Bagdad, towards the year 870 of our æra, and under the pontificate of Cosma, patriarch of the Jacobites at Alexandria. Mr. Maillet does not date its foundation above one hundred years back, and thinks it has replaced Canopus, which is an error. Prosper Alpinus has committed the same fault.

(o) *Raschid balidé ala garbi el Nil el garbi and mesabbo fil bahr.* Rosetta is a small town on the western bank of the Nile, near its mouth. Belon, who travelled in Egypt in 1530, says, that Rosetta was much smaller than Faoüé. Rosetta is at present much larger than that town.

towns

towns in Egypt. It extends along the western bank of the Nile, and is above a league in length, by a quarter of a league in breadth. There is no remarkable place in it, nor any one street quite regular, but all the houses built with terraces, well disposed, and well kept, have an air of cleanliness and elegance, which is very pleasing. Within them are vast apartments, where there is a continual supply of fresh air, from a great number of windows always open. The blinds and transparent linen, that they stretch over them, keep out the rays of the sun, afford a moderate light, and temper the excessive heats. The only public buildings worthy of notice, are the Mosques, with their lofty minarets, of a very light architecture, and constructed with much boldness. They produce a very picturesque effect in a town, where all the roofs are flat, and throw great variety into the picture. The houses in general have a view of the Nile, and of the Delta, which form a most magnificent spectacle. The river is always covered with vessels, mounting

and descending with oars or under sail. The tumult of the harbour, the joy of the mariners, their noisy music, exhibit a moving and animated scene. The Delta, that immense garden, where the earth is never wearied of production, furnishes the whole year, a succession of harvests, of vegetables, of flowers, and of fruits. This abundant variety satisfies, at once, the heart and the eye. It produces various species of cucumbers, and delicious melons. The fig, the orange, the banana, the pomegranate, are there of the most exquisite flavour. How much cultivation would still add to their excellence, if the Egyptians understood the art of engrafting.

To the north of the town are gardens, where lemon and orange-trees, date-trees, and sycamores are planted at random. This disorder is not graceful, but the mixture of these trees, their foliage, which affords an arch impenetrable to the rays of the sun, with the flowers spontaneously dispersed throughout these groves, render the shade of them delightful.

When

When the whole atmosphere is on fire, when the perspiration is bursting from every pore, when man, panting from the excessive heat, sighs after coolness as eagerly as the sick after health, with what joy does he not go to breathe under these charming bowers, by the side of the rivulet that waters them ! It is there that the Turk, holding in his hands a long pipe of jasmin adorned with amber, thinks himself already transported into the garden of delights promised him by Mahomet. Cold, indifferent, almost void of reflection, he smokes a whole day without weariness. Living without desire, and without ambition, he never casts a curious look towards futurity. That activity which torments us, that activity, the soul of all our talents, is a stranger to him. Content with what he possesses, he neither invents nor brings any thing to perfection ; his life appears to us a long sleep ; and ours seems to him a continual state of intoxication : but whilst we are running after that happiness which eludes us, he enjoys peaceably the blessings offered him by nature, and which every day

day presents to him, without troubling himself about to-morrow.

It is in these gardens, that young Georgian girls, sold into slavery by their inhuman parents, lay aside with the veil that covers them, that decency they observe in public. Free from all restraint, they there perform lascivious dances, sing tender airs, and recite romances, which display the natural picture of their manners and their pleasures. Born in a temperate climate, they have received from nature a soul full of energy, and adapted to the tumultuous passions; transported into Egypt, the fire of the atmosphere, the perfume of the orange-flower, the emanations of the aromatic plants convey voluptuousness into all their senses; it is then that their whole attention is devoted to one object; one only desire torments them, one only want makes itself most powerfully to be felt; and the constraint of their situation adds violence to their passion.

Commerce constitutes the principal wealth of the inhabitants of Rosetta. The importation of foreign merchandize to Cairo, and

and of the productions of Egypt into the port of Alexandria, employs a great number of mariners. They make use of *Scherms* (*p*), light boats, with a lateen sail, which, being without decks, are very dangerous. A sudden gust of wind throws them on their side, and sinks them. The *Bogaz* (*q*), so they call the bar at the mouth of the Nile, is to them a formidable shoal. The waters of the river combat with the sea to find a passage. When the wind freshens, the waves there run mountain-high, and form whirlpools, which swallow up vessels. The bogaz is very shallow, and in the space of a league, there is usually only one passage of a few toises breadth, where ships can pass. This passage is continually shifting. Night and day a boatman is sounding with the lead in his hand, to point out to navigators the course they must pursue; but

(*p*) *Scherm* signifies the velocity with which the boats cut the water. The sailors of Provence (in France, who are the principal European navigators to this country) have corrupted this word, and call it *germ*.

(*q*) The word *Bogaz* expresses the agitation of the waves.

frequently

frequently all their skill is unable to master the wind and waves ; they miss the passage, strike on the sand, and in a few minutes, all is overwhelmed in a whirlpool of mud and water. Every year is marked by a great number of shipwrecks. Several have happened since I have been in this country. It was but yesterday that a vessel richly laden perished on the bogaz. The passengers threw themselves into the water. An old man, worn down with years, holding by the mast, disappeared with it. Three young girls were swallowed up, after struggling a long time against the waves and the current. Two robust mariners got to land. A woman of thirty years of age, who, with her girdle, had fastened a child she was suckling, swam with vigour ; the desire of saving her son sustained her courage. After an hour's resistance against the violence of the waves, this tender mother was on the point of perishing, a victim to her maternal love. The boatmen perceiving her, plunged into the Nile, and flew to her succour. Spent with fatigue, she was scarcely able to support

port herself. They swam to her side, raised her up, and brought her safely to the shore. These melancholy scenes are frequent. The bar of the Nile is totally shut during two months of the year, and the commerce of Alexandria is interrupted. But should it become altogether impracticable; should all the ships in Egypt perish, the Ottoman government would not remove one inch of ground of the canal of Faouïé, to render it navigable. It suffers every thing to go to ruin, and repairs nothing.

I have much more to say to you on the subject of Rosetta; but as I intend to prolong my stay in that town, I shall wait until observation, and the society of the inhabitants enable me to transmit you fresh details.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LET-

LETTER IV.

An account of Rosetta, its origin, commerce, inhabitants, and gardens; and of the procession of the Psilli, or the eaters of serpents.

To Mr. L. M.

Rosetta.

ROSETTA, Sir, is a curious place of residence for an European. A thousand new objects strike his eye. He thinks himself transported into another world. The human race, the productions of nature, every thing is different. A profound silence reigns in the town, uninterrupted by the noise of any carriage. Camels supply their place. The inhabitants march deliberately along, without suffering any thing to discompose their gravity. Long robes hang down to their heels. Their heads are covered with heavy turbans, or bound round with a shawl (*r*). They cut their hair, and let their beards grow.

(*r*) The *schale* or shawl, is a long piece of stuff made of silk or wool, which they wrap round the head.

The

The girdle is made use of by both sexes. The citizen is armed with a knife, the soldier with a sabre, and a pair of pistols. The women of the lower class, whose dress consists of a large blue shift, and a long pair of drawers, have their faces covered with a piece of linen, with holes opposite to the eyes. The rich wear a large white veil, with a cloak of black silk, that wraps up their whole body. One would imagine they were in domino. A stranger dares hardly look at them; it would be a crime to speak to them. But these masks are not scrupulous in making signs, nor in ogling. As this is the only language which can be spoken in public, it is more expressive, carried to greater lengths, and brought to more perfection here than in Europe. Every thing is said, and wonderfully well understood, without opening the lips.

The country round it is as different from the environs of Paris, as Rosetta is from a town in France. An immense surface, without a mountain or hill, intersected by innumerable canals, is covered with harvests

vests; tufted sycamores, whose unperishable wood protects the labourer's earthen cottage, into which he retires during the winter, for in summer he sleeps under the shade; date-trees collected in groves, or scattered over the plain, crowned at top with enormous clusters of a sweet and wholesome fruit. Cassia-trees, whose bending branches are decked out with yellow flowers, and bear a pod (*s*), well known in medicine; orange and lemon trees, that have never been mutilated with the scissars, and which, extending their perfumed boughs, form vaulted roofs impenetrable to the rays of the sun. These are the principal trees to be met with in the Delta. Winter never strips them of their leaves. They are decorated the whole year, as well as in the first days of spring.

The soil is a black mud, the fertility of which appears to be inexhaustible. It is con-

(*s*) This filiqua or pod, resembles a small long cucumber. It is the cassia made use of in medicine. The cassia of Egypt is much preferable to that of America; but as it is dearer, the druggists neglect it. The Egyptians use the flower of the cassia-tree as a laxative.

tinually

tinually productive without ever lying fallow. They are just preparing some rice-fields: Oxen with bandages before their eyes, turn draw-wheels, which empty the water into a basin from whence it spreads over the fields, which are suffered to remain a week overflowed. When the ground has thoroughly imbibed it, men, women, and children, all naked up to their waists, go into the mud, wherein they sink very deep, and easily take up all the roots of the plants. This labour finished, they pluck the rice (*t*) of a foot high, and transplant it into the rice-field. Covered with water every day, it grows with an astonishing rapidity. At the end of July the lands lying on the banks of the Nile, and on the borders of the canals are planted with it. It is cut in November, and the sheaves spread on the ground. A man seated on a low cart, drawn by two oxen, and which has sharp wheels, drives over the straw, and cuts it into pieces. It is then winnowed, separated from the grain, and carried

(*t*) This word comes from the Arabic *roux*.

into barns where they make use of a mill to take off the husk. Thus prepared, it is mixed with salt, and shut up in *couffes* (*u*), made of the leaves of the date-trees.

The rice in the neighbourhood of Rosetta is called *Sultani*. It is a mistake to imagine that some of it is brought to Marseilles. Destined for the supply of Constantinople, its exportation into foreign countries is most rigorously prohibited. It is at Damietta that the people of Provence go to seek their cargoes.

As soon as the rice is cut, the planters tear up the stubble, give a slight tillage to the earth, and sow barley, which very soon ripens. They who prefer hay, overflow the field immediately after the rice crop, and sow it with lucerne (*x*). It springs up with such rapidity, that at the end of twenty days, it is a foot and a half high, and grows so thick, that its surface appears one solid mass of verdure. They mow it

(*u*) The word *couffe* is Arabic. It signifies the oval baskets made of the date-leaves, wherein the rice is kept.

(*x*) The Arabs call it *Barfim*; there is no other kind of hay in Egypt.

three times before the season proper for transplanting the rice, so that the same field in the course of twelve months, furnishes two harvests, one of rice, the other of barley, or four crops, one of rice, and three of hay. This abundance is no where but in the Delta, where the grounds, lower than in the Thebais, admit of being watered the whole year, by the means of canals and wheels, which raise the water.

The town of Rosetta has linen manufactories. The flax of the country, which is long, soft, and silky, would make very beautiful linen, if they knew how to employ it; but the spinsters are very inexpert, the thread they make at the spindle is clumsy, hard, and uneven. The linens they bleach serve for the table, the rest, dyed blue, are employed for the clothing of the people.

In my excursions in the environs of Rosetta, I went to see the castle built by the Mamelukes, to defend the entrance of the river; it is a square building, flanked with four towers, lined with cannon. It is situated a league to the northward of the town, on the western bank of

the river. A platform furnished with artillery, is opposite to it. These two forts altho' very inconsiderable, would be sufficient to stop vessels from entering, did the Turks know how to make use of cannon; but they have here no occasion for it. Nature has taken care to defend the mouth of the Nile, by raising a dangerous bar, the terror of navigators. It would be impossible even for gun-boats, to pass it, if the boatman of the *Bogaz* were not to point out the course.

To the southward of the town, on the bank of the Nile is a small eminence, from the middle of which rises an ancient tower half buried by time. A large semicircular bason, at the foot of it, announces a port which has been choked up by the sand. A Turkish merchant having made them dig a few years ago at the bottom of this hillock, found twenty beautiful marble pillars. This discovery was his ruin. The Beys imagined that he had carried off a treasure from it, and stripped him of his fortune (*y*).
The

(*y*) Messieurs Nieburh, Shaw, Pocock, Father Sicard, take no notice of it. Mr. Maillet, who was
a mi-

The learned who have visited Egypt, have not endeavoured to discover what town formerly stood here. Mr. Danville suspects that the ancient Bolbitina must have been at a very small distance from the spot on which Rosetta now stands. He is not deceived; for the ruins I describe are at the extremity of the town, and can only belong to the Bolbitina, which Stephen of Byzantium speaks of, and which gives its name to one of the branches of the Nile.

This place is very picturesque; the tower falling into ruins, is surrounded by tombs. To the westward is a desert plain, whose burning extent the eye cannot look over without horror. The infinite number of rays reflected from the sands, injures the sight, and the picture of sterility inspires the mind with gloom. But on turning to the east, what a striking contrast! what a

a minute observer, has remarked that there had been an ancient town at this place, and thought it was Canopus. But the situation of Canopus is so perfectly described by Strabo, Pliny, Diodorus Siculus, &c. that it is impossible not to discover that *Aboukir* occupies its place.

delightful landscape ! It is a majestic river covered with boats ; it is the Delta, where the graces of the spring, the beauty of the summer, the rich luxuriance of the autumn are most profusely united. As far as the eye can carry you, you have verdure, fruits, and harvests. Is not this the image of that Eden, where the Creator placed the first inhabitants of the world ?

You are acquainted, Sir, with the Pfylli of antiquity, those celebrated eaters of serpents, who amused themselves with the bite of vipers, and the credulity of the people. Cyrene, a town situated to the west of Alexandria, formerly a dependency of Egypt, reckoned a great many of these people amongst its inhabitants. You know that the unworthy Octavius, who wished to gratify his vanity by chaining Cleopatra to his triumphal car, vexed at seeing that haughty female escape from him by death, made one of the Pfylli suck the wound made by the asp which bit her. The attempt was fruitless ; the poison had already corrupted the mass of blood. She was not restored to life. Will you believe it, Sir,

Sir, these very eaters of serpents still exist in our days. A fact to which I was a witness will convince you of it.

Last week was celebrated the feast of *Sidi Ibrahim* (z), which drew a vast concourse of people to Rosetta. A Turk permitted me to come to his house to see the procession. Seated at the window, I observed attentively this new spectacle. The different bodies of artizans gravely marched along under their respective banners. The standard of Mahomet, which was carried in triumph, attracted a vast crowd. Every body was desirous of touching, of kissing it, of putting it to his eyes. Such as were fortunate enough to partake of that favour, returned contented. The tumult was incessantly renewed. At length came the Cheiks (the priests of the country) wearing long caps of leather, in the form of a mitre. They marched with solemn steps, chaunting the Coran. A few paces behind them, I perceived a band of madmen, with their arms

(z) *The Lord Abraham*. The Arabs descended from Abraham by Ishmaël, hold him in great veneration, and celebrate a feast annually in honour of him.

bare, and a wild look, holding in their hands enormous serpents, which were twisted round their bodies, and were endeavouring to make their escape (a). These Pfylli, griping them forcibly by the neck, avoided their bite, and notwithstanding their hissing, tore them with their teeth, and ate them up alive, the blood streaming down from their polluted mouths. Others of the Pfylli were striving to tear from them their prey; it was a struggle who should devour a serpent.

The populace followed them with amazement, and believed it to be a miracle. They pass for persons inspired, and possessed by a spirit who destroys the effect of the bite of the serpent. This description, which I give you after nature, at first frightened me, and then made me reflect on man, that strange being, for whom poison becomes food; that credulous being, whose eyes are not opened by the spectacle re-

(a) The Pfylli, who inhabited Cyrene and its neighbourhood, had a secret antidote against the bite of serpents. *Strabo, lib. 17.* It was perhaps by eating their flesh that they destroyed the effect of their bite.

newed every year ; and who in the blindness of his ignorance, is ready to worship as a God, his fellow creature who has the art to impose on his understanding. You see, Sir, those ancient usages are not lost in a country where custom, that imperious tyrant of the world, has peculiarly established her throne, and her altars.

I have the honour to be, &c,

LET-

LETTER V.

Journey from Rosetta to Boulac. Observations on the manner of navigating the Nile; the canals which are detached from it; the towns, villages, and hamlets on their banks; the cultivation of the lands, their productions, and the customs of the inhabitants.

To Mr. L. M.

Rosetta, the October, 1 1777.

HERE we are, Sir, on board a *mach*. It is a large boat with two masts, which has a handsome chamber, and a cabinet hung with matting curiously worked. A tent raised on the deck, forms a shelter from the heat of the sun. It is from this Belvidere, that I shall describe to you the objects that strike me. It is now one o'clock; we weigh anchor; the sail is filled; the north wind, which blows almost constantly at this season, carries us up the
river

river very easily against the current. We advance rapidly, and the waves foam under the bow of our little vessel. Already the lofty minarets of Rosetta disappear in the clouds. Charming prospects claim our attention every instant. The banks of the Nile are lined with reeds. The plain is covered with harvests. The rice is nearly at maturity, and the wind agitating the surface, makes it resemble the waves of the sea. The peasant, occupied in directing the watering necessary for his fields, opens or shuts his dykes at pleasure. The ox turns the noisy wheel which raises up the water. Along the plain, different hamlets, composed of earthen huts, present themselves to view, some houses built with bricks dried in the sun, and a small mosque, whose minaret is lost amongst the tops of the trees. Surrounded by orange and palm-trees, and sycamores, they seem to spring out of the verdure. We have passed several villages, and an island, whose summit is crowned with water-melons, of which we have laid in our stock. It is impossible to be surfeited with them.

them. Nourished in a fruitful soil, ripened by a burning sun, the pulp dissolves in the mouth, and furnishes a sugary water, which is delicious in this hot country. But what renders them infinitely more valuable, is, that they are very wholesome, and may be eaten to excess without any inconvenience. This island is between the villages of *Berimbal*, and *Mehallet el Emir*.

Before we arrived at *Deïrout*, a handsome town on the western bank of the Nile, we saw the mouth of a canal, that probably discharges itself into the lake of Behire, by which there was a communication with Canopus. The sun is now on the decline. He gilds with his departing rays the top of the minarets of *Faoüé*, which we perceive in the shade. We shall pass the night before that town.

From on board, the 2d October.

Faoüé, Sir, is greatly fallen from its former consequence. When Belon (*b*) travelled

(*b*) Belon, as I have already said, travelled in Egypt in the fifteenth century, about fifteen years after

travelled in Egypt, this was the largest town in the country after Cairo. The Venetians had a consul there. The merchandize was transported up the canal which conveys the water to Alexandria. Since it is no longer navigable, Rosetta has become a flourishing place, and Faouë, with its commerce, has lost the source of its riches. I have run through it with the Janissary who accompanies me. Large buildings falling into ruins; squares filled with rubbish; brick houses badly taken care of; some mosques without ornaments; an impoverished people, and few in number; such are the sad remains of the celebrated city of the Milesians (*c*). In the neighbourhood of Canopus, she has preserved a tint of her corrupted manners. The inhabitants permit the women of pleasure

after the Ottoman conquest. This valuable naturalist visited a great part of the eastern world, and brought to France several new plants. It is to him we are indebted for the ever-green oak, which preserves a faint image of the spring during the winter.

(*c*) I have said in my first letter, that the Milesians built the town which now bears the name of Faouë.

publicly

publicly to occupy a kan, and shut their eyes to the disorders they commit. They attack the passengers, and perform in their presence, the songs and dances customary in that country. Nothing can be more libertine than their songs; nothing more lascivious than their looks and gestures. In the environs of this town was Naucrates, founded also by the Milesians.

From on board, the 3d October.

The northerly wind, always favourable to our wishes, has hastened the dawn; the sailors have spread the sail. We overcome with ease the rapidity of the current. We have passed several low islands almost under water, and some hamlets, that we perceive through clumps of verdure. We are five miles from Faoué, opposite the mouth of the canal formed by Alexander, and which the negligence of the Turks has suffered to be partly choked up. Following its course, at four leagues within the country is the small town of *Damanhour*, inhabited by Copti and Mahometans. It is the *Hermopolis parva* of Ptolemy. Strabo places

places it on the river, but by that must be understood the canal of Alexandria. Abulfeda has marked its situation well (*d*). The neighbouring country produces a great deal of flax, corn, barley, and cotton, which is an annual plant.

As we advance, we perceive a multitude of boats going up the river under sail; others that go down, and drive with the stream. The mariners amuse themselves with their rough and noisy music. They mix their hoarse voices with the sound of the tambour de basque, and of the wild flute made of reeds. These concerts do not charm the ear; but the joy they inspire,

(*d*) *Damanhour* is a town of Egypt, situated to the south-east of Alexandria, near to the canal that conveys the water there. It is the capital of the *Behiré*. It is called *Damanhour* from the desert. *Oua men balad masr Damanhour*. *Oua hie fi-l-chark, oua-l-genoub*. *Oua hie caadat elbehiré*. *Oua leha Kalig Elefscanderié*. *Oua taaref Damanhour el ouaehech*.

Abulfeda. Description of Egypt.

It is so called to distinguish it from two towns of the same name, and because it is not far from the desert, where are the lakes of *Natroun*.

reaches

reaches the soul of those who hear them. Drove of oxen low in the meadows. The peasants, dispersed over the plain, are watering their crops. The girls descend from their villages to wash their linen, and draw water. They are all at their toilet. Their pitchers, and their clothes are on the bank. They rub their bodies with the mud of the Nile, plunge into the river, and sport amongst the waves. Several of them are now swimming around our boat, crying out *ia sidi at maïdi*, Seignior, give us a medin (*e*). They swim with a great deal of grace. Their hair flows in tresses on their shoulders. Their skin is very brown and swarthy, but they are in general well made. The facility with which they bear up against the rapidity of the current, proves what strength and suppleness the most delicate persons may acquire by exercise. (*f*). So after washing her garments, was the beautiful Nausicaa, bathing

(*e*) The medin is a small piece of copper coin silvered over, which is worth six liards of France, or three farthings English.

(*f*) Odyssæy, book the 6th.

herself with her companions, when Ulysses appeared quite naked before them(*g*). The wind freshens ; our bark cuts the water with rapidity. The course of the Nile is very crooked, and every elbow presents us a fresh landscape. Here appears a village which loses itself in the horizon ; there stands a large burgh with its mosque near

(*g*) Ulysses was shipwrecked on the coast of the Pheacians. Overcome with fatigue, he had fallen asleep amongst the bushes, on a bed of leaves. Nausicaa had come with her companions to wash their garments on the bank of the river. After bathing, they amused themselves with throwing stones. One of them falling near Ulysses, awakened him. He went towards the place from whence he heard the cries. At the sight of a man who had nothing to cover his nakedness but the bough of a tree, all the slaves ran away. The daughter of Alcinous alone remained. She listened with dignity to the tale of the unhappy stranger, comforted him, called her followers, and commanded them to wash him, and clothe him with a tunic and a cloke. The poet has painted with wonderful art in Nausicaa, the nobleness of a person of high rank, who does not fly at the sight of a man without clothing, from a certain confidence in her own virtue, and from the reflection, that he is possibly an unfortunate person, whom she may have it in her power to relieve.

to a wood of orange-trees. On every side we discover pigeon-houses of a pyramidal form, where innumerable flights of pigeons are collected. Fed in these fertile plains, their flesh is fat and of a delicious flavour; they only cost three medins, (or two-pence farthing English) the couple. The Egyptians manure with their dung the grounds wherein they plant their water-melons. Night approaches. The Nile is filled with pirates, who attack the boats under cover of the darkness, cut off the heads of the passengers who are off their guard, and rob them of their effects. We have cast anchor near a little hamlet. The captain has collected his crew, and is very gravely recounting to them many wonderful tales. His audience sitting round, is listening to him with the greatest attention.

From on board, the 4th October.

We have passed the night between a little island and the mouth of the canal of Menouf. This canal comes out of the branch of Damietta, and runs into that of Rosetta,

Rosetta, intersecting the Delta in an oblique direction. It is fifteen leagues long, very wide, and is navigable for boats three months of the year. At four leagues from its mouth is the pleasant town of Menouf (*b*), the capital of the province of that name, and the residence of a Bey. It is situated in the midst of rich fields sown with corn, beans, *bamier* (*i*), and *dourra* (*k*), and shaded by groves of tamarind and date-trees, inhabited by vast numbers of turtle-doves, which, never hearing

(*b*) The Delta is divided into two provinces, in which two Beys reside. Menouf is the capital of the upper, and *Mehallé el Kebire* of the lower province. The former is called *Menoufié*, the latter *Garbié*.

(*i*) The *bamier* is a plant which produces a pyramidal husk, with several compartments, of the colour of a lemon, and filled with musky seeds. This husk dressed with meat is a wholesome food, and has a very agreeable flavour. The Egyptians make great use of it in their ragouts.

(*k*) The *dourra*, or millet of India, is a lofty plant, with the leaf of a reed. It bears a membrane, which contains a number of seeds, of which the peasants make their bread. Tournefort calls it *milium arundinaceum plano alboque semine*. Linnæus, *holcus doraglumis villosis seminibus compressis aristatis*.

the terrifying noise of powder, are as tame as domestic pigeons.

From sun-rise the north wind had filled our sails. We pass between islands on which the grass is very high, and where they are driving the buffaloes to pasture. A shepherd seated on the neck of the foremost of the drove, descends into the river, smacks his whip, and leads the way. The whole drove follow in a row, lowing as they swim along to their pasture, and discharging out the water from their wide nostrils. These animals live in the Nile during the heats; they plunge up to the shoulders, and feed on tender grass that grows along the banks.

Behind a wood of date-trees and sycamores, which terminates our prospect to the southward, arise the lofty minarets of *Terrané*. This small town, situated on the western bank of the Nile, is only eight leagues from the monastery of St. Macaire. The *natroun*, which the Egyptians make great use of, is brought thither from two lakes. A few miles higher, is the little harbour of Ouar-dan

dan (*l*), under the shade of the palm-trees, where Father Sicard burnt heaps of ancient manuscripts which were shut up in a pigeon-house, under pretence that they were books of magic. Thus does blind fanaticism destroy, in a moment, the treasures of whole ages! The sun has run half his course; we have left Ouardan on our right; if the wind holds we shall be this evening at *Boulac*.

Before all the villages we pass, the children of both sexes are exercising themselves in swimming. They cover their bodies with mud, plunge into the water, return to the bank, and again throw themselves into it. Swimming is a pleasure

(*l*) The following is the passage of Father Sicard: "I had intelligence that there was in that village a pigeon-house filled with papers, full of magic characters, which had been purchased of some religious Copti and schismatics. Without meeting with any resistance, I made such use of them as was my duty, and I fixed up in their place a crucifix of Jerusalem, which the Copti revere with a great deal of devotion." *Lettres Edifiantes*, p. 53. It appears that he burnt, on the spot, these manuscripts filled with hieroglyphic characters.

which necessity has made a law for them. All Egypt in fact is intersected by wide and deep canals, which are full of water in the time of the inundation. It is often necessary to cross several of these, to go from one village to another. On these occasions men and women throw off their shirts and drawers, and, making a diadem of them round their heads, swim over the river. But what would surprise an European, is to see the Egyptian women, who, under these circumstances, preserve only a small piece of linen to cover themselves, put it on their *faces*. A Turk would find no difficulty in explaining this phenomenon.

We are arrived at the point of the Delta. It is here that the Nile divides itself into two branches, and is two miles wide at this place, called by the Arabs *batn el bakara*, the belly of the cow. We now have the first sight of the tops of the two large pyramids, which are at eight leagues distance from us. The setting sun tips them with his departing rays. They resemble summits of two mountains that lose themselves in the clouds. All hail to the two
most

most ancient monuments of the industry of man! The very sight of them inspires a religious awe. How many generations have disappeared from the face of the globe, since these enormous masses have rested on the foot of the mountain they are built on! Night has covered them with his shade. Our sailors, now near the end of their voyage, make the air resound with their shouts of joy. The lanthorn is just lighted, which is to prevent us from being run against, and perhaps sunk, by the prodigious number of boats which mount and descend the river. They have all got fires in them, and we are sailing in the midst of an illumination, the appearances of which vary every instant. It is eleven o'clock at night. We are casting anchor before *Boulac*, the port of Grand Cairo.

L E T T E R VI.

Description of Grand Cairo, the capital of Egypt. Researches concerning its origin, according to the authority of the most eminent Arabian writers.

To Mr. L. M.

FOR these nine months past, Sir, I have been an inhabitant of Grand Cairo, that immense city, where the Europeans crawl in the dust, and where the name of Frank (*m*) is a reproach. The fanaticism of the Mahometan religion reigns here triumphant. It is here that the Mussulman, eat up with ignorance, thinks himself the most sublime being in the universe, and attributes to himself with a secret complacency, the words contained in the

(*m*) The most abusive term the Egyptians can bestow on any person is to call him *Frank*; which is the general denomination of all the Europeans amongst them.

note.

note (n). This oracle, which is believed by every one of them, nourishes their pride. They consequently trample under feet all those who have not their faith. To avoid insults from the populace, and to fulfil the intention of my voyage, I have assumed the Turkish dress and manner. My skin, burnt by the sun, is become Egyptian. A shawl covers my head and conceals my hair. My cheeks are shaded by long whiskers. Thanks to this metamorphosis, and to the custom I have of speaking Arabic. I walk about the town, I run over its environs, and I live with this strange people. Curiosity very often leads me farther than is justified by prudence; but the voice of reason is weak, when a commanding passion has the sway. It is to this desire of seeing every thing, that you will be indebted for the

(n) *You are the most excellent people in the universe. You enjoin equity, you forbid crimes, you believe in God, &c. The Coran, (translated by the author) vol. 1st, page 66; and this other verse:*

Certainly the Christians, the infidel Jews, and the idolaters, are the most perverse of men, but the believers who practise virtue, are the most perfect work of heaven. Coran, vol. 2. page 246.

details

details I shall give you, which will have at least the merit of *truth* to recommend them.

Grand Cairo is a modern town. The oriental historians establish this fact so clearly, as to leave no room for doubt. I will give you their own words; for when one wishes to treat a particular point of their history, themselves can only furnish such information as may be relied on.

“(o) In the year 358 of the Hegyra,
 “ Jauhar, general of Moaz, sprung from
 “ the princes of the Kirouan, came into
 “ Egypt at the head of a formidable army,
 “ and took it from the Abassides (p).
 “ Thenceforward the prayer was in the

(o) *Elmacin*, page 222.

(p) The caliphs of Bagdad sleeping on their thrones, were gradually stripped of their vast dominions, by the governors, and nothing remained to them of that power which had threatened the whole world, but a pompous title, and the barren prerogative of being the first named in the prayers of all the mosques. The conquest of Moaz deprived them even of this honour, which was not restored to them till 207 years after, when *Salla Eddin*, of the family of the Aioubites, became master of Egypt.

“ name

“ name of the Fatimites (*q*). The con-
 “ queror being in want of a place to esta-
 “ blish his soldiers, laid the foundation of
 “ *Elkahera* (*r*) built a palace there to lodge
 “ the emperor, and made the great men
 “ and the soldiers inhabit the new town.
 “ Four years after Moaz quitted his do-
 “ minions in Barbary, and came to enjoy
 “ his conquest. That year the building
 “ of Grand Cairo was finished, and the
 “ empire of the Fatimites established.
 “ Moaz, in an injunction he gives his
 “ son, makes use of these words; The
 “ instant of the foundation of their town
 “ was marked by the ascension of Mars (*s*),

(*q*) The Fatimite caliphs derived their origin from
 Ali who espoused Fatima, the daughter of Mahomet.
 In the year 296 of the Hegira, they founded a kingdom
 on the coast of Africa, and reigned there till the year
 567.

(*r*) The town called by the Europeans Grand
 Cairo.

(*s*) The ditches were dug which were to surround
 the town, the materials were prepared to fill them, the
 astronomers observed with their instruments, the pas-
 sage of Mars over the meridian; a signal announced
 that moment, and the foundation of *Elkahera* was laid
 amidst shouts of joy.

of

“ of that Mars who subdues the universe.
 “ It is on account of this horoscope that I
 “ have given it the name of *Elkahera* (*t*)”
 (the Victorious).

The foundation of Grand Cairo having been the subject of error and dispute amongst the learned, and amongst travellers (*u*), permit me, Sir, to add to the testimony of Elmacin, the description of Abulfeda (*x*).
 This

(*t*) The word *elkaher* is the name of the planet Mars, and signifies at the same time victorious.

(*u*) Prosper Alpinus says, that Grand Cairo is the Memphis of the ancients. *Voyage d’Egypte*, page 17. Father Sicard pretends that Grand Cairo was built by *Ebn el Aas*, Omar’s lieutenant. *Lettres edifiantes*, page 466. The passages I quote are sufficient to refute those European writers, whose opinion, destitute of proofs, contradicts all the monuments of oriental history.

(*x*) “ Oua ala janeb el Fostat men chamaliha, me-
 “ dinet elkahera, ahedsha elkolfa elfatemioun. Ella-
 “ zin Zaharou Belgarb, tom melekou el masr; oua
 “ kan aoual men melek menhom bemafr Moazebn
 “ Elmanfor Oua akhtat elkahera fi séné
 “ tessaa oua khamfin, oua talat maïat; oua canet el-
 “ kahera bistanlebe tailoun, ala elcarb men medinet
 “ melkhom elmaroufé belcataïah; oua samet elkahera
 “ l’eltesfaoual ai ickhor men khalef amrha; oua elka-
 “ hera

This writer, celebrated both as a geographer and historian, gives many interesting particulars, which are no-where else to be met with.

“ On the side of Fostat (*y*), towards the
 “ north, is the town of *Elkabera*, which was
 “ founded by the Fatimite caliphs. These
 “ princes who had founded an empire on
 “ the coast of Barbary, made themselves
 “ masters of Egypt. The first conqueror,
 “ and who reigned there, was *Moaz*, son
 “ of *Elmansor* He laid the founda-
 “ tion of Cairo in the year 359 of the He-
 “ gira The spot he built it on,
 “ was a garden belonging to the son of
 “ *Toulon* (*z*), and which was near the
 “ royal

“ *hera leift ala chatt el Nil, belfi charkio; oua el Fostat*
 “ *ala hafat el Nil; oua hie mahatt, ou aellaa lelmara-*
 “ *keb, oua besabab Zalek far el Fostat actar rezca,*
 “ *oua arkas asaaara men el kahera.”* *Abulfeda, De-*
 “ *scription of Egypt.*

(*y*) Fostat is the town we improperly call old Cairo.

(*z*) *Toulon*, a celebrated governor of Egypt, revolted against *Abou Elabbas*, son of *Elmetouakkel*, the 15th Abassid Caliph, in the year 264 of the Hegira, and made himself master of the country. His children on-

ly

“ royal quarter of *Cataïah* (a), where he
 “ fixed his residence. The new town was
 “ called *Elkabera* (the victorious), as a pre-
 “ sage of future triumphs over its enemies.
 “ It is not, like Fostat, situated on the Nile,
 “ but a little to the east of the river. The
 “ situation of the latter is more favour-
 “ able therefore for commerce. Boats come
 “ there from all parts of Egypt, and every
 “ article of living is very cheap.”

The situation of Grand Cairo, as Abul-
 feda informs us, and as experience has
 convinced me every day, is not so advan-
 tageous as that of Fostat. Its distance
 from the Nile is not its only disadvantage.
 The barren chain of the Mokattam sur-
 rounds it to the eastward. This mountain,

ly reigned there till the year 292. Subdued by
Mohammed, general of *Moctefi Bellah*, the 17th
 Abassid Caliph, they were conveyed to Bagdad.
Elmacin.

(a) *Toulon* built to the north of Fostat, a suburb, so
 considerable as to obtain the name of the royal town
 of *Cataïah*. This suburb, which at present forms part
 of Grand Cairo, still contains the magnificent mosque
 built there by that prince, and the palace he inhabited,
 known at this day by the name of *Calaa el-kabech*.

totally

totally without verdure, presents nothing to the eye but a dry sand, and stones calcined by the sun (*b*). When the northerly wind does not blow, it reflects a suffocating heat upon the town. One breathes a fiery air, and coolness is no where to be found before the night. For a long time therefore, there was nothing but gardens, country-houses, and barracks for the troops. It owed its sudden encrease to an event I shall relate with pleasure, because it is connected with our history. “ The French, “ under king Lusignan, had extended their “ conquests in Syria, and carried their victorious arms even into Egypt. In the “ year 564, of the Hegira, they took *Bel-*

(*b*) “ *Oua fi féné arba oua settin oua khamfé maïat*
 “ *elfrangi melekou belbes, oua nahabouha, oua cata-*
 “ *lou ahelha, oua esrouhom ; tom farou men belbes*
 “ *oua nazelou ala elkahera oua haserouha. Fehara-*
 “ *Schaouar medinet masr raufan men en eimlekha el-*
 “ *frangi ; fe baquait elnar tehrokha arbaat oua kham-*
 “ *sin ioum ; oua sanéh schaouar elfrangi, ala elf elf*
 “ *dinar, iehmelha eleihom, fe hamal eleihom maïat*
 “ *elf dinar, fe salhom en ierhelou an elkahera*
 “ *leicdar alagama elmal oua hasalo, fe rahalou. Abul-*
 “ *feda.*

" *beis* by storm, put a part of the inha-
 " bitants to the sword, and led the rest
 " into captivity. Encouraged by these
 " successes, they marched towards Grand
 " Cairo, and took it. *Schaouar*, king of
 " Egypt, fearing lest Fostat should fall in-
 " to their hands, set fire to it; the flames
 " spread rapidly, and the town burnt for
 " four and fifty days. This weak prince,
 " unable to expel by force his enterprizing
 " enemies, had recourse to stratagem;
 " he gave them a hundred thousand di-
 " nars (crowns of gold), and promised
 " them a million, if they would leave the
 " country. They quitted it, and lost both
 " their conquest, and the promised sum.

Grand Cairo profited by the disaster of
 Fostat. The wretched inhabitants aban-
 doned their heaps of ashes, to take refuge
 in the new town, which assumed the proud
 surname of *Masr*, attached to the capital
 of Egypt. Salah Eddin (*c*) soon came
 to

(*c*) The famous *Salah Eddin*, who fought for twen-
 ty years against the Franks, and who almost entirely
 expelled them the eastern countries, was named gover-
 nor

to establish there the dynasty of the Aioubites.

“ In the year 572 (*d*) of the Hegira,
 “ he built the walls that surround Grand
 “ Cairo, and the castle situated on Mount
 “ Mokattam. It is about 29300 cubits,
 “ (three leagues) in circumference. They
 “ worked at it until his death (*e*).”

The walls still exist almost entire; but they are concealed in many places by rub-

nor of Egypt by *Nour Eddin* in the year 564 of the Hegira. Three years after he became king of it. He extended his conquests rapidly into Syria and Mesopotamia. This prince, born at *Tecrit*, a strong place between Bagdad and Mosul, in the year 533 of the Hegira, died at Damascus, in the year 582.

(*d*) “ Fi hade efféné (etnin oua khamfé maïat) amar
 “ Salah Eddin beinan effour eddiar ala masr elkahera,
 “ oua elkalaat ala eggebal elmokattam. Ou a dour
 “ telk tessaat oua acherin elf draa, oua talat maïat draa,
 “ oua lam izel elaml il a en mat. *Life of Salah Eddin.*

(*e*) This passage formally destroys the opinion of Father Sicard, who says that this castle was built by queen Semiramis, and the opinion of Messieurs Shaw, Nieburh, and a great many other writers, who take it for the fortress of Babylon, founded in Egypt by the Persians.

biſh and by houſes. There are ſeveral gates, of a ſimple and majeſtic ſtyle of architecture. Theſe edifices, and ſome moſques merit the admiration of travellers. *Salab Eddin*, the patron of literature, built an univerſity in the quarter of *Caraffè*, and the handſome moſque which covers the tomb of *Schaffey*, the founder of one of the four ſects of the Sunnites (*f*). It is ſtill exiſting; but the buildings of the univerſity are falling into ruins. The academy *Djamèb Elafbar* (the moſque of flowers) replaced it. The arts and ſciences flouriſhed there until the moment that the Turks got poſſeſſion of Egypt. That epocha was their tomb. Enemies of every branch of human knowledge, they have extinguished them throughout the whole extent of their vaſt empire.

Their ſtudies in our days are confined to theology, of which the innumerable commentators on the Coran have made an ob-

(*f*) The Sunnite ſects, called orthodox by the Mahometans, are thoſe of *Schafèi*, of *Haneſi*, of *Hanbali*, and of *Maleki*.

scure chaos; the grammar, necessary for reading correctly that book, which includes their religion, and code of laws; and astrology, a science inseparable from an ignorant nation.

Grand Cairo until the 15th century, was one of the richest and most flourishing capitals in the world. It was the emporium of Europe and of Asia. Its commerce extended from the streights of Gibraltar, to the lower parts of India. The discovery of the Cape of Good Hope, and the conquest of the Ottomans, have robbed it of a great part of its splendor, and its opulence. But notwithstanding many of the canals which conveyed thither the treasures of the east and of the west, are choked up, and although this town groans under the yoke of a Pacha and four-and-twenty beys, its admirable situation, and the fecundity of the soil of Egypt, procure it so many advantages, that in the circumference of three leagues, it still contains an immense population, and great riches. I hope, Sir, that these historical

facts will serve to ascertain the origin of Grand Cairo. Before I enter into further particulars, it appears proper to make you acquainted with *Fostat*, which I have often spoken of. That shall be the subject of my first letter.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T.

L E T T E R VII.

The foundation of Fostat by Amrou Ebn Elaas. Description of the town, its inhabitants, antiquities, and the ancient canal which extended to the Red-Sea; with a refutation of those authors who suppose this place to be the ancient Babylon, founded by Semiramis.

To Mr. L. M.

THE town of Fostat, Sir, commonly called *Old Cairo*, has been the subject of great discussions amongst the learned (g) who have written upon Egypt. The greatest part of them having sought
for

(g) Mr. Maillet pretends that it was in the town of Fostat that the governors of Egypt, for the emperors of Constantinople, resided, when *Amrou*, son of *Elaas* took it after a long siege. *Description de l'Egypte, tome premier, p. 194.*—It is a mistake.

Mr. Shaw, who relates the opinion of the geographer of Nubia, says, “The town of Fostat is precisely the same we call *Mafr*, a name taken from *Misram*, son of Cham, the son of Noah;—Peace be to whom;—for it is he who was its first founder.” *Observations*

for its origin in Greek and Latin authors, have deceived themselves. Had they opened the annals of oriental history, they would have discovered the truth they were in search of, and their descriptions would have been free from a multitude of errors. I shall follow the plan I have traced out for myself, and instead of my opinion, shall lay the facts before you.

“(b) In the twentieth year of the Hegira,
 “ Amrou, son of Elaas, built *Masr Fostat*,
 “ on the spot where he had formed his
 “ camp, previous to his going to besiege
 “ Alexandria. His tent remained in that
 “ place, because he would not destroy the
 “ nest of a pigeon, which had laid her
 “ young there. The general on his return
tions géographiques sur la Syrie, et l’Egypte, p. 24. à
la note. This opinion is far from the truth.

Father Sicard, who quotes Flavius Josephus, gives the following words: “ Old Cairo was the ancient
 “ Leté. Cambyfes settled the Babylonians in that town
 “ who dwelt in Egypt after the conquest of Babylon.”
Lettres Edifiantes, page 473. Old Cairo was not founded in the time of Flavius Josephus, as history assures us; but the fortress of Babylon, at near a league’s distance from that town, was in existence.

(b) Elmacin, history of the Arabs.

from

“ from his conquests, laid the foundation
 “ of a town there, to which he gave the
 “ name of *Fostat*, (which signifies *Tent*, in
 “ Arabic).”

This passage points out with precision the foundation of *Fostat*. The governors sent by the Caliphs made it their place of residence. It took the surname of *Masr* (*i*), which Memphis had borne, before and which the Arabs always bestow on the capital of Egypt. Its situation on the banks of the Nile, and near a canal that communicated with the Red-Sea, rendered it in a short time very flourishing. It was about two leagues in circumference, when *Schaouar*, five hundred years after its foundation (*k*), delivered it up to the flames, to prevent it from falling under the dominion of the French. Its power terminated with this epocha. With its inhabitants, it lost its commerce and its riches. It was then that

(*i*) The Arabs pretend that *Misram*, the son of *Cham*, settled in Egypt. They call that country therefore *Masr*, and give the same name to the town which becomes the capital.

(*k*) See the preceding letter.

Grand Cairo having become the residence of the grandees, and the kings of the country, received the pompous epithet of *Masr*, and that *Fostat*, assumed that of *Elatik*, which signifies *the ancient*, which it bears at this day (1).

The learned *Abulfeda*, adds some circumstances to the description of *Elmacin*, which throw a great light on history. “ *Amrou* son of *Elaas*, after conquering
“ Egypt, laid the foundation of *Fostat* under the caliphate of *Omar*. Near the

(1) Never have the oriental historians given *Fostat* the name of *Cahera*, (Cairo). They first call it *Fostat*, then *Fostat Masr*, and since its decline, *Masr Elatik*. It was the Venetian merchants who called it *Old Cairo*, and travellers have repeated this improper denomination.

“ *Oua Fostat mediné mahedta benaha amrou ebn*
“ *elaas, lamma fatah diar masr fi khalafet Omar.*
“ *Oua can fi mauda el Fostat Casr men bena elaouail*
“ *iecal lo casr elchamah, fe can Fostat amrou be janeb*
“ *el jamèh elmarouf bejamèh Omar be masr. Oua*
“ *lam tezel masr, oua hié Fostat couch lelmemleké*
“ *eddiar elmasriat hetta taula ahmed ebn Toulon.*
“ *Oua bena lo oua l’asquero elcataïah fi chemali masr.*
“ *Oua bena and elcataïah djamèh elmarouf be djamèh*
“ *Tailoun.”* *Abulfeda, description of Egypt, p. 33.*

“ *fite*

“ site on which he built it, was a castle
 “ of an ancient construction, called the *Castle*
 “ of the *Lights*. The mosque of Omar,
 “ built at a little distance from the spot
 “ where the general had pitched his tent,
 “ was enclosed within the walls of the
 “ town. *Fostat Masr* was the seat of the
 “ Egyptian empire until the time of *Ebn*
 “ *Toulon*, who built to the northward of
 “ its walls the suburb of *Cataïab*. He retired
 “ thither with his army, and founded the cele-
 “ brated temple (*m*) which bears his name.”

The enclosure of the castle, Abulfeda speaks of, is still existing; it is an oblong square, surrounded by thick walls, the antiquity of which strikes the eye; it is situated to the east of Fostat, on the decline of Mount Mokattam; some Christians inhabit the ruins, and the Greeks and Coptis have churches there. Several ancient arches still existing, in the space between it and the river, others half destroyed, and a building of a hexagonal

(*m*) I have spoken of this temple in the preceding letter; it is one of the handsomest mosques in Grand Cairo.

form

form, raised on the banks of the Nile, announce the ruins of the aqueduct which supplied it with water. This, Sir, is the Fortrefs of *Babylon*, the fubject of numberlefs researches and errors of the learned. It was founded by the Perfians when they ravaged Egypt under Cambyfes, or as other writers will have it, when Semiramis vifited this country, at the head of a formidable army (*n*). Strabo has described it fo as not to be mistaken. The Perfians, worfhippers of the fun, kept up a perpetual fire in it, which gave rife to the name beftowed on it by the Arabs of *the Caftle of the Lights* (*o*).

Maf

(*n*) In mounting the Nile above Heliopolis (the modern Matarée, fituated at two leagues from Grand Cairo) is the caftle of Babylon, fortified by art and nature. It was built by fome Babylonians who withdrew thither by the permiffion of the fovereign. The Romans keep in garrifon there one of the three legions ftationed in Egypt. From that fortrefs the mountain has a gentle flope to the bank of the Nile. One hundred and fifty flaves are continually employed there in raifing the water, by means of wheels and an aqueduct. *Strabo*, lib. 17.

(*o*) Mr. Nieburh has given a figure of this oblong fquare in his plan of Cairo, but he took it for
a ci-

Masr el Atik is not half a league in circumference; but it is still very populous, and has a good deal of trade. It is the harbour for the boats which come from Upper Egypt; and it is from thence they take their departure to remount into the Said (*p*). The Copti are very numerous there, and have several churches. The most considerable is that of St. Macaire, where their patriarch is installed. Within the church of Saint Sergius is a grotto, held in great veneration by the Christians. They pretend that the holy family, flying from the persecution of Herod, took refuge in this place. I saw the history of that flight painted on the gate of a niche where *masr* is said. The oriental dress is perfectly observed in this picture, and the head of the virgin is tolerably well painted. The truth of the *costume*, too much neglected by modern painters, often destroys the effect of their most beautiful compositions.

a citadel, which he supposes, without any reason, to have been built by the Arabs.

(*p*) The Arabs call Upper Egypt *Saïd*, which commences above *Masr Fostat*, and terminates near to *Afsouan*, formerly *Sienna*.

At

At the entrance of Old Cairo, is an hexagonal building, each side of which is eighty feet, and one hundred high. A range of steps, very easy of ascent permits the oxen to mount it, where they turn a wheel which raises the water to the top. Five basons receive, and pour it into an aqueduct, supported by three hundred arches, which conveys it into a reservoir. From thence, other oxen raise it by the means of fresh wheels, up to the palace of the Pacha. This building is the work of the Arabs. They have formed it on the plan of that described by Strabo, the ruins of which are between the citadel of Babylon and the Nile. All the difference is, that the Mahometans make use of oxen, instead of men.

The environs of *Masr Elatik* are covered with ruins which mark its ancient extent, and which, in default of historical monuments, would sufficiently attest that it is a modern town. They have not in fact that character of majesty with which the Egyptians impressed their edifices, and which time itself has been unable to efface. Amongst these heaps of rubbish we discover neither sphinx, column, nor obelisk.

Within

Within the town, thick walls surround a large place, where the corn of the Thebais is deposited, that is destined for the subsistence of the troops. This enclosure is called Joseph's Granary. This name has imposed on some travellers, who, without examining, have taken it for the work of the son of Jacob; but this monument has no appearance of antiquity, and history informs us that it was built by the Mameluk sovereigns. It is at Memphis, the residence of the Pharaohs, that Joseph, overseer of the corn of Egypt, established his magazines.

At the extremity of *Masr Elatik*, near the water castle, begins the *Khalig (q)* which traverses Grand Cairo, and is opened every year with great solemnity. Almost all the modern writers have attributed its construction to the emperor Trajan (*r*),
founded

(*q*) The Arabs call by the name of *khalig* all the canals formed by the hand of man.

(*r*) Mr. Shaw calls it the canal of Trajan. *Observations géographiques sur la Syrie et sur l'Égypte*, p. 27.

Mr. Pocock says; " Opposite to the reservoir of
" water which is on the Nile, is the canal that con-
" veys

founded on this passage of Ptolemy, *between Heliopolis and Babylon, runs the river Trajan*; but that Emperor cut no canal in Egypt; it is to his successor who built the town of Antinoé, that a work of this kind must be ascribed. The canal meant by Ptolemy, begins at a league and a half below Old Cairo, and passes near Heliopolis; it is that which *Macrizi (s)* names with reason *the Kbalig of Adrian Cæsar*.

The origin of the canal whose opening is before *Mafr Elatik*, is too well described by *Elmacin*, to suffer those who consult oriental history to confound it with that of Adrian. Amrou having announced the taking of Alexandria to Omar, and sent some camels laden with corn to Medina, then laid waste by famine, the Caliph congratulated him on his successes, adding

“veys it to Cairo, which appears to me the same that
“Trajan formed.” *Description de l’Egypte, tome premier.*

Father Sicard, going beyond the rest, says; “It is
“the canal that Ptolemy calls *Amnis Trajanus*, *Quintus Curtius*, *Oxius*, and the Arabs, *Merakemi*.”
Lettres edifiantes, p. 470.

(s) *Macrizi*, *histoire de l’Egypte*.

these

these words, “ (t) Cut a *Khalig*, by which
 “ the produce of Egypt may be transport-
 “ ed into the sea of *Colzoum*, (u), and from
 “ thence to the port of Medina. Amrou
 “ executed this grand project, and dug the
 “ *Khalig*, which was called *the River of the*
 “ *Prince of the Faithful* (x). Boats going
 “ from Fostat, conveyed the articles of
 “ Egypt into the Red Sea.”

Such, Sir, is the origin of this famous canal, which travellers, copying from one another, call the *Amnis Trajanus*. It takes its rise near Fostat, traverses the whole length of Grand Cairo, fills the lakes of that city, and loses itself four leagues beyond it, in the *Birque* (y) of the pilgrims of Mecca. The different princes who successively have occupied the throne of Egypt, several of whom were enemies of the Caliphs, have suffered it to be choked up.

(t) Elmacin, *histoire des Arabes*.

(u) Colzoum, is the Arabic name for the Red Sea. which is taken from the little town of *Colzoum*, whose ruins are at some distance from Suez.

(x) *Khalig el emir el moumenin*.

(y) *Birque* is an Arabic word, which signifies a large piece of water.

It

It no longer conveys its waters to the Red Sea; but as it is cut through a rock for the space of twenty-four leagues, the mud and sand with which it is filled might easily be removed. By opening this important communication with the Red Sea, Grand Cairo would again become the richest and most commercial capital in the world.

I hope, Sir, that your love of truth will pardon me these discussions, as they serve to illustrate several points of history, hitherto hidden in profound darkness. I shall soon have the opportunity of presenting you with more pleasing pictures. The country I inhabit is another world, which daily affords new scenes. I shall endeavour faithfully to paint them; you shall hear the Turks converse; you shall see them act; and I will leave you the highest gratification of an enlightened mind, the pleasure of judging for yourself.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T.

L E T T E R VIII.

Extent of Grand Cairo. Description of the streets, squares, and mosques, and of the palace of Salah Eddin, built upon an eminence which commands the town; and where are to be seen superb columns of granite, with the famous well of Joseph.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

GRAND Cairo, Sir, is built along the canal of *the Prince of the Faithful*, and is a league and a half from north to south, and three-quarters of a league from east to west. To discover its extent, one must mount up to the castle built by *Salah Eddin*, on mount *Mokattam* (z), which

(z) *Mokattam* signifies cut. This rock is so called from being separated by art from the mountain, which beginning at the cataracts, terminates at this place. It is only about a hundred paces distant from it.

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I

commands

commands the town that forms an immense crescent around it. In the midst of that multitude of houses which appear heaped together in the space of three leagues, it is impossible to follow the direction of the streets, which are narrow and crooked. One can only distinguish here and there large vacancies, which become lakes during the encrease of the Nile, and are gardens the rest of the year. In the month of September they are passable in boats; in April they are covered with flowers and with verdure. Amongst the numerous temples with which this city is filled, some of them rise up like citadels. Such is the mosque of Sultan Hassan, into which the rebels withdrew in the time of sedition, and from the top of which they battered the castle with cannon. This large edifice, the grotesque sculpture of whose cornice projects considerably, is covered with a vast dome. The façade is encrusted with precious marbles. At present the gates are walled up, and a guard of janissaries defends the approach to it.

Within

Within the walls of Grand Cairo, are upwards of three hundred mosques, the greatest part of which have several minarets. They are very high steeples, of a very light architecture, and surrounded with galleries. They give an agreeable variety to the city, otherwise too uniform, from the universal flatness of the roofs, which are all in the form of terraces. It is from these minarets that the public criers call the people to prayers at the hours prescribed by the law (a). About eight hundred voices are to be heard at the same instant in every quarter of the town, reminding the people of their duty towards the Deity. The sound of bells is odious to the Turks. They pretend that it hurts the ears, that it does not address itself to the heart, and that it is only made for beasts of burthen. This opinion they derive from Mahomet. That great politician, wishing every thing to have an object in his religion, that it might

(a) That is to say, at sun-rise, at noon, at three o'clock, at sun-set, and about two hours after. These prayers are named *Salaas el fegr, el dohr, el asr, el magreb, el âché.*

captivate, at once, the mind and the senses, rejected the trumpet, made use of by the Jews, and the rattle of the oriental christians. He thought that the human voice would make more impression upon man than the noisy found of insensible brass, and procured from heaven a formula (b) favourable to his designs.

The castle of Cairo, placed on a steep rock, surrounded by thick walls, supported by large towers, was very strong before the invention of gunpowder. But as it is commanded by the neighbouring mountain, it would not sustain the fire of a battery from thence, two hours. It is more than a quarter of a league in circumference. There are two very steep ways up to it, cut out of the rock, which lead to two gates, en-

(b) The following is the formula : God is great. I declare that there is only one God. I aver that Mahomet is his prophet. Come to prayer ; come to adoration. God is great. He is the only one.

Allah Acbar. Echhed en la ila ella allah echhed en Mahammed raçoul allah, hai ala es salat. Hai ala el falah. Allah Achbar. La ila ella allah.

trusted

trusted to the guard of Affabs (*c*) and Janissaries. The former occupy the lower part of the fortress, and the others, what is properly called the citadel. It is from thence, that with six wretched pieces of cannon turned against the apartment of the Pacha, they force him to retire as soon as the Beys have given him the order.

The interior of the castle contains the palace of the Sultans of Egypt, almost buried under their ruins. Domes overthrown, heaps of rubbish; gilding and painting, whose colours have braved the injury of time; superb columns of marble still standing, but almost all without capitals; these are all that remain of their ancient magnificence. It is in one of the halls of these ruined buildings, that the rich carpeting is fabricated, which the *Emir Hagg* (*d*)

(*c*) The Affabs and the Janissaries are corps of troops maintained by the Grand Seignior, but are sold to the grandees of the country.

(*d*) The Bey who is employed to escort the caravan that sets out every year for Mecca, takes the name of *Emir Hagg*, prince of the caravan.

carries every year to Mecca. The old one is carried off by the pilgrims, who tear away pieces to make relics of them, and the new one serves to cover the *Caaba*, or temple of Abraham (*e*).

The Pacha resides in a large building which has nothing remarkable, and whose windows look upon the place called *Cara Maidan*. The audience hall where the divan is held three times a week, is as long, but not so wide as that of the *Palais* at Paris, (not so large as the Guildhall of London.) It is stained with the blood of the Beys, massacred in the course of a few years, by order of the Porte. At this day they are in fact the sovereigns of Egypt. The representative of the Grand Seignior is only a vain phantom that they sport with. They keep him to answer their purposes, and send him off disgracefully, whenever their interest requires it. Kept a prisoner in his own palace, he cannot stir out of it without their permission. To such a point of humiliation is the dignity of the Ottoman

(*e*) See *L'Abrégé de la Vie de Mahomet*, p. 4.

sovereign degraded! To such a degree of weakness is that empire reduced, which threatened to give chains to Europe!

At the extremity of *Cora maïdan* is the mint, where they coin a prodigious quantity of medins and sequins, (*f*) which are struck with the die of the *Cheik Elbeled* (*g*). I have several times visited these works. The sequins are made of the gold-dust brought by the caravan of Abyssinia. The intendant of the mint assured me that it furnished them annually with upwards of four millions.

One of the most curious monuments to be admired in the castle, is the well of Joseph (*h*), hewn out of the rock. It is

(*f*) The sequin is a piece of gold worth about seven livres, ten sols, or six shillings and three-pence English.

(*g*) The most powerful of the Beys of Grand Cairo takes the name of *Cheik Elbeled*, Governor of the country, and assumes the right of coining money.

(*h*) Mr. Pocock says, that a Visir called Joseph sunk this well about 700 years ago, by order of Sultan *Mahommed*, son of *Caloun*. The Egyptians assert, that it was the work of *Salah Eddin*. It is certainly, however, a work of the Arabs, and not of the Babylonians, as Father Sicard pretends.

two hundred and eighty feet deep, by forty-two in circumference. It consists of two different excavations, which are not perpendicular one to the other. A staircase, whose descent is very gentle, winds round it. The partition which separates it from the well, is formed out of the rock, and is only six inches thick. Some windows made in it at stated intervals, light this flight of stairs; but as they are small, and the light comes from a great distance, it is necessary to have candles to conduct you. When you arrive at the foot of the first perpendicular, there is an esplanade with a basin. It is there that oxen turn the wheel which raises the water from the bottom of the lower well. Other oxen placed above, raise it from this reservoir by the same mechanism. This water comes from the Nile, and, as it filters through a sand impregnated with salt and nitre, it is brackish.

In the quarter of the Janissaries are the ruins of the palace of Salah Eddin. One
there

there sees the divan of Joseph (i), the dome of which, and part of the walls, are fallen. There are still standing thirty columns of red granite, the shafts of which of single stones are more than forty-five feet high. The difference of their size, and of the sculptured ornaments around their capitals, announce that they have been brought from ancient monuments. At some distance from these beautiful pillars, is a charming belvedere. It is a saloon situated in the highest part of the citadel, from whence the view extends over an immense horizon. One sees the whole extent of Grand Cairo, a multitude of mosques and minarets, and on the side of Boulac a rich country covered with harvests, and interspersed with groves of date-trees. Maſr Foſtat appears to the ſouth-weſt, and the plains of the Saïd, which, when they are overflowed by the Nile, offer to the

(i) *Salah Eddin* was called *Joseph* ſon of *Aioub*. His other names are ſo many high titles given him by the Mahometans, on account of his victories over the Chriſtian princes, whom he expelled Syria.

view here and there different hamlets, built on eminences, now converted into islands. This landscape is terminated by the pyramids, which, like the tops of mountains, lose themselves in the clouds. One is never tired of running ones eye over so many variegated and commanding objects. I have more than once enjoyed this delightful spectacle. The fresh air one breathes in this lofty situation, the coolness one enjoys there, adds a new charm to the pleasures of the sight. Seated on this delightful belvedere, the mind gives itself up to agreeable meditations, which are soon interrupted by those of a more gloomy nature. One says to ones self, these rich countries, where flourished formerly the arts and sciences, are occupied by an ignorant and barbarous people, who trample them under foot. Despotism crushes with his iron sceptre the most beautiful portion of the globe ; it seems as if the misery of the human race increased in proportion to the efforts which nature has made to render them happy. It was
but

but yesterday that these sentiments penetrated my very soul, whilst walking on the esplanade of the castle, I meditated on the magnificent picture which presented itself to the eye.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LET-

L E T T E R IX.

Description of Boulac, the port of Grand Cairo, its magazines, environs, and the gardens of Hellé; with a curious account of the Mekias, otherwise named the Nilo-meter, placed at the point of the beautiful isle of Raouda, which is covered with enchanted groves.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

YOU have seen, more than once, Sir, the word *Boulak* in my letters. It is the port where all the merchandize is landed which comes from Damietta and Alexandria. It is only half a league's distance from Grand Cairo. This modern town is situated on the western bank of the Nile, and is two miles long, but not very wide. It contains magnificent public baths, and vast *okals*; these are square buildings, around a great court with a portico, which supports

supports a winding gallery. The ground floor is composed of spacious warehouses, the next floor contains apartments without furniture, and without ornament. These *okals* are inhabited by strangers, who there deposite their merchandize. One single gate like that of the citadel, secures them from insult at the time of the revolts. These *kans* are the only inns to be met with in Egypt. The traveller is obliged to furnish them, and dress his victuals there, for in this country a dinner is not to be had for money.

From all the houses in Boulak one sees thousands of boats at anchor, of every shape and every size. Some of them that are strong and solid have two masts, and are employed in transporting merchandize. These usually have a large chamber for the passengers. Others, lighter and without deck, only serve to convey the people from one shore to the other. Those which are made use of in voyages of pleasure are adorned with painting and with sculpture, and have handsome apartments covered with carpeting, where one is sheltered from
the

the sun. It is in them that the rich go to breathe that coolness which is incessantly supplied by the current of air that reigns upon the Nile. It is from them that one admires at one's ease that variety of landscapes which diversify its ever verdant banks. When the wind is favourable, the sail is spread, and these light vessels seem to fly upon the water. When it is contrary, a set of robust boatmen row them with great rapidity. Cleopatra, who knew the charms of these parties on the water, engaged Cæsar in one of them, and carried him even into Upper Egypt. She had the art to make the most active, and the greatest of all the Roman generals, forget that the capital of the world might possibly shut her gates against him.

Opposite to *Boulak* appears the small village of *Enbabé*. It is composed of miserable round huts of earth under the sycamore trees, by which they are propped. Some few houses of brick hardened in the sun, and a small mosque, lose themselves at a distance, amongst the foliage of date and tamarind-trees. The inhabitants of Cairo purchase

purchase excellent butter there in the winter, and in the summer delicious melons.

Half a league to the north-east of *Bou-lak*, is the old castle of *Hellé* (*i*), which is falling into ruins. It is there that the Beys, attended with brilliant retinues, go to receive the new Pacha, to conduct him in pomp to the prison from whence they have just driven his predecessor. In the environs of *Hellé* are spacious enclosures, where orange, lemon, and pomegranate-trees, grow very high and very bushy. Their interwoven branches form delightful bowers, over which the sycamores and palms elevate their foliage of a deeper green, whilst rivulets purl through tufts of (*k*) sweet basil and of roses. I cannot express to you how grateful it is, when the sky is inflamed with the burning heat of the dog-days, to breathe the fresh air under these en-

(*i*) It appears probable that this castle has taken its name from Heliopolis, from which it is not distant.

(*k*) The basilic, or sweet basil, in Egypt grows to three times the height it does in France, and forms agreeable and odoriferous tufts.

chanted

chanted shades. It is a voluptuousness, more easily felt than described. The fragrance of the orange-flower, mixed with the delicious emanations from balsamic plants, sweetly awaken the senses, benumbed with the heat, and circulate through the soul the most agreeable sensations. It is often dangerous for an European to walk in these groves, which are peopled with courtezans; and the jealous Turks would never pardon them a false step. One may with propriety apply to these Barbarians this verse of Virgil:

Ignoscenda quidem, scirent si ignoscere manes.

Beyond these gardens is the canal which Macrifi says was constructed by the Emperor Adrian, and which Ptolemy calls *the river Trajan*; it is almost choked up.

After visiting these delicious spots, I returned to embark at *Boulak*, and went up the Nile as far as the isle of Raouda (1),

(1) *Raouda* signifies *gardens*, from whence the island takes its name, as it contains charming ones.

situated

situated between Old Cairo and *Gizé*. In the space of one league, the eye runs over immense fields of corn, flax, and beans, interspersed with clumps of date-trees, and with hamlets over the whole extent of the prospect. Before I arrived at *Gizé*, I saw on the left bank of the river the mouth of a large canal (*m*).

Arriving at the point of the isle of *Raouda*, I went to see the Nilometer, called by the Arabs *Mekias* (*n*). It is a lofty pillar of marble in the middle of a basin, the bottom of which is on a level with the bed of the Nile. It is graduated through its whole length, and divided into cubits, and inches. A corinthian capital, on which rests a beam that supports a gallery, crowns this column. When the inundation commences, the waters enter the basin by a conduit; the

(*m*) I have several times gone along its banks, and followed its course for the space of a league. It describes several windings in the plains, and runs in the direction of *Lybia*. It appears to me to have been one of those which formerly conveyed their waters to *Lake Mareotis*.

(*n*) *Mekias* signifies *measure*.

public criers then examine the pillar every morning, and publish the daily increase of the river in all the streets of Cairo. When it reaches sixteen cubits, the dyke which closes the canal of the *Prince of the Faithful*, is cut with great ceremony; and the Nile flows across the town amidst the acclamations of the whole people. I will describe this feast to you in a particular letter.

Before the Arabs made the conquest of Egypt, the Nilometer was placed in the town of *Halouan*, five leagues to the southward of Fostat, opposite to the ancient (o) Memphis. “ In the year 92 of the “ Hegira, Ocam, governor of this rich “ country, wrote to the emperor Soliman *Abd elmelek*, that the Mekias of *Halouan* (p), “ was overturned. The caliph command- “ ed him to erect another in the island “ between Fostat and Gisé. He was obey-

(o) Elmacin, history of the Arabs.

(p) It was natural to place the Nilometer near to Memphis, which, at the time of the conquest of the Arabs, was the residence of the governors of Egypt. It is not improbable there was one on each side of the river.

“ ed.

“ ed. One hundred and forty years after,
 “ this Nilometer fell, and the emperor
 “ *Elmetouakkel* built another in the same
 “ place.” It was called the *New Mekias*.

This Nilometer is now existing. *Nejm Eddin*, son of *Melek el Adel*, who died at *Mansoura*, during the expedition of Saint Louis into Egypt, charmed with the beauty of this situation, built a vast palace near the *Mekias*, and quitted the castle of *Salab Eddin* to inhabit it. The slaves who were employed to guard it, were called *Babarites*, or maritime, and distinguished themselves at the battle of *Mansoura*. At present the apartments of the palace are in a state of decay, and the walls are falling into ruins; but the bason, which is of solid work, and the column strongly supported, do not appear, in the space of nine hundred years, to have suffered from the outrages of time.

If *Murtadi* (*q*) may be credited, the Nile failed in its increase at the usual season, the year that Amrou conquered

(*q*) Description of the wonders of Egypt.

Egypt. The heads of the people addressed themselves to that conqueror, praying him to permit them, agreeable to the ancient custom, to deck out a young virgin in rich garments, and to throw her into the river. This the Mahometan general strongly opposed. The Nile did not swell during the three months after the summer solstice. The Egyptians alarmed, again renewed their solicitations. He wrote to Omar, and gave him an account of this event. The Caliph answered him:—
“ O! Amrou! I approve your conduct, and
“ the firmness you have displayed. The
“ Mahometan law ought to abolish these
“ barbarous customs. When you have
“ read this letter, throw into the river the
“ billet it contains.”—Amrou found in it these words:

“ *In the name of the merciful and gracious*
“ *God!* may the Lord shower his benedic-
“ tions on Mahomet and on his family!
“ *Abd allah Omar*, son of *Khattab*, prince
“ of the faithful, to the Nile:—If it be
“ thine own virtue which hath made thee
“ overflow Egypt until our days, suspend
“ thy

“ thy course ; but if it be by the will of
“ the Almighty God that thou bedewest
“ it with thy waters, we supplicate him to
“ order thee still to diffuse them over it.—
“ Peace be with the prophet ! health and
“ benedictions repose upon his family !

“ As soon, continues the historian as this
“ billet was thrown into the river, the wa-
“ ter rose several cubits.”

Notwithstanding Omar, to whom the burning of 400,000 volumes cost no more than a momentary hesitation, was very capable of writing such a letter ; and although it is evidently his style, I am far from warranting its authenticity, on the faith of *Murtadi*; still less the miracle that followed it. A custom however still subsisting at this day, seems to me to prove that the Egyptians formerly sacrificed a young virgin to the God of the Nile ; for they now make a statue of earth in the shape of a girl, to which they give the name of *The betrothed Bride*, upon the dyke of the *Khalig of the Prince of the Faithful*, which they throw into the river previous to the opening of the

the canal. Are not these the remains of that barbarous worship, which the Ottomans, in spite of their horror for every species of idolatry, have not been able totally to abolish, an account of its being an ancient error of a superstitious people?

After visiting the *Mekias*, and the remains of the palace of Nejm Eddin, I made an excursion through the island, which is only a vast garden furrounded by the waters of the Nile. Its banks are defended by thick walls, breast-high, from the impetuosity of the current. On one side is Old Cairo, the water-castle, and the country-houses of the Beys. On the other, one sees the handsome little town of Gisé, where there is a manufacture of sal ammoniac. The governor who resides there has assumed to himself a claim on the curiosity of those who go to visit the pyramids. I was insensibly advancing under a wood of orange, tamarind, and sycamore-trees, and was enjoying an agreeable coolness under their thick shade. Seldom did a few scattered rays of the sun penetrate this gloom with a glimmering

mering of light, and gild a small part of the foliage. The air was embalmed with exhalations from the flowers and plants. A multitude of turtle doves were flying from one tree to another, without any symptoms of fear at my approach. The soul, abandoned to the sweetest reveries, the senses absorbed in the most flattering sensations, I penetrated incautiously into the inmost recesses of the thicket, when of a sudden I heard a dreadful voice cry out; “Where
“goest thou? If thou stirrest another step,
“thou art a dead man.” It was a slave who watched at the entrance of the wood, to prevent any rash intruders from troubling the women who were reposing on the grass. I immediately drew back, and was very fortunate not to have been known for an European. I have since understood that the Beys sometimes come with their *Harem* (*r*) into this isle, and that a stran-

(*r*) This is the name given to the apartment of the women, but it is made use of in the country to signify the women themselves.

ger who might be led thither by curiosity on these occasions, would run the risk of having his head taken off on the spot. You see, Sir, how circumspect it is necessary to be in a country where death may prove the consequence of the slightest indiscretion.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T.

L E T T E R X.

Description of Heliopolis, the ancient city of the Sun ; of the state in which it was in the time of Strabo ; the obelisk of granite, which still remains ; the balm of Mecca, transplanted thither by a Pacha ; the fresh water fountain named Matar Ain, held in great veneration by the Copti, who believe that the holy virgin and her child visited this place.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

IN describing the environs of this city, I must not overlook, Sir, the ancient Heliopolis (*s*), formerly renowned for the cultivation of the higher branches of sciences, and for the grandeur of its buildings. Geographers place it at some distance from the eastern

(*s*) That is to say *the city of the Sun.*

point

point of the Delta. Strabo (*t*) tells us that it was built on a long mound of earth, made by the hands of man, to place it out of the reach of the inundation. This causeway, covered with rubbish, is still visible two leagues to the north-east of Grand Cairo, and three from the separation of the Nile.

Heliopolis had a temple to the sun, where a particular place was set apart for the feeding of the sacred ox, which was there adored under the name of *Mnevis*, as he was at Memphis, under that of *Apis*. The credulous people looked upon him as a God, whilst the priest saw nothing in him but an animal of infinite use in agriculture, in a country where he serves for tillage, and for the (*u*) six following months of the year, to water the earth ;

(*t*) Book 17.

(*u*) During the whole time that the Nile is low, the oxen are employed in turning draw-wheels, to raise the water into cisterns, from whence it is circulated through the grounds. For this reason they never destroy this animal at its birth. It is prohibited to kill a calf in Egypt.

but

but as this superstition was advantageous to them, by procuring offerings, and rendering them masters of the oracles, they made use of every art to maintain it.

The temple of the Sun was not the only one which was admired at Heliopolis. There was another remarkable one in the ancient Egyptian taste (*x*), with avenues of sphinxes, and superb obelisks before the principal entry. Nothing could be more awful than those colossuses of marble, and those lofty needles of one single stone, which were placed before the vestibule of the temples. Whilst the astonished eye contemplated these wonderful works, the mind discovered in the hieroglyphics with which they were covered, the history of the God who was the object of adoration, and of the prince who had erected these monuments. The temples of Heliopolis were already fallen into decay, under the reign of Augustus. Strabo relates that one every where saw, strongly imprinted, the marks of the fury of Cambyfes, who had

(*x*) Strabo, lib. 17.

laid this city waste with fire and sword. Of the four obelisks built by *Sochis* in that town, two were removed to Rome (*y*). another has been destroyed by the Arabs, and the last of them is still standing on its pedestal. It is composed of a block of Thebaic stone perfectly well polished, and is 68 feet high, without reckoning its base, and about 6 feet and a half wide on each aspect. They are covered with hieroglyphics. This obelisk is in good preservation, except on the south-west side, where the granite is scaled off, up to a certain elevation. This beautiful monument, and a sphinx of a yellowish marble, overset in the mud, are the only remains of Heliopolis.

This city had also a college of priests which the barbarity of Cambyfes spared no more than the asylum of *Mnevis*. It was from thence that for upwards of one thousand years they observed the state of the heavens, and that by dint of labour they had succeeded in composing the solar

(*y*) Strabo, lib. 17.

year of three hundred and sixty-five days, and a few minutes. This fact alone proves the extent of their astronomical knowledge. For several ages after, the people of Europe were unable accurately to determine the solar year, and Julius Cæsar, who wished to reform the Roman calendar, to effect his purpose, was obliged to make use of an astronomer of Alexandria.

It was chiefly at Heliopolis that Herodotus became acquainted with the sciences, and the Egyptian mysteries. These were in fact no other than a superior degree of knowledge, which their prudence concealed from the people, by covering them with the veil of religion, and by writing them in hieroglyphical characters, of which the priesthood exclusively possessed the interpretation. Enlightened by the information he had drawn from them, and gifted with the genius of observation, this father of history was crowned at the Olympic games, and the nine books he had composed, merited the distinction of being named after the nine Muses. How many persons are there, notwithstanding, who not having deeply examined
his

his works, or who not having even read them, presume to explode or accuse them of infidelity? As for myself, suspending my judgment of the rest of his history, I can only estimate that part of it which treats of Egypt, and it is with the greatest satisfaction I have found, in that country, the very manners and customs he has described, with only a few slight modifications introduced by the changes of government and religion. With respect to the monuments, of which he has given us a description, what still remains of them sufficiently proves that he has not exaggerated, and demonstrates the possibility of what no longer exists. I am impelled by justice to make this acknowledgment to a historian, who, like Homer, is the painter of nations.

Heliopolis has not only the glory of having instructed Herodotus; she may still further boast of having taught philosophy to Plato (z), who merited the name of Divine from the sublimity of his doctrine. It was in this city also that Eudoxus

(z) Strabo, lib. 17.

passed thirteen years at the school of the priests, and became one of the most celebrated astronomers of his time. What now remains to her of all her sciences, of all her monuments? A Persian barbarian overthrew her temples; a fanatic Arab burnt her books; and one solitary obelisk raised on its ruins, says to the passengers,—*Here stood Heliopolis.*

One sees at some distance from the bank on which it was built, the little village of Mataree (*a*), so named from its having a spring of fresh water, the only one existing in Egypt. It is probable that the bed of earth, through which the water of the Nile filtrates into this fountain, is destitute of the nitre universally found in this country. It is rendered famous by an ancient tradition, which says that the holy family, flying from the persecution of Herod, retired to this spot; and that the holy virgin bathed the infant Jesus in this fountain; the Christians of course relate many mira-

(*a*) The Arabs call it *Matareé* or *Ain chams*, fountain of the Sun, on account of its situation near the ancient Heliopolis.

cles which have been performed there. They come with great devotion to drink this water for all their disorders. The Mahometans themselves partake of their veneration on this subject.

In this village was an enclosure where a Pacha had planted some slips of balm from Mecca. They were cultivated with care, and by cutting them like vines, produced those precious tears known in medicine, and which the women in the eastern world make use of with advantage, to preserve the freshness of their complexion, and to fortify the stomach. These shrubs, a foot and a half high, shoot out small branches and leaves like those of rue. Belon, who saw them when he was at Cairo, counted nine of them. He dried one of the branches, and ascertained it to be the plant known by the name of *xylobalsamum*, brought by the caravans from Mecca. He says that its reddish bark covers a skin of a beautiful green. It has a mixed flavour of frankincense of the leaf of turpentine, and of wild savory. When rubbed between the fingers, it
diffuses

diffuses an aromatic odour, approaching that of cardamum. This precious plant is lost in Egypt, where the Pachas remain too short a time to employ themselves about any thing but their own interest. It no longer existed when Mr. Maillet was Consul at Grand Cairo. At this day it is scarcely in remembrance.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T T E R XI.

Description of the warm baths, universally used in Egypt; the manner of bathing; the benefits experienced from this practice; the custom of the women, of bathing once or twice in the week; and a comparison of these baths, with those of the ancient Greeks.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

THE hot-baths, Sir, known from the most remote antiquity, and celebrated by Homer, the painter of the manners of the age he lived in, have preserved their pleasure and salubrity in Egypt. The necessity of cleanliness, in a climate where one perspires so copiously, has rendered them indispensable; the comfort they produce, preserves the use of them; and Mahomet, who knew their utility, has reduced it to a precept. Travellers in
general

general have described them superficially. My habit of frequenting them, having afforded me leisure to examine them with attention, I shall enter into all the particulars necessary to give you a thorough knowledge of them (*b*).

The first apartment one finds in going to the bath, is a large hall, which rises in the form of a rotunda. It is open at the top, to give a free circulation to the air. A spacious estrade, or raised floor, covered with a carpet, and divided into compartments, goes around it, on which one lays ones clothes. In the middle of the building a jet-d'eau spouts up from a basin, and agreeably entertains the eye.

When you are undressed you tie a napkin round your loins, take a pair of sandals, and enter into a narrow passage, where you begin to be sensible of the heat. The door shuts to, and, at twenty paces off,

(*b*) I know the baths of the principal towns in Egypt; they are all built on the same plan, differing only in their size; so that by giving the description of one of them, the reader will have that of all the others.

you open a second, and go along a passage, which forms a right angle with the former. Here the heat increases. They who are afraid of suddenly exposing themselves to a stronger degree of it, stop in a marble hall, in the way to the bath, properly so called. The bath is a spacious and vaulted apartment, paved and lined with marble, around which there are four closets. The vapour incessantly rising from a fountain and cistern of hot water, mixes itself with the burning perfumes (*c*).

The bathers are not imprisoned here, as in France, in a sort of tub, where one is never at ones ease. Extended on a cloth spread out, the head supported by a small cushion, they stretch themselves freely in every posture, whilst they are wrapped up in a cloud of odoriferous vapours, which penetrates into all their pores.

After reposing there some time, until there is a gentle moisture over the whole

(*c*) Perfumes are never burnt, except the persons who are in the bath desire it. They mix with the steam of the water, and produce a most agreeable effect.

body,

body, a servant comes, presses you gently, turns you over, and when the limbs are become supple and flexible, he makes all the joints crack without any difficulty. He masses (*d*), and seems to knead the flesh, without making you feel the smallest pain.

This operation finished, he puts on a stuff glove, and rubs you a long time. During this operation, he detaches from the body of the patient, which is running with sweat, a sort of small scales, and removes even the imperceptible dirt that stops the pores. The skin becomes soft and smooth like satin. He then conducts you into a closet, pours the lather of perfumed soap upon your head, and withdraws. The ancients did more honour to their guests, and treated them in a more voluptuous manner. Whilst Telemachus was at the court of Nestor (*e*), “the beautiful Polycasta, the handsomest of the

(*d*) *Mafs* comes from the Arabic verb *mafs*, which signifies touching in a delicate manner.

(*e*) *Odyfsey*, book 3d.

“ daughters of the king of Pylos, led
 “ the son of Ulysses to the bath, washed
 “ him with her own hands, and, after
 “ anointing his body with precious oils,
 “ covered him with rich habits, and
 “ a splendid cloke.” Pisistratus and Te-
 lemachus were not worse treated in the
 palace of Menelaus (*f*). “ When they
 “ had admired its beauties, they were con-
 “ ducted to basins of marble, where a bath
 “ was prepared. Beautiful female slaves
 “ washed them, and after anointing them
 “ with oil, covered them with rich tunicks,
 “ and superb pelices (*g*).”

The closet to which one is conducted
 is furnished with a cistern and two cocks,
 one for cold and the other for hot water.

(*f*) Odysses, book 4th.

(*g*) I have translated the words *χλαίνας οὐλάς* hairy
 cloaks, by *superb pelices*. I am aware that no other
 translator has done the same; but it appeared to me
 that the poet wished to describe a custom still existing
 in the east, of covering themselves with pelices in
 coming out of the hot-baths, to prevent the perspi-
 ration from being checked at a time when the pores
 are extremely open.

There

There you wash yourself. Soon after the servant returns with a depilatory pomatum (*b*), which in an instant makes the hair fall off the places it is applied to. Both men and women make general use of it in Egypt.

After being well washed and purified, you are wrapped up in hot linen, and follow the guide through the windings that lead to the outer apartment. This insensible transition from heat to cold prevents one from suffering any inconvenience from it (*i*). On arriving at the estrade, you find a bed prepared for you, and scarcely are you laid down, before a child comes to press every part of your body with his

(*b*) It is composed of a mineral called *rusma*, which is of a deep brown. The Egyptians burn it lightly, knead it with water, mixing it with half the quantity of flaked lime. This greyish paste applied to the hair, makes it fall off in two or three minutes, without giving the slightest pain.

(*i*) Delicate persons stop some time in the hall next the stove, to avoid inconvenience from going suddenly into the external air. As the pores are very open, one keeps ones self warm the whole day; and if in winter, one stays in the house.

delicate fingers, in order to dry you thoroughly. You change linen a second time, and the child gently grates the callosity of your feet with pumice stone. He then brings you a pipe and Moka coffee (*k*).

Coming out of a stove, where one was surrounded by a hot and moist fog, where the sweat gushed from every limb, and transported into a spacious apartment, open to the external air, the breast dilates, and one breaths with voluptuousness. Perfectly *massed*, and, as it were regenerated, one experiences an universal comfort. The blood circulates with freedom, and one feels as if disengaged from an enormous weight, together with a suppleness and lightness, to which one has been hitherto a stranger. A lively sentiment of existence diffuses itself to the very extremities of the

(*k*) One of these baths, with all the preparations, cost me three livres, (half a crown). The common people do not take so much trouble about them: they only go to sweat in the stove, wash themselves, and give three or four sols, (a penny or two-pence) at coming out.

body.

body. Whilst it is lost in delicate sensations, the soul, sympathising with the delight, enjoys the most agreeable ideas. The imagination, wandering over the universe, which it embellishes, sees on every side the most enchanting pictures, every where the image of happiness. If life be nothing but the succession of our ideas, the rapidity with which they then recur to the memory, the vigour with which the mind runs over the extended chain of them, would induce a belief that in the two hours of that delicious calm that succeeds the bath, one has lived a number of years.

Such, Sir, are the baths, the use of which were so strongly recommended by the ancients, and which are still the delight of the Egyptians. It is by means of them that they prevent or dispel rheumatisms, catarrhs, and such cutaneous disorders as are produced by want of perspiration. Hence likewise they find a radical cure for that fatal evil which attacks the sources of generation, the remedy for which is so dangerous in Europe.

rope (l). By the same resource, they get rid of that uncomfortable feeling, so common to all nations, who do not pay so much attention to the cleanliness of their bodies.

The women are passionately fond of these baths. They frequent them at least once a week, and take with them slaves properly qualified for the purpose. More sensual than the men, after undergoing the usual preparations, they wash their bodies, and above all, their heads, with rose-water. It is there that female head-dressers form their long black hair into tresses, which they mix with precious essences, instead of powder and pomatum. It is there that they blacken the edge of their eyelids, and lengthen their eyebrows with *cobel* (m). It is there

(l) Mr. Tournefort, who had used steam-baths at Constantinople, where there is less refinement in them than at Cairo, is of opinion that they injure the breast. This is an error which further experience would have corrected. There are no people who make more frequent use of them than the Egyptians, and there is no country where there are fewer asthmatic people. The asthma is scarcely known there.

(m) *Cobel* is a preparation of tin burnt with gall-nuts,

there they stain the finger and toe nails with *benné*, which gives them a golden colour (*n*). The linen and clothing they make use of are passed through the sweet steam of the wood of aloes. When the work of the toilet is at an end, they remain in the outer apartment, and pass the day in entertainments. Females entertain them with voluptuous songs and dances, or tell them love tales.

The days of using the bath, are festivals for the Egyptian women. They deck themselves out magnificently, and under the long veil and cloak that conceal them from the public eye they wear the richest stuffs. As they undress before each other, their coquetry extends even to their drawers. In summer they are made of embroidered muslin; in winter of stuffs, of silk and gold brocade. They are not acquainted with the use of ruffles and laces, but their nuts, which the Turkish women make use of to blacken, and lengthen their eye-brows.

(*n*) *Henne* is a very common shrub in Egypt; it has some resemblance to privet. The leaf cut small, and applied to the skin, gives it a golden colour.

shifts,

shifts, made of silk and cotton, are as light and transparent as gauze. Their flowing robes are bound with rich girdles of the wool of Cachemire (*o*). Two crescents of fine pearls sparkle on the black hair that covers their temples. The Indian handkerchiefs with which they crown their heads, are decorated with diamonds. Such are the Georgian and Circassian women, whom the Turks purchase to make wives of them. Nothing can equal their cleanliness, and, as they walk, they are surrounded by a cloud of odours. If their luxury be not publicly displayed, it greatly surpasses that of the European women, in the interior of their houses.

The Turks, governed by an excessive jealousy, pretend, that in a hot country, where nature is so powerfully felt, where

(*o*) The wool of Cachemire is the most beautiful in the world. It surpasses even silk in fineness. The girdles that are made of it, cost about 600 livres, or 25 *l.* sterling. They are usually embroidered at the ends, and although they are an ell wide and three long, one can pass them through a ring for the finger.

the

the women are hurried on to pleasure by an irresistible impulse, the communication would be dangerous between the two sexes; they abuse their power, therefore, by keeping them in slavery; but by this means they only add to the violence of their desires, and they seize accordingly the first opportunity to revenge themselves. The Turks are ignorant, no doubt, that if women left to their liberty are attainable, in a state of slavery, they will make the first advances to the men.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LET-

LETTER XII.

A particular account of the Egyptian manner of living, the food, occupations, and amusements of the people; their taste, morals, and the manner in which they receive visitors.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

LIFE, Sir, is more a passive than an active existence at Grand Cairo (*p*). The body during nine months of the year is oppressed with the excessive heats. The mind partakes of this state of indolence. Far from being continually tormented by the desire of seeing, of acquiring knowledge, and of acting, it sighs after calm and tranquillity. Under a temperate sky

(*p*) From the month of March to November the height of the thermometer is constantly from twenty-three to thirty-six degrees. In the other months it is seldom lower than nine degrees above the freezing point.

inactivity

inactivity is a pain ; here, on the contrary, repose is an enjoyment. The most frequent salutation therefore, that which is made use of on accosting, and repeated on quitting you, is, (*q*) *Peace be with you!* Effeminacy is born with the Egyptian, grows up with him as he advances in life, and follows him to the tomb. It is a vice of the climate. It influences his taste, and governs all his actions. It is to satisfy this disposition that the most luxurious piece of furniture in his apartment is the sofa ; that his gardens have delightful shades, convenient seats, and not a single alley one can walk in. The Frenchman, born in a climate, the temperature of which is continually changing, receives every instant new impressions which keep his soul awake. He is active, impatient, and inconstant as the air he breathes in. The Egyptian who for two-thirds of the year almost invaria-

(*q*) This is the salutation of the Orientals. The christian religion, which is of Asiatic origin, has preserved it. At the high festivals, the priests salute each other during the communion, saying, *Peace be with you!*

bly

bly experiences the same degree of heat, the same sensation, is slothful, serious and patient.

He rises with the sun to enjoy the coolness of the morning. He purifies himself, and goes to prayer according to the precept (*r*). He is presented with a pipe and coffee. He remains softly reposing on his sofa. His slaves, with their hands crossed on their breasts, stand in silence at the bottom of the apartment. Their eyes fixed on their master, they strive to anticipate all his wishes. His children standing in his presence, unless he gives them permission to be seated, display in all their behaviour the utmost tenderness and respect. He gravely caresses them, gives them his blessing, and sends them back to the *harem* (*s*). He alone interrogates, and is answered with

(*r*) *O! ye Believers, before you begin the prayer, wash your face and hands up to your elbows. Wipe your head and feet down to your heels. Coran, p. 107. tome premier, of Mr. Savory's translation.*

(*s*) *Harem* is an Arabic word, signifying *forbidden place*; it is the apartment of the women, called by us improperly the Seraglio.

decency.

decency. He is at once the chief, the judge, and the pontiff of the family, which respects in him those sacred rights.

After breakfast he applies himself to his commercial affairs, or to those of the place he occupies. As to differences, they are very rare amongst a people where the monster of chicanery is dumb, where the name of attorney is unknown, where the code of laws is confined to a few clear, and well defined precepts of the Coran, and where every man is his own advocate.

If any visitors arrive, the master of the house receives them without many compliments, but in an affectionate manner. His equals go and seat themselves by him with their legs crossed; a posture by no means fatiguing with clothes which do not fetter the limbs.

His inferiors are on their knees, and seated on their heels. Persons of great distinction sit on an elevated sofa, from which they overlook the company (*t*). Thus

Æneas

(*t*) *Inde toro pater Æneas sic arsus ab alto.* Æneid, lib. 2. The epithet of *father*, given by Virgil to Æneas,

VOL. I.

M

proves

Æneas was in the place of honour in the palace of Dido, when seated on a high bed, he related to the queen the disastrous fate of Troy, reduced to ashes. As soon as every one is seated, the slaves bring pipes and coffee, and place in the middle of the chamber a pan with perfumes, the delicious vapour of which fills the whole apartment. They are next presented with sweetmeats and forbet.

The tobacco made use of in Egypt comes from Syria. It is brought in leaves, which are cut in long filaments. It has not the pungency of the American tobacco. To render it more agreeable, it is mixed with the scented wood of aloes. The pipes, usually made of jessamine tipped with amber, are frequently enriched with precious stones. As they are extremely long,

proves that this great poet was perfectly acquainted with eastern manners, with whom the name of father is the most respectable title one can confer on any man. They still think it an honour to be so called. On the birth of a son they quit their proper name for the appellation of *father of such a one*.

the

(u) the smoke one inhales is very mild. The Orientals pretend that it tickles agreeably the palate, at the same time that it gratifies the smell. The rich smoke in lofty apartments with a great number of windows.

Towards the conclusion of the visit, a slave holding in his hand a silver plate on which are burning precious essences, approaches the faces of the visitors, each of whom in his turn perfumes his beard. They then pour rose-water on the head and hands. This is the last ceremony, after which it is usual to withdraw.

You see, Sir, that the ancient custom of (x) perfuming one's head and beard, celebrated by the royal prophet, still subsists in our days. Anacreon, the father of joy, the poet of the graces, never ceases repeating in his odes, “ (y) I like to perfume

(u) One sees pipes fifteen feet long. The general standard is five or six.

(x) Sicut unguentum optimum in capite, quod descendit in barbam Aaron. *Psalms* 132.

(y) *Anacreon*, ode 15.

“ myself with precious essences, and to
“ crown my head with roses.”

About noon the table is covered. A large flat plate of copper tinned receives the dishes. No great variety is displayed, but there is an abundance of provisions. In the middle rises up a mountain of rice boiled with poultry, seasoned with saffron and a quantity of spices. Round it are placed hashed meats, pigeons, stuffed cucumbers, delicious melons, and other fruits. Their roast meat consists of flesh cut into small morsels, covered with the fat of the animal, seasoned with salt, spitted and roasted on the coals. It is tender and juicy. The guests are seated on a carpet round the table. A slave holding a basin and ewer, offers it to wash with. This ceremony is indispensable in a country, where every one puts his hand into the plate, and where they are unacquainted with the use of forks. This is repeated at the end of the repast. These customs appear very ancient in the East.

Menelaus and the beautiful Helen, after loading Telemachus and Pisistratus with presents, gave them the banquet of hospitality.

talities (z). “The fair Menelaus conducted his guests to the place of entertainment. He made them be seated on thrones. A female slave, carrying in her hands a golden ewer with a silver basin, offers them to wash. She places before them a polished table, on which she arranges the victuals.”

The manner in which the son of Thetis received the Grecian deputies very much resembles that of the Egyptians towards their guests.

“(a) Achilles perceiving the deputies of the Greeks, rises up, takes them by the hand, gives them the salute. . . . and introduces them into his tent, where he makes them be seated on beds of repose (b), covered with purple tapestry. . . . The banquet is prepared. Automedon holds the flesh, the noble Achilles divides it into pieces, and spits them. Menetius, a mortal like unto a God,

(z) Odyſſey, book 4.

(a) Iliad, book 9.

(b) The ſophas of the Orientals ſerve them alternately as ſeats and as beds.

“ lights the fire, spreads out the coals, ar-
 “ ranges the spits upon the cinders, and
 “ strews over them the sacred salt.

“ Achilles, seated opposite to the divine

“ Ulysses, shares out the victuals.

“ The guests put their hands to the meat

“ (c) that is served up to them.” A poet

of an inferior genius to Homer would have thought he dishonoured a poem filled with magnificent descriptions by mixing such details with them. Yet, how precious are they, by making us acquainted with the simplicity of ancient manners, a simplicity lost to Europe, but which is still existing in the eastern world.

After dinner, the Egyptians retire into their harams, where they slumber a few hours in the midst of their children and their women. It is a great article of voluptuousness with them, to have a convenient, and agreeable place of repose. Mahomet, accordingly, who neglected nothing that could seduce mankind, whose wants and tastes he knew thoroughly, says

(c) They took the victuals doubtless with their fingers, as is practised at this day in some countries.

to

to them, (*d*) “The guests of Paradise
 “shall enjoy the luxury of repose, and
 “shall have a delicious place to sleep in at
 “noon.”

The poor, who have neither sofa nor haram, lie down on the mat where they have dined. Thus, when Jesus Christ took the supper with his disciples (*e*), he whom he loved had his head reposed upon his bosom.

In the evening one goes in a boat upon the water, or to breathe the cool air on the banks of the Nile, under the shade of orange and sycamore trees. Supper-time is an hour after sunset. The tables are spread with rice, poultry, vegetables, and fruit. These aliments are wholesome during the heats. The stomach, which would reject more substantial nourishment, has occasion for them. They eat little. Temperance is a virtue of this climate.

Such is the usual life of the Egyptians. Our places of amusement, our noisy plea-

(*d*) Coran, ch. 25, p. 119.

(*e*) Erat ergo recumbens unus ex discipulis ejus in sinu Jesu quem diligebat Jesus. *St. John, ch. 13, v. 23.*

fures, are unknown to them. That
 fameness which would be the greatest pu-
 nishment to an European, appears to them
 delicious. They pass their whole life in
 doing the same thing, in following the esta-
 blished customs, without desiring any thing
 beyond them, without extending their
 ideas any further. Having neither lively
 appetites, nor ardent desires, they are
 strangers to what we call *l'ennui*; that is a
 torment reserved for such persons as nei-
 ther being able to moderate their passions,
 nor to satisfy the extent of their tastes, are
 a burthen to themselves *s'ennuient* where-
 ever they are, and only live where they are
not.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T.

L E T T E R XIII.

An account of the paternal authority still subsisting in Egypt, similar to that of the ancient patriarchs; the manner in which a father governs his children; and the great respect which the Egyptians pay to old age.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

IT is in the East, Sir, that history places the cradle of the human race. It is there that paternal authority took its rise, which is still preserved there in its full force. A father there enjoys all the titles that nature has bestowed on him. Chief, judge, and high priest of his family, he commands there, he is the arbiter of all their differences, and sacrifices the victims of the *Courban beiram* (f).

Each

(f) The *Courban beiram* is a Mahometan festival, where each father of a family must offer a sacrifice proportioned to his ability. The rich slay oxen and sheep;

Each family forms a small state, of which the father is the sovereign. The members who compose it are attached to him by the ties of blood. They acknowledge his power, and submit to it. The differences which arise amongst them are brought before his tribunal; he pronounces, and his decrees terminate the dispute, and restore order and tranquillity. The most aged of the old men holds the sceptre in his hands, and he is enabled to direct it from the result of a long experience. But in every thing respecting the interior administration, he is guided by the law of ancient customs.

sheep; the poor fulfil the precept by killing a pigeon. This solemn feast amongst the Mahometans is six weeks after the Ramadan, and recalls to mind the Jewish passover.

Mahomet, unable to abolish the sacrifice of animals, authorized by heaven in the eastern world, recommends to them the chapter of the pilgrimage of Mecca; but to sanctify the use of it, corrupted by idolatry, he enjoins them to invoke the name of God on the animal they slaughter, adding these remarkable words; *God receives neither the flesh nor the blood of victims, but the piety that makes the offering is welcome to him.* Coran, p. 93, tome 2.

The

The children, brought up in the apartments of the women, do not enter the hall, particularly when there are strangers. When the young people appear, they observe a profound silence. Grown up to manhood, they may mix in the conversation; but when the *Cheik* (g) speaks, they hold their tongue, and listen attentively. Every one rises up when he appears in company. The precedence is given him in all public places, and he is every where treated with consideration and respect. This custom subsisted in Egypt in the time of Herodotus (b); and the despotism that crushes the country contributes still to preserve it. Under a yoke of iron, who dares lift up his head? It would be a crime to make a display of riches to the public eye. Every thing is carefully avoided that may

(g) This word signifies old man, the eldest of the family assumes this respected name. It is bestowed also on the men of the law.

(b) Like the Lacedemonians, who alone of all the Greeks paid true homage to old age, the Egyptians give the precedency to those who are older than themselves, and rise from their seats when they appear.
Herodotus. Euterpe.

serve

serve to awaken the avarice of the ruling tyrants. It is even dangerous to appear happy. It is only within one's own family therefore, that tranquillity and happiness are to be found. As the safety of the society depends on the union of its members, the common interest, joined to the voice of consanguinity, preserves its harmony. It is there, accordingly, that the holy laws of nature are observed in their primitive purity. A numerous posterity are frequently lodged under the same roof. Every day the children and grand-children come to pay their progenitor the tribute of tenderness and veneration. The pleasure of being more loved and respected as he advances in years, makes him forget that he grows old. The joy and contentment of his heart glisten in his eyes. The wrinkles of his brow are smoothed by serenity. He is joyous and condescending; and whilst the young people wear nothing but the plainest dresses (*i*), he is decked out in

(i) In Egypt, the splendid colours are reserved for the old men; the youth whose morals are corrupted, alone dare clothe themselves in brilliant dresses.

the most brilliant colours. Happy in the bosom of his family until on the very verge of the grave, he does not perceive that death is about giving him the fatal blow, and falls asleep amidst the embraces of his children. They long weep over him, and go every week to strew flowers over his tomb (*k*), and to repeat funeral hymns. The Egyptians have lost the custom of embalming the bodies, but have preserved the sentiments that gave it birth.

Amongst polished people, who live less in the domestic style, old age is not so respected; it is not unfrequently even a reproach. Old age with its hoary locks is often obliged to be silent before presumptuous youth, and sport like a child to be supportable in company. In proportion as he feels the weight of years come upon him, and the pleasures of his existence diminish, he sees that he becomes a burthen to those whom he has brought into the world. When he has the greatest

(*k*) It is a custom in Egypt to cover the tomb of their kindred with fragrant plants, and to repeat prayers there.

need of consolation, they refuse him their respect, and every heart is shut against him. His soul, chilled by age, falls into decay, without the comfort of filial love to warm him with its generous flame. It is in the midst of polished nations that the venerable old man, who was a tender father, dies, long before he drops into the grave.

Let us draw the veil over a picture which happily is not general. The affecting scenes to which I have daily been a witness in this country, extort from me this parallel. Here the respectable patriarch, whose venerable white beard falls down upon his breast, smiles, under the frost of old age, on his grand-children who come to caress him. His heart expands at the sight of four generations, eager to pay him the tribute of filial piety. He relishes the charm of life even to his last moment. Yes, Sir, this people in their state of ignorance, have preserved the simplicity of ancient manners. They know nothing of our arts and sciences; but the forcible sentiments of nature, (sentiments which books can never teach); with those
they

they are intimately acquainted, they revere and enjoy them.

I could support what I advance by a thousand instances. I shall only select one well known anecdote. When Mr. Maillet was consul at Grand Cairo (*l*), the Jesuits prevailed on the court of France to send for some children of the Copti (*m*), to Paris, to educate them in the College of Louis le Grand. They were to be instructed in the orthodox faith, and to be sent back to convert their schismatic nation. By dint of money and promises, the consent of some fathers, extremely poor, was obtained; but when the moment of separation from their children arrived, paternal tenderness revived in all its force, and they preferred returning to a state of poverty, rather than purchase a comfortable situation, by a sacrifice which cost their heart too dear.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(*l*) About one hundred years ago.

(*m*) The Copti are the ancient inhabitants of Egypt. They are Jacobite Christians. I shall speak of them more amply in the course of these letters.

L E T T E R XIV.

An account of the Almé, otherwise the Egyptian Improvisatrices; their education, dances, music; and the extreme desire which prevails through the country, of procuring this kind of performers.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

E G Y P T, Sir, as well as Italy, has her *Improvisatori*. They are called *Almé*, knowing they have merited this name, from having received a better education than other women. They form a celebrated society in this country. To be received into it, it is necessary to have a good voice, to understand the language well, to know the rules of poetry (*n*), and be able

(*n*) The Arabic have the same quantity as the Latin verses, with the varied measure, and rhyme of the French poetry. These advantages are not to be found in a language the prosody of which is not distinctly marked.

to

to compose and sing couplets on the spot, adapted to the circumstances. The *Almé* know by heart all the new songs. Their memory is furnished with the most beautiful *moals* (o), and the prettiest tales. There is no festival without them; no entertainment of which they do not consti-

(o) The *moals* are elegiac hymns, where the death of a hero is bewailed, or the misfortunes incident to love. Abulfeda has preserved the end of a *moal*, sung by *Ommia* on the side of a trench into which her nephews had been thrown after the defeat of Beder:

“ Have I not sufficiently wept over the noble sons
“ of the princes of Mecca?

“ At the sight of their broken bones, like to a tur-
“ tle concealed in the depth of the forest, I have filled
“ the air with my lamentations.

“ Unfortunate mothers! your foreheads bowed down
“ to the earth, mix your sighs with my tears.

“ And ye, ye women who follow the processions,
“ chaunt your funeral hymns interrupted with long
“ sighs.

“ To what have the princes of the people, the chief
“ men of the tribes been reduced at Beder?

“ The old and the young warriors are laid there
“ naked, and without life.

“ How Mecca hath changed her appearance!

“ These desolated plains, these savage deserts them-
“ selves seem to share my sorrow.” *Life of Mahomet*,
“ (by the author) p. 83.

tute the ornament. They are placed in a rostrum from whence they sing during the repast. They then descend into the saloon, and form dances which have no resemblance to ours. They are pantomime ballets, in which they represent the usual occurrences of life. The mysteries of love too, generally furnish them with scenes. The suppleness of their bodies is inconceivable. One is astonished at the mobility of their features, to which they give at pleasure the impression suited to the characters they play. The indecency of their attitudes is often carried to excess. Their looks, their gestures, every thing speaks, but in so expressive a manner, that it is impossible to mistake them. At the beginning of the dance, they lay aside with their veils the modesty of their sex. A long robe of very thin silk goes down to their heels, which is slightly fastened with a rich girdle. Long black hair, plaited and perfumed, is flowing on their shoulders. A shift, transparent as gauze, scarcely hides their bosom. As they put themselves in motion, the shapes, the contours of their
bodies

bodies seem to develope themselves successively. Their steps are regulated by the sound of the flute, of castanets, the tambour de basque, and cymbals, which accelerates or retards the measure. They are still further animated by words adapted to such scenes. They appear in a state of intoxication. They are the *Bacchantes* in a delirium. It is when they are at this point, that throwing off all reserve, they abandon themselves totally to the disorder of their senses; it is then that a people far from delicate, and who like nothing hidden, redouble their applauses. These *Almés* are sent for into all the *harams*. They teach the women the new airs; they amuse them with amorous tales, and recite in their presence poems, which are so much the more interesting, as they furnish a lively picture of their manners. They initiate them into the mysteries of their art, and teach them to contrive lascivious dances. These girls, who have a cultivated understanding, are very agreeable in conversation. They speak their language with purity. The habit of dedicating themselves

to poetry renders the softest and most sonorous expressions familiar to them. They repeat with a great deal of grace. In singing, nature is their only guide. I have heard them sing gay airs, the time of which was quick and light like that of some of our *ariettes*; but it is in the pathetic that they display their talents. It is when they recite a *moal*, from the movement of the romance, that the continuity of tender, affecting, and plaintive sounds, inspires a secret melancholy, which insensibly increases, and changes into tears of commiseration. The Turks themselves, the Turks, enemies of all the arts, pass whole nights in hearing them. Sometimes two of them sing together, but always with the same voice. It is the same with an orchestra, where all the instruments playing in unison, execute the same part. Accompaniments are only made for enlightened people, who, at the same time that the melody flatters their ear, wish to have their mind occupied by the justness and perfection of the harmony. Those nations, on the contrary, whose sensibility is more affected than their hearing,

hearing, little capable of enjoying the charms of harmony, like only the simple tones whose beauty goes directly to the soul, without requiring reflection to perceive it.

The Hebrews, to whom the tastes of the Egyptians had become natural, from a long residence in Egypt, had also their *Almé*. It appears that they gave lessons to the women, at Jerusalem, as well as at Grand Cairo (*p*). St. Mark has preserved a fact which proves what an empire the oriental dance had over the minds of men. “He-

(*p*) Et cùm dies opportunus adesset, Herodes in natalitiis suis cœnam faciebat proceribus suis, ac chiliarchis, primariis Galilææ.

Cùmque introisset filia ipsius Herodiadis, et saltasset et placuisset Herodi simulque recumbentibus, rex ait puellæ : pete à me quodcunque volueris, et dabo tibi.

Et juravit illi quodcunque petieris dabo tibi, licet dimidium regni mei.

Quæ cùm exisset dixit matri suæ : quid petam ? at illa dixit : caput Johannis Baptistæ.

Cùmque introisset statim cum festinatione ad regem, petivit dicens : Volo ut protinus des mihi in patina caput Johannis Baptistæ.

. Sed misso speculatore precipit afferri caput ejus in patina, et decollavit eum in carcere.

Gospel of St. Mark, chap. 6.

“rod celebrated his birth-day in the midst
“of a sumptuous banquet, where he had
“gathered together the chiefs of the na-
“tion, the tribunes, and the princes of
“Galilee. Whilst the guests were at ta-
“ble, the daughter of Herodias entered,
“and danced before them after the man-
“ner of the country. The whole assem-
“bly applauded the graces she displayed.
“The king, enchanted, vowed that he would
“grant her what she should demand, were
“it the half of his kingdom. Urged by
“her mother, the young Herodias de-
“manded the head of John the Baptist,
“and obtained it.”

The *Almé* assist at the marriage ceremonies, and march before the bride, playing on instruments. They make a figure likewise at funerals, and accompany the procession, singing sorrowful airs. They break forth into groans, and lamentations, and give every sign of grief and despair. These women are paid very high, and seldom appear but amongst the grandees and rich men.

I was invited lately to a splendid supper, given by a rich Venetian merchant to the Receiver-general of the finances of Egypt. The *Almé* sang several airs during the entertainment. They then celebrated the praises of the principal guests. The passage which appeared to me the most striking was an ingenious allegory, wherein the messenger of love is made to speak. After the entertainment there was play, and I perceived that handfuls of sequins were sent to the fingers from time to time. This entertainment produced them at least fifty louis d'or. It is true they are not always so well paid.

The common people have also their *Almé*. They are girls of the second class, who try to imitate the former, but they have neither their elegance, their graces, nor their knowledge. They are every where to be met with. The public places and the walks about Grand Cairo are full of them. As the populace require allusions still more strongly marked, decency will not allow me to relate to what a pitch they carry the licentiousness of their gestures and attitudes.

attitudes. It is impossible to form an idea of it, without having been a witness to these scenes. The *Bayadieres* of India are models of chastity compared to these Egyptian women dancers. You have here, Sir, the chief amusement of the Egyptians. It constitutes their delight.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LET-

L E T T E R X V.

An account of the private life of the Egyptian women; their taste, manners, employment, diversions; their method of bringing up their children; with the custom of lamenting at the tombs of their parents, after covering them with flowers, and the branches of odoriferous plants.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

I Have given you some account, Sir, of the manner of living of the male inhabitants of this country, but I have spoken very little of the women. This (*g*) ori-

(*g*) The Egyptians never mention their wives in conversation. When they are obliged to speak of them, they say the mother of such a one, or the mistress of the house, &c. Politeness prevents one from saying, How is madam your wife? It is necessary to imitate their reserve, and say, How is the mother of such a one? Even this they would look upon as an affront, were it not the salutation of an intimate friend or relation. I relate these traits, as perfectly characteristic of oriental jealousy.

ental

ental reserve cannot be agreeable to an European. I am now going to give you, therefore, a general idea of the manners of the Egyptian women.

The women act a brilliant part in Europe. They appear as sovereigns on the theatre of the world. They preside over manners, and decide on the most important events. The fate of nations is often in their hands. In Egypt, what difference! They are there only to be seen loaded with the chains of slavery. Condemned to servitude, they have not the smallest influence on public affairs. Their empire is limited to the walls of the Haram; for there are buried all their graces and their charms. Confined within the bosom of their family, the circle of their life does not extend beyond domestic employments (*r*).

Their first duty is the education of their children. Their most ardent wish is to

(*r*) The compiler, *Pomponius Mela*, pretends that the women do all the out of door labour in Egypt, and the men take charge of the house, p. 59. This assertion is contradicted by every writer who has travelled in that country.

have

have a great number of them, since the public esteem, as well as the tenderness of their husbands are measured by their fecundity. Even the poor man who earns his bread with the sweat of his brow, prays to heaven for a numerous progeny, and the barren woman would be inconsolable, did not adoption indemnify her in some degree for the injury of nature. Every mother suckles the child she has brought into the world. The first smile of that tender creature, and an easy childbed, repay her for the pains and cares imposed upon her by this duty.

The overflowings of the milk, therefore, and other disorders, which drain the sources of life of the young spouse unobservant of this law, are not known in this country. Mahomet has converted this custom, which is coeval with the world, into a precept (*s*).
 “ Mothers shall suckle their children two
 “ whole years, provided they are disposed
 “ to take the breast so long. The mother
 “ shall be permitted to wean her nurse-

(*s*) Coran, p. 40. t. 1. *Mr. S.'s translation.*

“ child with the consent of the husband.” Ulysses descending into the gloomy kingdom of Pluto (*t*), saw there his mother, who had nourished him with her milk, who had reared up his infancy.

When circumstances compel them to have recourse to a nurse, she is not looked upon as a stranger. She becomes part of the family, and passes the rest of her life in the midst of the children she has suckled. She is honoured and cherished like a second mother.

Racine, who possessed all the knowledge necessary to display the brilliancy of his genius; Racine, who, from his intimate acquaintance with the *chef-d'œuvres* of Greece, well knew the oriental manners, gives his *Phædra*, her nurse, for her only confidante. The unhappy queen, burning with a guilty flame, she could not conquer, and the fatal secret of which burthened her mind, without her daring to reveal it, did not resolve to entrust it to the

(*t*) *Odyssæy*, lib. 23. p. 375.

tender Ænone until the latter addressed her :

Cruelle, quand ma foi vous a-t-elle déçue ?

Songez-vous qu'en naissant mes bras vous ont reçue ?

The Haram is the cradle and the school of infancy. The helpless being, just brought into the world, is not infolded in wretched swaddling clothes, the source of a thousand disorders. Stretched out naked on a mat, exposed to the air in a spacious apartment, he breathes without restraint, and moves his delicate limbs at pleasure. His entrance into the new element wherein he must pass his life, is not marked either by grief or tears. Bathed in water every day, reared up under his mother's eye, he grows rapidly. Free in all his movements, he tries his growing strength ; he is in constant action, he rolls about, he gets up, and if he happens to tumble, his falls cannot be dangerous on the carpet or mat (*v*) which covers the floor.

(*v*) In Egypt the rooms are paved with large flag stones, which are washed, at least, once a week. In summer

floor. He is not banished his father's house at seven or eight years old, to send him to a college, where he loses his health and his innocence. It is true that he acquires little knowledge. His education is often limited to the art of reading and writing. But he enjoys a robust state of health; whilst the fear of the divinity, respect for old age, filial piety, the love of hospitality, virtues which every object presents to him in the bosom of his own family, remain deeply graven on his heart.

The girls are brought up in the same manner. The whalebone, and the busks to which the European women fall martyrs, are unknown to them. They are left naked, or only covered with a shift until they are six years old. The habit they wear the remainder of their lives does not fetter any of their limbs, and allows the whole body to assume its natural structure. Nothing is so uncommon, therefore, as to see children full of hu-

summer they are covered with a cane mat, neatly worked, and in the winter with a carpet.

mours,

mours, or crooked persons. It is in these eastern parts of the world that man rises in all his native majesty, and that woman displays all the charms of her sex. It is in Georgia and in Greece that those well-defined features, those admirable forms, impressed by nature on the *chef-d'œuvre* of her works, are in the highest preservation. It is there that Apelles would still find models worthy of his pencil.

The women do not solely confine themselves to the education of their children. All the domestic affairs are in their department. They are the house-keepers, and do not think it any disparagement to prepare the victuals for themselves and for their husbands with their own hands. The ancient custom which still subsists makes it their duty. Thus we see Sarah hastening to bake the cakes on the ashes, when the angels visited Abraham, who offered them the usual repast of hospitality. Before the departure of Telemachus (x), Menelaus says to him “ I go

(x) *Odyfsey*, lib. 15.

“ to command the queen and her attendants to prepare a splendid repast with the provisions that are contained in this palace.”

Subject to custom, whose unalterable laws govern the countries of the East, the women are not admitted into the society of the men, not even at table (y), where the assemblage of the two sexes produces gaiety and *bons mots*, and gives a zest to the entertainment. When the rich are desirous of dining with one of their wives, they give her previous notice. She disposes the apartment, prepares the most delicate dishes, and receives her lord with respect, and with the most refined attention. The women of the lower class usually remain standing, or seated in a corner of the room, whilst their husband is at dinner. They frequently present him water to wash himself, and help him at table (z). These customs

(y) Sarah, who prepared dinner for Abraham and his guests, did not seat herself at table; she remained shut up in her tent.

(z) I dined lately with an Italian who was married to an Egyptian woman. He has adopted the manners

customs which the Europeans might justly style barbarous, and against which they might exclaim with reason, appear so natural in this country, that they have no idea of their being different in other climates. Such is the force of habit over the human mind. A custom established for ages seems to be the law of nature.

Domestic cares leave the Egyptian women a great many leisure moments, which they employ amongst their slaves in embroidering a sash, in making a veil, in drawing designs on stuff to cover a sofa, and in spinning with the distaff. So Homer paints the women of his time (*a*).
 “ Andromache, however, had not yet
 “ learnt the death of Hector. She did
 “ not know that he had remained without
 “ the gates of the town. Occupied in
 “ her palace, she was embroidering a mag-

manners of the country he has lived in so long. His wife and sister-in-law stood up before me; with difficulty I prevailed on them to be seated, and place themselves at table with us. Their timidity and embarrassment were very great.

(*a*) Iliad, lib. 22.

“ nificent work, whilst her slaves were heat-
 “ ing the bath for her husband on his re-
 “ turn from battle.”

Telemachus, seeing that Penelope, in speaking to her suitors, talked of affairs which seemed to be out of her sphere, says to her “ O, mother! go up into your
 “ apartment; resume the occupations of
 “ your sex, the shuttle, and the distaff.
 “ Command in the midst of your women,
 “ but leave to the men, and above all to
 “ me, the care of this bow. Penelope
 “ withdrew, secretly admiring the wisdom
 “ of her son (*b*).”

Labour, however, has its interludes. Joy is not banished the interior of the haram. The nurse interests you in the history of past times, by the manner in which she relates the tale. Gay or tender airs are sung; slaves accompany the voice with the tambour de basque and castanets. The *almé* sometimes come to enliven the scene by their dances, and the touching melody of their voices. They gracefully repeat

(*b*) Odyſſey, lib. 21.

passionate romances. A collation, where perfumes and exquisite fruits are in abundance, terminates the daily scene. Thus do the Egyptian women strive to charm the listlessness of their captivity.

Yet they are not wholly prisoners. They have permission once or twice a week to go to the bath, and to visit their relations and their friends. Another duty they are permitted to perform, is, to weep over the dead. I have often seen, in the environs of Cairo, disconsolate mothers, repeating funeral hymns around the tombs which they had covered with odoriferous plants. It was thus that Hecuba (*c*) and Andromache

(*c*) I shall lay before you the lamentations of *Andromache*, and of *Fatima*.

A N D R O M A C H E.

“ O my husband, thou diest in the flower of thy
 “ age ! Thou leavest me a widow in a desert palace.
 “ Before this helpless infant, the unhappy offspring
 “ of our love, arrives at puberty, the city of Troy
 “ will be overthrown. Thou art no more, Thou
 “ who defendedst her ramparts, who protectedst her
 “ women from violence, and her children from cap-
 “ tivity. Triumphant vessels prepare to lead them

maché poured forth their lamentations near the body of Hector. It was thus that

“into bondage, and I shall be amongst the number
 “of the captives. O! my son! thou must share in
 “my misfortune; thy hands will be employed in un-
 “worthy labours, by order of a cruel master; per-
 “haps even one of those Greeks, whose father, son,
 “or brother has fallen by the hands of Hector, will
 “precipitate thee in his fury from the summit of one
 “of our towers; for Hector was terrible in his com-
 “bats, and he often covered the earth with the bo-
 “dies of his enemies. All Ilion celebrates his va-
 “lour, and bewails his loss. Oh my husband! thy
 “death is a dreadful stroke for thy parents, but they
 “are less to be pitied than I am. Hadst thou but
 “in dying, amidst thy family, stretched out thy
 “hand to thy unhappy spouse! had but thy mouth
 “addressed her in consoling words! I should have
 “preserved the memory of them in my heart, and have
 “recalled them night and day to my memory, amidst
 “my tears and sighs.” *Iliad*, lib. 24.

F A T I M A.

“O my father! O minister of the most high! O
 “prophet of the merciful God! All then is over!
 “The divine revelation is buried with thee. The
 “angel Gabriel has for ever taken his flight to hea-
 “ven. Supreme Being, grant my last prayers. Hasten
 “to unite my soul to his; enable me again to behold
 “his

that Fatima and Sophia wept over that of Mahomet. Nor were the Romans strangers to this custom. They had their funeral urns which they crowned with cypress. With what elegance does Horace strew flowers over the urn of Quintilius! How touching and tender (*d*) is the ode he addresses to Virgil on the death of their common friend! Amongst the European nations, where the ties of blood are not so strict, those religious duties paid to the dead by the piety of the ancients, are as much as possible superseded; but one only dies without regret, when one has not known the happiness of being loved in life.

“his face; deprive me not of the fruit of his merits
“and intercession at the day of judgment.”

Then taking a little dust from off his coffin, and holding it near her face, she added “When one has
“smelt the dust of his tomb, can one any longer
“relish the flavour of the most exquisite perfumes?
“Alas! all these agreeable sensations are lost to my
“heart. The clouds of melancholy, which rise
“around me, would change the most beautiful days
“into gloomy nights.” *Vie de Mahomet*, p. 235.

(*d*) Horace, ode 24.

The Egyptian women treat one another in the most affectionate manner on their visits. When a woman enters a haram, the mistress of the house rises, makes offer of her hand, puts it on her heart, embraces her, and seats her by her side. A female slave hastens to take off her black cloke, and she is desired to put herself at her ease. She lays aside her veil, and her shift (*e*), and retains only a flowing robe which is perfectly adapted to her shape, and is fastened round the middle by a sash. Compliments are then paid her in the oriental style (*f*). “ My mother or my sister, “ why have you so long neglected us ? “ we were sighing after your company. It “ embellishes our house, it constitutes “ the happiness of our lives,” &c.

(*e*) A habit of ceremony which goes over the other clothes, except the collar, it is like the *chemise* adopted by the French women. It is taken off, as soon as they are seated, to be freer and lighter clad. In Arabic they call it *camis*.

(*f*) The titles of Mrs. Miss, &c. are unknown in Egypt. An elderly woman is called *mother*, a younger woman *sister*, a young girl *daughter of the house*.

Slaves then present her with coffee, sherbet, and sweetmeats. They chat, they laugh, and toy together. A large dish is placed on the sofa, which is covered with pomegranates, bananas, and excellent melons. The daughter of the house, holding a ewer full of water mixed with rose-water, presents it to wash with, in a silver plate. During the time they eat, noisy mirth, and joyous conversation season the repast. The wood of aloes is kept burning in the cassiolet, and perfumes the apartment. After the collation, slaves dance to the noise of cymbals, and the ladies often take a share in their amusements. Before they part they often repeat “ God preserve your health ! Heaven
“ grant you a numerous progeny ! God
“ preserve your children, the joy and glory
“ of your family (*g*).”

During the whole time a stranger is in the haram the husband is not allowed to approach it. It is the asylum of hospita-

(*g*) I mention these wishes, which are very ancient in the East, since they are often to be met with in the holy scriptures.

lity, and cannot be violated without dangerous consequences. This is a privilege the Egyptian women carefully maintain, and it is rendered dear to them by a very powerful motive. A lover in disguise may be thus introduced into the forbidden place (*b*), and it is of the last importance not to be discovered. Death would pay the forfeit of the attempt. Love in this country, where the passions are impetuous, both from the nature of the climate, and the obstacles it meets with, is often followed by tragic scenes.

The Turkish women go always under the guard of eunuchs, to take the air on the Nile, and enjoy the prospect of its charming banks. There are handsome apartments in their boats, richly decorated. They are adorned with sculpture, and are agreeably painted. They are distinguishable, from the blinds let down over the windows, and the music that accompanies them.

(*b*) I have already said that *Haram* signifies prohibited place.

When they cannot go abroad, they endeavour to enliven their prison. Towards the setting sun they mount upon the terrace, and enjoy the cool of the evening amidst the flowers which are carefully preserved there. They often bathe themselves, and enjoy, at once, the coolness of the water, the perfume of odoriferous plants, the fresh air, and the sight of a million stars shining in the firmament.

So was *Bathsheba* bathing herself, when David (*i*) saw her from the top of his palace.

The Turks, to prevent their women from being seen from the tops of the minarets, oblige the public criers to swear that they will shut their eyes at the hours when they mount up them to announce the prayers; but a more effectual precaution they take is, to choose *blind men* for these pious functions.

Such, Sir, is the ordinary life of the Egyptian women. To bring up their children, to employ themselves solely in

(*i*) Book of Kings, chap. II.

the affairs of house-keeping, to live retired in the interior of their family, constitute their duties. To visit and give entertainments to each other, where they often resign themselves to wanton mirth, and to the greatest freedoms, to go on the water, or walk under the shade of orange-trees, and to hear the *almé*; these are their amusements. They deck themselves out with as much art to receive their acquaintances, as the French women do to distinguish themselves in the eyes of the men. Naturally timid and gentle, they become forward, and are hurried away by passion, when once a violent appetite gets possession of their souls. Then neither bolts nor bars, nor the Cerberuses who surround them, are any obstacle to their desires. Death itself, suspended over their heads, does not hinder them from contriving means to satisfy their passions, and they are seldom ineffectual.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T-

LETTER XVI.

An intrigue which happened at Rosetta, between an European and a young girl, a native of Georgia.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

TO complete, Sir, the portrait of the Egyptian women, I shall recount to you an adventure of gallantry, which happened a short time ago at Rosetta. It will give you an idea of the manner in which they love in this country. To paint manners, we must make use of facts, not reasoning. I shall only be careful to throw a veil over my pictures. Should my narrative become animated, attribute it to the nature of the subject.

Old *Hassan*, a very jealous Turk, had married a Georgian girl of sixteen; she was never suffered to be out of sight; but is there any barrier against love? This Seigneur who was very rich, possessed some beautiful estates in the environs of Rosetta. At a quarter of a league's distance from the town he had a magnificent garden, where
he

he permitted young Gemilé (for that was her name) to go in the evenings to take the air, attended by several slaves of both sexes. The men kept the gate, and stood sentry round the walls. The women followed her into the garden. There she walked pensively under the orange bowers. The murmur of the waters, the freshness of the verdure, the tender accents of the turtle doves which inhabit these hallowed groves, only added food to her melancholy. She gathered fruit and ate it without taste, she plucked a flower, and smelt it without enjoyment. The pleasures she partook of with her women, only served to whet her desires. One evening as she was passing along the river to go to her garden, covered with her veil, and surrounded by her slaves, she perceived an European who had lately arrived at Rosetta (*k*). His dress, so different from that of the Turks, made her remark him. The bloom of youth still glowing on his cheeks, not yet made tawny

(*k*) The Europeans may keep their dress at Rosetta; but they run a risk in going far from the town in it.

by the sun, caught her attention. She passed him slowly, and let her fan drop (1), to have a pretence for stopping a moment. She met his eyes, and his looks penetrated to the very bottom of her soul. The air, the shape, every feature, every attitude of the stranger, remained imprinted on her memory. The impossibility of speaking to him, the dread of seeing him no more, gave her the most lively feelings of her bondage; and a growing desire, from the constraint in which she lived, became at once an impetuous passion. Scarcely had she entered the shady grove, before she stole away from the troublesome crowd, and taking aside one of her women, in whom she placed the greatest confidence, “Did you observe, said she, the young stranger? what vivacity is there in his eyes! “what looks he darted towards me! O “my friend, O my dear Zetfé! go and find “him. Tell him to come to-morrow under the orange-trees that line the garden, near the wood of date-trees, where

(1) The Egyptian women carry fans made of feathers, fastened in a handle of wood, of a semicircular form.

“the wall is lowest. Tell him that I
“wish to see him; to converse with
“him; only let him take care to elude
“the vigilance of my merciless keepers.”

The message was punctually conveyed. The European promised without reflection, but was prevented by the dangers to which he would be exposed. The slave disguised like a merchant, finds him a second time, and enquires why he had broke his word. He made several excuses, and fixed a distant day of rendezvous, that he might consider of the measure. Reflection prevailed over desire. The sight of a place prepared for impaling some unhappy wretch alive, froze his courage. He did not keep his assignation. Zetfé returns a third time, after some sharp reproaches, tells him of her mistress's passion for him, and of the horror in which she held old Hassan. She extolled the charms, the beauty, and painted the ill fortune of a young woman torn from her parents, and sold to a barbarian. The young man, seduced by this portrait, vowed that he would be the next day under the shade, an hour after sunset.

The

The beautiful Gemilé still full of confidence, tho' hitherto deceived, had gone into the bath. Her black locks, which formed a contrast to the fairness of her complexion, were just washed with rose water, and flowing in tresses down to her very feet. She was perfumed with precious essences. A girdle richly embroidered displayed her shape, and fastened her light dress, which, without being made to project artificially, assumed the exact form of her body, and defined all its contours. She had thrown off her veil and mantle; an India handkerchief adorned with pearls, crowned her head. All brilliant as she was with the graces of youth, she still feared she was not handsome enough; she waited with anxiety, now quickening her pace, then suddenly stopping short, and lying down to roll amongst the flowers. She started at the least noise, and cast her eyes towards the country. The sun was set, the stars began to shine. Night, so beautiful in this climate, night, whose delicious coolness repairs the exhausted strength, and restores the soul to its full energy, had spread her
veil

veil over all nature, and thickened her shades on the bower which concealed the amorous Gemilé. Each breath of wind which shook the leaves, alternately extinguished and revived fear and hope in her fluttering heart. Uncertainty, the torment of passionate lovers, made her experience at once a thousand miseries.

The moment of returning to the town was come, and she found herself again deceived for the third time. Rage takes place of tender sentiments. She breathes nothing but revenge, and is on the point of commanding the death of her deceiver; but endowed as she was with more sensibility than vanity, hope and desire soon got the better of her resentment. “No, said she, “he shall not die; go, my dear Zetfé, go “and be the bearer of peaceful tidings. “Dissipate his fears, paint to him my “love, and let him come and taste its “value.”

Zetfé returns to the European, calms his apprehensions, gives him a lively representation of the tenderness of her mistress, and the good fortune which was offered

ferred him. The imprudent youth, unable to resist such a seducing picture, made fresh promises; but scarcely was he alone, before the idea of an ignominious death made him violate his vows. Patience may be exhausted. That of Gemilé continued long. For nine months did she solicit a man whom she had only seen for a moment. She pleaded in his behalf, who merited no excuses. To these fruitless attempts she added fresh ones, and could not prevail on herself to lose the fruit of so much labour. One evening that she had been pouring forth bitter tears, one evening that she had forgot herself under the shade, with thinking on him she loved, and whose image was perpetually before her eyes, old Hassan, tired of waiting for her, used her ill. The charm was broken. She retired furious into her apartment. Despairing love transported her to vengeance, but mitigated, whilst it pronounced the sentence; "Hearken, said she to her faithful Zetfé, "go to-morrow at sun-rise, find this perfidious European, and convey to him "my last words: Stranger, I have seen thee;

“ I thought thee possessed of sensibility,
 “ and my heart wished to belong to thee.
 “ For nine months thou hast betrayed my
 “ hopes. Thou makest a sport of perjury.
 “ Take heed (*n*), thy life is in my hands,
 “ and I am irritated. On Thursday, Haf-
 “ san sets out for Faoüé, he returns late,
 “ I shall pass the day in the country.
 “ Come and receive thy pardon at my
 “ feet, or a slave shall bring me thy head.
 “ I have sworn it by the prophet; Gemilé
 “ will be satisfied, or revenged.”

Zetfé faithfully repeats the words of her
 mistress, and the European deliberates no
 longer. That death appeared preferable to
 him at least, which promised pleasures; he
 made a present to the slave, conjured her
 to calm the rage of Gemilé, and assured
 her that he would not fail to be at the
 place of rendezvous a little after sun-set.
 He was not however without uneasiness.
 Is it a snare laid for him? May she not be
 disposed to punish so many breaches of

(*n*) It is very easy for a Turkish woman to get a
 stranger assassinated, or even to get him capitally pu-
 nished. She has only to express a wish.

promise?

promise? Does a Turkish woman know the pleasure of pardoning? Can wounded pride ever be brought to relent? The day arrives. His anxiety augments. A thousand ideas run counter in his mind. A thousand sentiments distract his soul. No matter; he must go. The image of a beautiful woman who is waiting for him, sets him on fire, and hides the danger from his eyes. He arms himself at the approach of night, crosses the field of rice, steals along the wood of date-trees, and reaches the wall that separates him from his fair Georgian. His heart beats; he looks whether any body sees him; he springs upon the wall, and descends into the garden. At the sight of him, two women rise up and seem frightened. He remains motionless. One of them, it was Gemilé, stretches out her hand, and encourages him. He approaches her, and makes a profound bow, she tenderly raises him, makes a sign, and her slave retires. “Stranger, says she to him, why hast thou so long deceived me? thou didst not love me then?”—“Pardon, beautiful Gemilé, fear alone has

“ hitherto restrained me ; but I come to
“ throw myself at your feet, to repair my
“ misconduct.” She attempts to renew
her reproaches ; they expire on her lips.
She takes the young man by the hand,
which trembles in hers, and leads him,
“ nothing loth,” under a thick bower of
orange-trees. The foliage was silvered over
by the moon ; The grass was covered with
flowers. The delicious odour of the plants
conveyed voluptuousness into all the senses.
The gauze and silk she wore, scarcely con-
cealed the charms of Gemilé. The mo-
ments were precious ; and history says that
the two lovers knew how to make the
most of them.

This adventure, Sir, will appear impro-
bable, as it will be judged relatively to
European manners. I could easily have
frenchified the circumstances. Then it
might have appeared natural. But where
would have been the advantage of it ?
Another error added to the number ! It
would have been said, the Egyptian are
like the European women, without re-
flecting

them, produced by slavery on one hand, and freedom on the other ; I have rather chosen to relate a fact which is improbable, than to dress out a fable with the colour of truth.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER XVII.

Journey from Grand Cairo to Gizé, where the French merchants have a country house; the route from Gizé to the pyramids, with an exact account of their height, as described both by ancient and modern travellers. It is shewn that the great pyramid is at present 600 feet high; but that in the time of Herodotus, when the sand was not accumulated round its base, it measured almost 800 feet perpendicular.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

YOU are surpris'd, Sir, that I have hitherto made no mention of the pyramids. You expect a description of them, which may clear your doubts, and determine your judgment. This has been the very reason of my silence. I have only delayed it hitherto from the desire of ascertaining facts, and of giving such particulars as may gratify your curiosity. One journey

journey was not sufficient. I arrive from a second one with the Count d'Antragues, who has been led into Egypt by his thirst after knowledge. This French nobleman unites the most amiable qualities with a great deal of understanding and much information.

We set out from Grand Cairo after dinner, and went out of town by the quarter of *Hanefi*. The Nile was on our right, and the canal of *the Prince of the Faithful* on our left. The plain we crossed extends as far as *Mafr Fostat*. It is intersected by lakes, by clumps of trees, and gardens. There are several country houses also belonging to the grandees. The most considerable is that of Ibrahim Bey, *Cheik Elbelled (o)*, whither he often brings his women. They have for a walk, a vast enclosure planted with orange and pomegranate trees, with a covered terrace, which overlooks the river. It is there they spend a part of their days in captivity. A little

(o) It is, as I have already said, the title assumed by the most powerful amongst the Beys, and signifies Governor of the country.

farther is a large building inhabited by the dervises. It is said that their proximity is a subject of consolation to the fair prisoners.

At the extremity of the plain we found the opening of the canal of the Prince of the Faithful, and the water-castle. We traversed a part of Old Cairo, and embarking at the point of the *Mekias* we landed at Gizé, where the French merchants hire handsome country-houses. We passed the evening there, impatient to continue our journey. Before we set out it was necessary to make a present to the *Kia-chef* (*p*), who promised us two *Cheiks* (*q*), to secure us from being pillaged by the Arabs. This was formerly a voluntary gift, but at present is become a tribute, which the governor exacts from European curiosity. It originated with the English, who in returning from Bengal never fail to visit the pyramids. The ridiculous vanity of these *Nabobs* distributing their gold by handfuls, reflecting on the immense difference between

(*p*) Governor.

(*q*) Man of the law, or of authority amongst the Arabs.

them

renders travelling more expensive and more difficult for those who have not had the fortune to govern the rich provinces of Bengal.

The present being accepted, and the escort arrived, we quitted Gizé at about one o'clock in the morning. Scarcely had we travelled a quarter of a league before we perceived the summit of the two great pyramids, from which we were three leagues distant. The full moon shone upon them, and they appeared like two points of rock crowned by the clouds. The sight of these ancient monuments, which have outlived the destruction of nations, the fall of empires, and the ravages of time, inspires a sort of veneration. The calmness of the air, the silence of the night, added still further to their majesty. The soul, casting an eye over the ages that have passed away before their unshaken mass, trembles with an involuntary respect. Hail to the remains of the seven wonders of the world ! Honour be to the power of that people who could raise them !

It

It is in the rich territory which furrounds them, that fable has placed the Elyfian fields. The canals which interfect them are the Styx and Lethé. Penetrated with ideas of mythology, you think you behold the shades of heroes and virtuous men fleeing by your fides. You think you hear the laft adieu of Eurydice. How many affecting images have thefe places, celebrated by Orpheus and by Homer, furnished to poetry!

We kept advancing however, and the pyramids, whole aspects varied according to the circuits we made in the plain, and the pofition of the clouds, difplayed themfelves more and more to view. At half paff three in the morning we arrived at the foot of the greateft. We left our clothes at the gate of the paffage which leads to the infide, and defcended, carrying each of us a flambeau in his hand. Towards the bottom you muft creep like ferpents to get into the interior paffage which corresponds with the former. We mounted it on our knees, fupporting ourfelves with our hands againft the fides. Without this precaution
one

One runs the risk of slipping on the inclined plane, where the slight notches are insufficient to stop the foot, and one might fall to the bottom. Towards the middle we fired a pistol, the frightful noise of which, repeated in the cavities of this immense edifice, continued a long time, and awakened thousands of bats, which flying round us, struck against our hands and faces, and extinguished several of our wax candles. They are much larger than the European bats. Arrived above, we entered a great hall, the gate of which is very low. It is an oblong square, wholly composed of granite. Seven enormous stones extend from one wall to the other, and form the roof. A sarcophagus made of one block of marble lies at one end of it. This monument has been violated by the hands of men. It is empty, and the lid of it has been wrenched off. Some pieces of earthen vases lie around it. Under this beautiful hall is a chamber not so large, where you find the entrance to a conduit filled with rubbish. After examining these caves, where day-light never penetrated,
and

and where eternal night thickens his gloomy shades, we descended the same way, taking care not to fall into a well (*r*), which is on the left, and goes to the very foundations of the pyramid. The internal air of this edifice never being renewed, is so hot, and mephitic, that one is almost suffocated. When we came out of it, we were dropping with sweat, and pale as death. We might have been taken for spectres. After greedily breathing the external air, and refreshing ourselves with it, we lost no time in scaling this mountain made by the hands of men. It is composed of more than two hundred layers of stone. They overlap each other in proportion to their elevation, which is from two to four feet. It is necessary to climb up all these enormous steps to reach the top. We undertook it at the North-East angle, which is the least damaged. It took us however, half an hour with great pains and many efforts to effect it.

(*r*) Pliny knew of it.—There is in the pyramid a well 26 cubits deep. Lib. 36.

The

The sun was rising, and his gilding was gradually spreading over the east. We enjoyed a pure air, and a most delicious coolness. Presently he began to gild the point of the *Mokattam* (*s*), and his luminous disk appeared on the edge of the mountain. We received his first rays, and distinguished in the shade the points of the pyramids of Saccara, at three leagues distance from us in the plain of the mummies. The light descended rapidly. The minarets, and the tops of the date-trees, planted round the villages, built on eminences, appeared enlightened. Every instant discovered to us new beauties. As this luminary mounted in the heavens, he spread his burning rays over the mountains and the valley of Egypt. The flocks were descending from the hamlets, boats under sail were going up the Nile. We followed with our eyes the vast contours formed by him in the plain. To the north we had barren hills, and parched sands; to the south, the river, and an ocean of harvests;

(*s*) The mountain which overlooks Grand Cairo.

to the east, to complete the picture, we perceived the small town of Gize, the towers of Maſr Foſtat, the minarets of Grand Cairo, and the caſtle of Salah Eddin,— Seated on the loftieſt and moſt ancient monument of men, as on a throne, by running over the horizon, we ſaw a frightful deſert; a rich country where lay the Elyſian fields, hamlets, towns, a majestic river, and edifices, which ſeemed to be the work of giants. There is not in the univerſe a more varied, a more magnificent, and more awful ſpectacle. It elevates the mind, and forces it to contemplation.

After engraving our names on the ſummit of the pyramid, we deſcended cautiously, for we had the abyſs before us. A piece of ſtone detaching itſelf under our feet or hands, might have ſent us to the bottom.

Arrived at the foot of the pyramid, we made the tour of it, contemplating it with a ſort of horror. When viewed cloſe, it ſeems to be made of maſſes of rocks; but at a hundred paces diſtance, the largeneſs of the ſtones

stones is lost in the immensity of the whole, and they appear very small.

To determine its dimensions is still a problem. From the time of Herodotus to our days, it has been measured by a great number of travellers and learned men, and their different calculations, far from clearing up doubts, have only increased the uncertainty. I shall give you a table of them, which will serve at least to prove how difficult it is to come at the truth.

| | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Height of the great pyramid. | Width of one of its sides. |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|

Ancients.

French feet.

| | | | | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|-----|---|---|---|---|-----|
| Herodotus | - | 800 | - | - | - | - | 800 |
| Strabo | - | 625 | - | - | - | - | 600 |
| Diodorus Siculus | 600 and a fraction. | | | | | | 700 |
| Pliny | - | - | - | - | - | - | 708 |

Moderns.

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|---|-----|---|---|---|---|-----|
| Le Bruyn | - | 616 | - | - | - | - | 704 |
| Prosper Alpinus | - | 625 | - | - | - | - | 750 |
| Thevenot | - | 520 | - | - | - | - | 682 |
| Nieburh | - | 440 | - | - | - | - | 710 |
| Greaves | - | 444 | - | - | - | - | 648 |

Number

Number of layers of stone which form it.

| | | | | |
|--------------------|-------|-----|-----|---------|
| Greaves | - | 207 | - - | layers. |
| Maillet | - - | 208 | | |
| Albert Liewenstein | | 260 | | |
| Pocock | - - - | 212 | | |
| Belon | - - - | 250 | | |
| Thevenot | - - | 208 | | |

It appears to me that Messieurs Greaves and Nieburh have prodigiously deceived themselves in measuring the perpendicular height of the great pyramid. All the travellers allow, in fact, that it has at least two hundred layers of stone. Now, these layers, are from two to four feet high (*u*).

(*u*) The layers are from four feet and a half to four feet high, being not so high at the top as at the base.
Pocock, description of the East, 1st volume.

The elevation of the first layer is five feet, but it diminishes insensibly in proportion as one mounts.
Prosper Alpinus, chap. 6. of the Pyramids.

This pyramid has 208 steps of large stones, the thickness of which makes the height of them about two feet and a half, one with another, for I have measured some of them more than three feet high. Thevenot, p. 242.

The

The highest are at the base, and decrease insensibly to the top. I have measured several of them which were more than three feet high, and I found none less than two, the least height of them we can take as a medium, therefore, is two feet and a half, which, even according to Mr. Greaves's calculation, who reckons 207 layers, would make 517 feet six inches perpendicular height.

Observe that Messieurs Greaves, Maillet, Thevenot, and Pocock, who only differ in the number of the layers, from 207 to 212, all mounted by the North-east angle, as the least injured. I followed the same route, and counted only 208 steps. But if we reflect that the pyramid has been open on the side next the desert, that the stones on that side have been thrown down, that the sand which covers them has formed a considerable hill, we shall not be astonished that Albert Liewenstein, Belon, and Prosper Alpinus, who must have mounted by the South-east, or South-west angle, which are less exposed to the sands of Lybia, should have found a greater number of

Vol. I. Q steps,

steps, so that the calculation of these travellers, agreeing with that of Diodorus Siculus and Strabo, appears to be nearest the true height of the pyramid taken at its natural base; whence we may conclude with reason, that it is at least six hundred feet high. Indeed this is authenticated by a passage of Strabo (*x*). These are his words, "Towards the middle of the height of one of the sides, is a stone that may be raised up. It shuts an oblique passage which leads to a coffin placed in the center of the pyramid." This passage open in our days, and which in the time of Strabo (*y*), was towards the middle of one face of the pyramid, is at present only a hundred feet from the base. So that the ruins of the covering of the pyramid, and of the stones brought from within, buried by the sand, have formed a hill in this place two hundred feet high (*z*). Pliny comes in aid of this opinion. The great Sphynx was in his time upwards of 62 feet above the surface of the ground.

(*x*) Strabo, lib. 17. p. 1161.

(*y*) That is to say, in the Augustan age.

(*z*) Pliny, lib. 36. page 861.

Its whole body is at present buried under the sand. Nothing more appears of it than the neck and head, which are 27 feet high. If even the sphynx, though defended by the pyramids against the northerly winds, which bring torrents of sand from Libya, be covered as high as 38 feet, judge what an immense quantity must have been heaped up to the northward of an edifice whose base is upwards of seven hundred feet long. It is to this we must attribute the prodigious difference between the accounts of the historians who have measured the great pyramid at distant periods, and at opposite angles. Herodotus who saw it in the age nearest to its foundation, when its true base was still uncovered, makes it 800 feet square (*a*). This opinion appears very probable to me. It is also that of Pliny (*b*), who says it covered the space of eight acres.

Messieurs Shaw (*c*), Thevenot (*d*), and

(*a*) Euterpe, p. 6.

(*b*) Pliny the naturalist, lib. 36. p. 861.

(*c*) Geographical observations on Syria and Egypt.

(*d*) Voyage up the Levant.

the other travellers who pretend that this pyramid was never finished, because it is open and without coating, are in an error. It is only necessary to observe the remains of the mortar, with the splinters of white marble which are to be found in many parts of the steps, to see that it has been coated; after reading attentively the description given of it by the ancients, every doubt vanishes, and the truth is as clear as day light. Let us examine some of these passages. “The great pyramid
 “was covered with polished stones, perfectly well jointed, the smallest of which
 “was 30 feet long. It was built in the
 “form of steps, on each of which were
 “placed wooden machines to raise the
 “stones from one to another.” *Herodotus, Euterpe.*

“The great pyramid is built of stones
 “very difficult of workmanship, but of an
 “eternal duration. It is preserved to our
 “days (*e*), without being in the least injured. The marble was brought from

(*e*) Towards the middle of the Augustan age.

“the

“ the quarries of Arabia.” *Diodorus Siculus, lib. 1.*

This historian thought that the whole building was composed of stones, similar to those of the coating, which were of very hard marble. Had there been some pieces torn off, he would have perceived under that covering, a rather soft calcareous stone.

“ The great pyramid is formed of stones brought from the quarries of Arabia. It is not far from the village of Bufiris (*f*), where those persons reside who are so skilful as to climb up to the top.” *Pliny the naturalist, lib. 36.*

This passage shews that Pliny, deceived by the appearance, was in the same error with Diodorus Siculus. It demonstrates also that it was covered. For what difficulty would there have been for the inhabitants of Bufiris to scale a building raised by steps? but it was really a prodigy for them to get up it when it formed a mountain, the four inclined planes of

(*f*) This village still exists; it is called *Boufir*, and is only a short league from the pyramids.

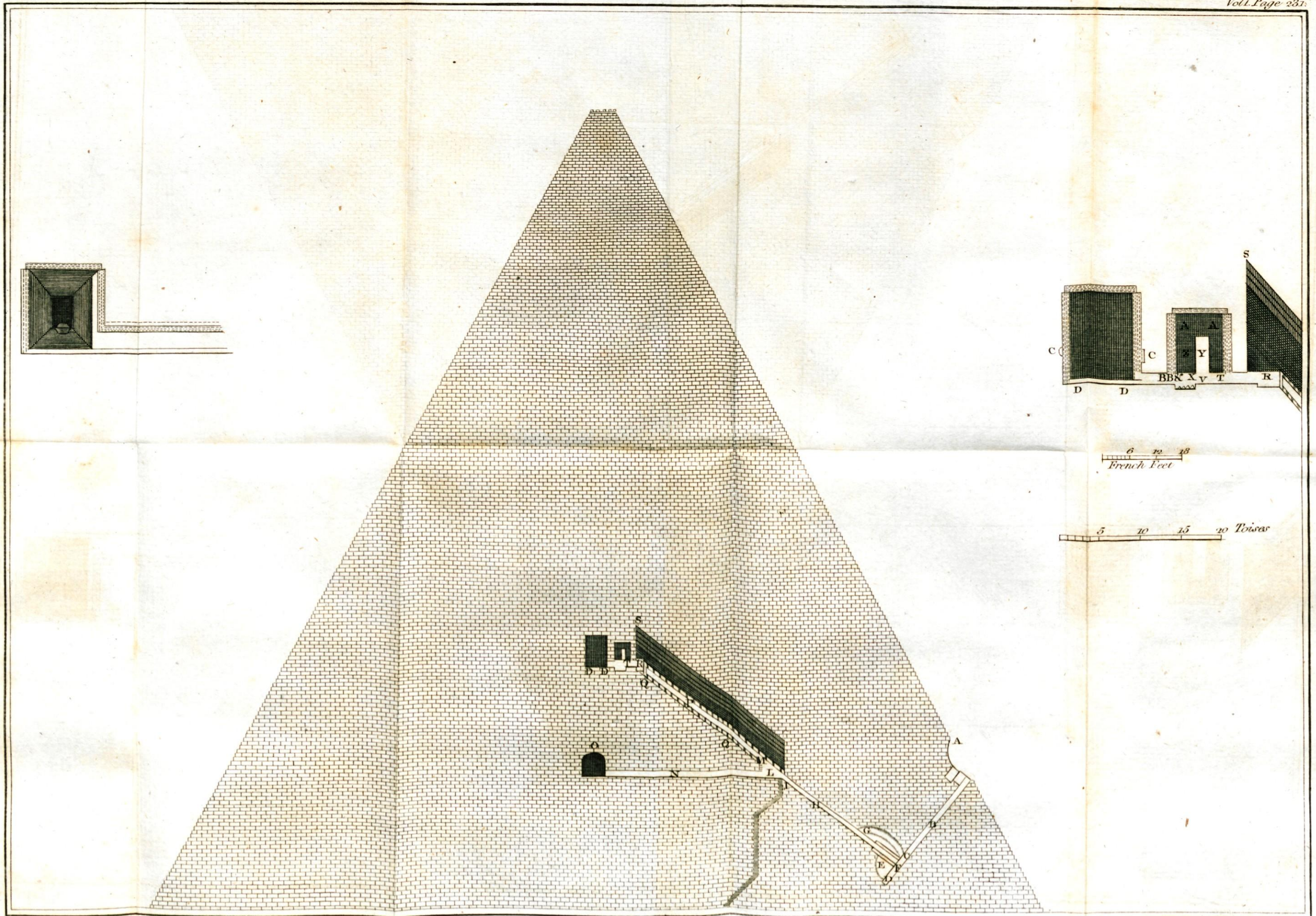
which presented a surface covered with polished marble.

I shall not pursue my remarks any farther, to prove to you that the great pyramid had a coating of marble. It is an incontestible fact. It is as certain too that it has been shut, as Strabo gives us to understand; and that by removing a stone placed in the middle of one of the sides, one found a passage which led to the tomb of the king; but I shall leave Mr. Maillet, who visited it forty times with all imaginable attention, the honour of laying before you the means employed to open it. I have examined the inside of it in two different journeys; twice I have mounted it, and I cannot help admiring the sagacity with which that author has developed the mechanism of that astonishing edifice. I shall subjoin his enquiries, and his plan of the pyramid, since I could only express myself as he does, and all the honour of the discovery belongs to him. I shall only add some necessary notes.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T





Plan of the Inside of the Great Pyramid.

L E T T E R XVIII.

Remarks on the interior structure of the great pyramid, its apartments, the means employed by the architects to shut it, and render it inaccessible, with the method now used of procuring admittance. This article is extracted from the learned Maillet. Subjoined is a chart, with notes, and reflections.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

NOT only, Sir, has the great pyramid been coated, and finished on the outside, but it was shut, and has been forcibly opened. This I take upon me to establish, so as to leave no doubt of the fact.

This violence may be remarked in the first place at the natural entry of the pyramid, whence, as may be seen with a

little attention, some of the stones which shut it, and were of an enormous size, have been removed. These stones were placed above a passage, which, by a steep descent, leads you to the centre of the pyramid, and to the chambers where the bodies of those who had built it were to be deposited. This passage, which slopes very rapidly, is one hundred feet long, and has its entrance at a hundred feet from the base of the pyramid. You get to it by a sort of hill, of about that height, formed by the ruins of the pyramid itself. The passage is three feet three inches square, and is filled from top to bottom with very even stones, of the same marble of which it is composed. Above the opening of the entrance into this passage, one remarks in the body of the pyramid, a space of nine or ten feet, whence stones of a prodigious size have been carried off, as appears from those which remain. This remark alone would sufficiently prove that the pyramid has been closed, since these stones can only have been removed, to
discover

discover the entrance of the passage, or to get a better hold of those which were in the passage itself, and which were bound to those that have been wrenched off. This may be observed at the letter A. After removing these prodigious stones, and those of the passage, which were under the former, it was easy to draw out the others, by taking hold of the part of them that projected externally. It is supposed, in order to render the execution of such an enterprize more difficult, that in placing these stones in the passage, they were covered with a very strong cement, that they might adhere more closely to the wall of the passage, and constitute only one mass with the whole body of the building; but by making use of stronger powers, and by the means of hot-water running in the channel marked B. they had succeeded in destroying the quality of the cement, and in detaching these stones, which they then drew out with little trouble. It is certain, at least that they have been able to extract them without at all injuring the stones which form the passage.

passage. In fact, they are as well polished at present, as on the first day, except in the bottom of the passage, where they have since hammered out cavities two or three fingers deep. This precaution was necessary, to facilitate the entry and return of the persons who visit the pyramid. It is easy to conceive, that, were it not for this aid, it would be impossible to descend this passage, without being hurried rapidly to the bottom; and that to remount, it would be necessary to tie one's self by cords fastened at the external entrance.

I have hinted above that this passage was composed of marble; I further add, that the stones which form its four sides, are in fact, of the finest white marble, and consequently the hardest. I acknowledge that it is rather of a yellowish cast; owing, doubtless, to length of time (*g*). One of these

(*g*) It is not grown yellow from time, it is its natural colour. There is at the foot of Mount Colzoum, on the western coast of the Red Sea, an immense quarry of this yellow marble. The sandy plain which leads to it is called *Elaraba---the Plain of Waggon*s. This name is undoubtedly derived from the

these prodigious stones which were removed, as I have said, from before the aperture of the passage, when the pyramid was forced, is still to be seen at the entrance. It is customary to get upon it and eat, when one visits this illustrious monument. It is undoubtedly of the same marble, as well as all those which form the other passages. It is on this principle I have advanced, that the stones, which closed the first passage I have just spoken of, and even all the other passages of the pyramid, were also of the same marble, preferred, doubtless, to any other, on account of its extreme durability. It is very easy to ascertain this, by lifting up one half of the stone still existing at the place marked C. where the interior and exterior passages join. With respect to the inside of the pyramid, it is so dark, and so blackened

the waggons made use of to convey the marble to the Nile, from whence it was transported, by water, almost to the foot of the pyramids. Herodotus and Pliny assure us that the stones, with which they were covered, were brought from the quarries of Arabia, because that part of Egypt was then called Arabia.

by

by the smoke of the candles, and wax-lights burnt there for ages, by persons who have visited it, that it is difficult to form an accurate judgment of the quality of the stones of the halls, and other places within this enormous mass. One only observes that they have been finely polished, that they are of the greatest durability, and so well jointed, that it is impossible to insert the point of a knife between them.

They had cleared this first passage, and accomplished this laborious work, when a second, still more considerable, presented itself. It was then necessary to extract the stones with which another passage was filled, which went up from this towards the summit of the pyramid, by a route as steep as the other was sloping. The first question was, how to find out where the passage which mounted towards the top terminated in that which they had opened; and I suppose they discovered it, although the stone, which closed this passage, was so exactly fitted, as to leave no mark
of

of any opening whatever. It could only be observed, that it did not, like the others, pass over the upper part of the first passage; this was discovered by sounding with the point of a knife, or some other instrument, which could easily be pushed into the cement that covered this stone, and joined it to those of the lower passage. This was found out, at ten feet from the end of the latter passage, the better to deceive those who might search to discover this opening. This stone was first attacked, and it was no easy work. The place was very narrow, and the work must have been carried on above the head, by lying on the back, without being able to use the strength of the arms but very feebly, and at the risk of being crushed every moment by a heavy mass ready to fall upon them. This may be seen by casting the eye on the figure, at letter C. After overcoming, however, by the hammer, the resistance of this first stone, which must have had a hold in this place, there succeeded a second, which ran along the bottom of the passage, and which must have
been

been worked in another manner. At length they got the better of this as well as of the former; but as another still presented itself, the labour being thought too tedious, this method was abandoned, and after preventing the descent of the stone which followed, and shut up the entrance of the passage, they made at the place marked D. a forced route of forty feet long, by eight or ten feet wide, in the stones which lined the lower passage, and which were at its extremity. This route is pointed out in the plate by the letter E. (*b*); in some places it is narrow and very low; in others it is high enough to admit of a man's standing erect. This work cost an infinite deal of labour. Turning at length to the left, towards the upper passage, they removed from the side of it three or four stones, which made an open-

(*b*) This uneven winding route, very different from the passages of the pyramid, evidently proves that it has been entered by force. What prodigious pains and labour it must have cost, to clear out a road of forty feet, in a narrow space, and through a mass of enormous stones!

ing

ing of fifteen or twenty feet broad in the place marked G. But before I speak of the continuation of this work, it is proper to observe, that the real stone which closed the passage in the place where it formed an angle with the lower one, that this stone, which had been cut in proportion to that angle, and which exactly closed this entry, has really been removed as I have mentioned. The stone in fact, with which it is at present closed, by no means fits it, but leaves, on the contrary, an interval of three or four fingers at the upper part, which ought to be longer there than at the lower. This may be seen at the place marked F. in the plate.

When they had wrenched off, and broken the three stones, which closed the side of the upper passage, from the place marked G, it was necessary to attempt to empty it of all the other stones, not only those which corresponded with that opening, but those also which were above, to an unknown extent. This was a difficult and very tedious undertaking, since only one person could work in a space of three feet three inches square.

square. There was reason to think, however, that besides the great number of stones that might be met with in the passage, there might perhaps be beyond it, in a place not so narrow, a long continuation of the same stones ready to choke up this passage in proportion as it was cleared out. This was in fact an augmentation of pain and labour the architect had not failed to prepare for those who should attempt to penetrate by this passage into the centre of the pyramid. To save a part of this labour, instead of attempting to break these stones one after the other at the place marked G, where the passage had already been attacked and begun upon, they took the resolution of supporting these stones in the passage itself, by staying, by means of a prop, or otherwise, the stone above that which they intended breaking. They then set to the work, and beginning with those stones which they broke and supported by props of a proportionable length as they proceeded, they continued it from stone to stone, and still advancing, still keeping within the size of the passage, until they at length

length arrived at its extremity, and at a space of which I am going to speak.

As for the rest, it is proper to observe that as long as the passage lasted, and in its whole length, they were obliged to make very great efforts to break the stones it was filled with. The blows of the hammer, the blows they had struck on the wedges they made use of to execute this work, so injured every part of this passage, that from being square, they have made it almost round ; which incontestably proves that they worked from top to bottom, and consequently had adopted the measure of propping the stones to break them in it. Indeed had this work been executed at the opening of the passage marked G, where it had been begun, that part only of the passage would have been injured ; the remainder of it, fourscore feet in length, designed by the letter H in the plate, from whence the stones would only have slid to the place where the passage had been opened, would have remained entire, and in as good preservation as in all the other places, where

it still subsists complete, even to the hall.

When they had got to the extremity of this passage, they found that its upper part was wanting; they even discovered that it had lost a foot of its capaciousness, since it was no more than two feet and a half deep. This space however extending from one part to the other a foot and a half in length, formed a vacancy of three feet, and made this interval six feet and a half wide, which composed on each side of the passage two elevations, or benches, two feet and a half high, and a foot and a half wide. They extended upwards in the same direction with the first passage, for the space of one hundred and twenty-five feet in length, according to my measuring; others make it one hundred and forty. At the extremity of these benches and of the passage, one meets with an esplanade or platform eight or nine feet deep, and six feet and a half wide, as all this interval is above the benches. This space is marked by the letter R in the more extensive plate of the extremity of the gallery, as it is given
on.

on the side of the pyramid. At the distance of every two feet and a half, there are formed in the benches from the bottom upwards, adjoining the wall, openings of a foot in length, six inches wide, and eight deep, perpendicularly cut. I shall explain in what follows, the use they were designed for. These benches and holes which accompany the passage marked P, are designed in the plate by the letter Q.

The sides of the gallery rise twenty five feet above the benches. From thence to the height of twelve feet, the wall is perfectly equal; it is then straightened by a stone which projects about three fingers; three feet above that another stone projects as much, and is followed at the same distance by a third, which equally advances. A fourth, in short, does the same three feet higher. From that there is only four feet of wall to the top, which is flat, and nearly as wide as the passage at the bottom of the gallery, that is to say, about three feet, three inches. All this elevation was necessary to the architect, for placing the stones destined to close the passages. What

I have just been saying of the narrowing of the gallery in proportion as it rises, may be seen in the plate marked at the two extremities by the letter S.

On coming out of the passage marked by the letter H, and on entering the gallery, one finds on the right hand an opening made in the wall. It occupies a part of the bench; this hole is almost round, cut in the shape of a small door of about three feet high by two and a half wide. From this hole one descends into a well I shall hereafter speak of, and of the use for which it was intended. This hole is at the letter I.

Once arrived at the gallery, it was not at all difficult to break the stones which filled the passage P, as well on account of their being above the benches, as from the greater width of the gallery, which gave the workmen liberty to employ their tools, and to strike at their ease the iron wedges they made use of to wrench and splinter the stones. They could begin, in short, with the last, which was still more easy to break than all the others, since they could
stand

stand erect in the passage, the more easily to accomplish it. After finishing this work, and freeing this space from the rubbish of the broken stones, they would examine the bottom of the groove, and remark that the first stones with which it was covered at the distance of from fourteen to fifteen feet, marked by the letter L, did not traverse the benches. On this discovery it was easy to remove these stones one after the other. This place was no sooner cleared, than a platform appeared of ten feet long, and as many high, at the end of which was a continuation of the passage, and which formed at the entrance of the gallery a triangle of fourteen or fifteen feet in extent. At the same time, on a level with the platform, and to the left of the passage which led to the gallery, they discovered a continuation of the passage three feet three inches square. This new passage was, before that, covered with stones which they had just removed. It was naturally conjectured that this road must necessarily lead to some secret part of the pyramid, which they determined to

find out. It was easy to extract from this passage, marked N in the plate, the stones which served to block it up, since there was room enough to work conveniently, and they might be removed out of the passage in a straight line. They broke them in this space which was at its entrance; this passage was found to be one hundred and eighteen feet long, and beyond, there was a vaulted chamber.

This hall, marked in the plate O, is seventeen feet and a half long, and fifteen feet ten inches wide; its roof is sharp, *en dos d'ane*, in the form of an ass's back. On the eastern side of this hall is a niche sunk three feet into the wall, and eight feet high by three wide. There had doubtless been a mummy in this niche, placed erect, according to the Egyptian custom. It was probably the body of the Queen whose husband built the pyramid, nor have I any doubt that this prince was buried in the hall above this, to which it was perpendicular, but about one hundred feet higher, as may be seen in the plate at letters O and DD. On entering this hall, the last stone

one

one finds on the right hand, had a shelving projection at its extremity of about three fingers, which had been done on purpose to prevent that which was to serve to close up the passage marked N, from entering into the hall. It is probable that this latter stone had a notch on the same side, that it might fit well, and join the wall of the apartment which corresponded with that entry. But I ought not to quit this place without mentioning a discovery I made in the upper part of the passage (*p*). I leave to others more expert than myself to determine what has been the cause of this accident. I am inclined to think that it must have been the effect of some earthquake, or perhaps the settling of this enormous mass, either heavier, or with a less solid foundation, on one side than

(*p*) This long and very remarkable slit is at least six lines in width. It strikes you at first sight. It is on the side next the Nile. Perhaps this part of the mountain, the foot of which is bathed by the waters of the river, which filtrate through the sand, has shrunk a little under the tremendous weight of the pyramid.

the other. It is certain, however, that I have never observed a similar defect in any other part of the pyramid, although I have examined it with the most minute attention. There is no part of the gallery in particular that I have not accurately examined. To supply the deficiency of a pole, which it was not possible to introduce through the crooked way by which one is obliged to gain the direct passage, I fastened several sticks together, at the end of which were tied some lighted wax-tapers; I caused them to be lifted as near as possible to the roof and the wall, without ever being able to discover any defect. I only observed that the sides were disfigured in some places, and that on the right, a piece of the wall was wanting, above the narrow part of the gallery. This accident happened doubtless by the fall of some stone, in the shutting of the pyramid, the manner of doing which I shall hereafter describe. Slipping from the workman's hands, it had fallen from the scaffold, and broken the place against which it fell.

On

On the subject of the first hall I have been speaking of, I must observe likewise, that they imagined, no doubt, that there was some hidden treasure below it. This appears from a breach made in it, by means of which one may, by passing over some irregular stones, penetrate into the body of the pyramid, to the depth of twenty or five-and-twenty paces. The stones that have been broken and extracted from that place at present almost fill the whole of the hall. The same attempt has been made in the upper hall; but it is probable that in both, they have had no other recompense for the infinite pains they took to spoil such beautiful works, than the mortification of having fruitlessly employed much time and labour.

After discovering the secret of this first hall, nothing remained but to penetrate into that where the body of the king was shut up. They did not doubt that they should meet with it at the top of the esplanade, which was, as I have observed, at the upper extremity of the gallery; and they

they concluded, with reason, that it must be situated above, and exactly on a level with the former. At the end of this platform, in fact, which, in the plate annexed to the pyramid, is marked with the letter R, they observed a continuation of the passage, of three feet three inches, perfectly closed. This they first set about clearing. This continuation of the passage is marked in the same figure by the letter T. It is probable that the first stone which closed it was so strongly fastened that it would require the greatest trouble to force it. This appears from a piece of the upper stone, that has been broken, undoubtedly to get a hold on the lower one which blocked the passage. It was at length removed, after many efforts, and a second was wrenched off also, which, with the former, opened a space of seven feet and a half in length. They wished to continue to penetrate this extremity of the passage; but after these two stones, they met with a third which could not be moved, because it was higher and wider than the opening. This was the architect's last resource to
deceive

deceive whoever might reach thus far, and to prevent the examining any further this mysterious hall, which was not twelve paces from that wherein reposed the body of the king, and where his treasures must be, in case any were buried with him. In spite of this difficulty however, this stone did not impose upon the workmen, nor discourage those who had undertaken to visit the whole pyramid. They assailed it with the hammer, and succeeded in breaking it after much time and trouble. It was six feet long, four wide, and possibly five or six high, since at this place there was a space of fifteen feet high, which at the end of eight feet elevation, widened four feet, or thereabouts, on the side of the gallery. This extension is marked by the letter G. It corresponded with an opening of the passage one foot and a half wide, anterior to this large stone by two feet. I shall point out in the sequel what use it was designed for.

At the top of this void there was in the wall which closed the passage on both sides, a hollow of a foot deep, and of about the same

same height. These holes, marked in the plate by the letters AA, have been made on purpose. They served for places for powerful levers, or cross beams, to suspend strong ropes from, which, by iron rings fastened to the great stone I have spoken of, held it suspended in the void marked Z, which it filled until the time of letting it drop on the passage BB; that is to say, when the body of the king was shut up in the hall. The opening of a foot and a half made in the passage V, and which preceded by two feet the space occupied by the great stone, was contrived to let the workmen out after they had let down that enormous stone. This opening was shut after they came out, by a stone two feet thick, that exactly fitted, and was brought under the opening by means of two iron rings fastened towards the extremity of the upper part of it. To these two rings were fixed two chains, which corresponded above with another heavier stone, hanging over the top of the opening Z, occupied by the great stone that left it open, by falling on the passage.

The

The ropes which supported this enormous stone had for a point of support the pillar marked Y in the plate. They rested however on the lower stone, whilst the workmen got out by the aperture of one foot and a half, which I have spoken of, and which remained between that and the upper opening. In short, as soon as they had got out of that cavity, the stone was no longer balanced, and was lifted by the counterpoise into the place it was to occupy, where it was exactly fitted by another stone in the shape of an escutcheon three fingers wide ; this escutcheon had been contrived by cutting the stone, where it is enchased. It is three fingers thick, by six or seven wide, and is of a man's height, when on entering the pyramid at the present day one raises one's body in the cavity marked V, which made the last part of the secret employed to secure the hall from violation. This sort of escutcheon of three fingers thickness is marked by the letter X, and merits attention.

Along the walls, which form the sides of the passage where the large stone of six feet

feet long, and four wide, was shut up, one observes on each side some round channels three fingers deep, the extremity of which is marked in the plate. This was done to let the stone fall more easily, and more exactly into its place, and to render it firmer and more immoveable in case of an attempt upon it. All these precautions prove the extreme pains they took to secure the body of the prince from violation, supposing that men might be found hardy and impious enough to undertake it. If, after the stone of a foot and a half wide, and three and a half long, which was the measure of the opening marked V formed in the passage, there still remained the smallest degree of light, it was filled with cement. There is reason to believe also that this stone itself was covered with it, before it was introduced upwards into the cavity it was to close; which rendered its position more sloping, by supporting it against the force of the counterpoise. A few strokes of the handle of the hammer would be sufficient to free it from the cement where there was too much, and to enable it

it to reach its destined place. This stone no longer exists, nor even the large one, which they were obliged to break in pieces to tear it from the place it occupied. Whoever examines with attention the disposition of the cavities I have just described, and which precede only by six feet the entrance of the hall, where the king's body was deposited, must be persuaded that things have been thus executed; and in the small space of nine feet, must admire the art and ingenuity of the architect. It is to facilitate the knowledge of this, that I have represented at large and separately, these different circumstances at the side of the figure I have given of the pyramid. The sight will explain the secret, better than any detail.

After extracting by the force of the hammer, and in fragments, the great stone from the channelled space where it had descended, they got to the last, which terminated at the hall, and filled the space marked BE. This was not difficult to draw; it was lifted almost without resistance, after which there

was

was a free entrance to this mysterious and well defended hall. This place, marked DD in the plate, has a flat roof, composed of nine stones. The seven middle ones are four feet wide by more than sixteen long, since, on either hand, they rest upon the two walls which run from East to West, and are at sixteen feet distance from each other. Two feet only of the width of each of the other two stones which are by the side of these are visible; the remainder is concealed in the walls on which their extremities rest. I leave to conjecture what may have been found in this hall. History, which undertakes to transmit to posterity only the memory of laudable actions, or of such as ought to be avoided, does not wish to perpetuate the recollection of outrages against nature, since they carry their own horror with them. Thus, burying in oblivion the name of the impious wretch who laid his sacrilegious hands upon this tomb, she wishes also to leave us in ignorance of the secret of its contents. At this day, however, of all that might have been contained in this
apartment

apartment, there remains only a case of marble granite (*b*), seven or eight feet long, by four wide, and as many high. It has been deposited when this place was shut at the top, and remains now, only because it could not be moved without breaking, and that it would thereby be rendered of no use. This case had a lid, as one may see from the form of its edges, but it has been broken off in moving it, and there are now no traces of it. It was undoubtedly this case which contained the body of the king, enclosed in two or three boxes of precious wood, agreeable to the custom in use amongst the great. It is also highly probable that this hall contained many other cases besides that of the prince, especially of persons buried with him in the same tomb, as it were, to keep him com-

(*b*) It appears to me that this Sarcophagus was of yellowish marble, like that of the first stone at the entrance of the exterior passage. A naturalist who should examine these different marbles, and those which were taken from Mount Colzoum, a few leagues from the spot where the monastery of St. Antony is built, would furnish the strongest degree of evidence.

pany. In fact, when the body of the king, who built this pyramid, was deposited in this superb mausoleum, several living persons, destined never to come out of it, and to be buried alive with their prince, were introduced there at the same time; a fact which I cannot doubt of, after the convincing proof I have of it. It is on the following testimony, that I found my opinion: precisely in the middle of this hall, which is 32 feet long, by 19 high, and 16 wide, one remarks two holes opposite to each other, elevated three feet and a half above the pavement. One which faces the north, is one foot long, by eight inches high, and goes in a right line to the outside of the pyramid. This hole is now blocked up by stones, at five or six feet from its aperture. The other on the eastern side, at the same distance from the floor, is perfectly round, and is spacious enough to admit the two fists. It then widens to the size of a foot in diameter, and continuing to descend, loses itself in the bottom of the pyramid. These two holes are marked by the letter C. I think, and
I hope

I hope every sensible man will think with me, that both one and the other of them could have no other use than to serve the persons shut up in this tomb with the body of the prince. The first was designed to give them air. It was through this also they received their food, and every thing they stood in need of; for which purpose they were doubtless provided with a long casket, proportioned to the size of the passage. To this machine was fastened a long cord, for the persons shut up in the pyramid, by means of which they might draw it to them; and another, likewise connected with the machine, hung on the exterior side, so that the casket might be reciprocally drawn from without. It was probably by this means that the persons shut up in this edifice were supplied with necessaries as long as any of them remained alive. On entering it I suppose that each of them was furnished with a coffin to be buried in, and that they successively rendered each other this last pious duty, until the last, who must want that succour his companions had derived from

himself and the others. The second hole served to empty dirt, which fell into a deep reservoir made for that purpose. I intended to have made a search without side the pyramid, at the place which corresponded with the oblong hole, and towards which there are two punctuated lines in the plate which represents the inside of the building. Perhaps I should there have found fresh proofs of what I have advanced; but besides that this research might have given umbrage to the powers of the country, who would not have failed to imagine that one was trying to discover some hidden treasure, I thought it possible that this hole might terminate in some hollow of the external part, and was apprehensive of finding its extremity wholly blocked up, either by the body of the pyramid, or at least by the stones of the coating. From what I have said, however, others may pursue the enquiry at the spot which corresponds with that aperture. By that there will be a full proof of the use of this hole, although it does not admit of a doubt with me, and seems impossible

impossible to be accounted for in any other way.

After explaining with as much perspicuity as the nature of the subject would allow, in what manner, and by what efforts the pyramid was opened, I shall clear up a doubt which the reader must have started on perusing this first part.— It remains to know where the magazine was placed for so many stones as were necessarily employed in blocking up the passages I have spoken of, and in what manner they were stopped by the workmen who afterwards came out from the inside. This discussion is no doubt as curious as the rest, and merits at least, as much attention.

I have already observed, that in the benches which ran along each side of the passage of 124 feet, at the bottom of the gallery were mortices perpendicularly hewn, of a foot long, six inches wide, and eight deep. This may be seen at the letter Q. These mortices perfectly corresponded with one another, and ran all the length of the benches at the distance of two feet

and a half. These apertures had been contrived in building the gallery, so as to be able to place in each of them a piece of wood a foot square, and three or four feet long, six inches of which were cut at the bottom to the height of eight fingers, according to the form and capacity of the mortices into which these joints were to enter. These pieces of wood were to form a scaffold above, to support the stones necessary to fill all the passages that remained to be blocked up in the inside of the pyramid, and even this passage of 124 feet, marked F. which was at the bottom of the gallery. These joints had another notch at their upper end; and long pieces of wood, in which mortices were cut, similar to those of the benches, being applied to these stakes, formed on each side of the gallery a resting-place from top to bottom, to lay planks of six feet and a half long, half a foot thick, and properly disposed, on which was placed the first row of stones. The benches rose, as I have said, two feet and a half from the floor of the gallery. I suppose that the scaffold was placed three feet

feet higher than the benches; thus, from the bottom of the gallery to this scaffold there was an elevation of five feet and a half, which was sufficient to let the workmen pass upright.

I have already remarked in another place, that from the bottom of the passage to the roof of the gallery, there was 27 feet and a half elevation. From the bottom of the passage to the scaffold are reckoned six. From the scaffold upwards there remained therefore 21 feet and a half; so that lodging in that space four rows of stones, three feet and a half high, such as were necessary for filling the passages, there still remained a void seven feet and a half high. But I will suppose that from the first row to the second, was placed between the stones a plank about three inches thick, and a similar one from the second to the third, in order the more easily to withdraw the stones, by making them slide along the planks; in this case three rows of these stones would be sufficient to fill all the cavities that were to be blocked up, and which are open at this day. It is possible
S 4 that

that there are other passages which have been blocked up, and never opened, in the body of the pyramid, since in the gallery, four, and even five rows of these stones might have been placed, if necessary. This is clear from the above calculation, and it is not probable that they would have made the gallery more lofty than was necessary; which would proportionably weaken the whole body of the edifice.

Let us confine ourselves, however, to the passages which are known, and have been violently opened; let us keep to the quantity of stones with which they certainly were filled, and which have been broken, except three feet and a half, or four feet of the same stones which remain at the place marked F. in the plate, and which close at this day the entrance of the upper passage, corresponding with the first. This first passage B. I call the exterior passage, because it has been closed from without, whereas the others have been filled from the inside even of the pyramid, and from the magazine placed in the gallery. Now, I maintain that three
rows

rows of stones were sufficient to fill all the passages, and it is easy to prove this by the detail.

It was first necessary to have thirteen feet and a half of stones, to fill the passages leading to the royal hall, and which was on a level with the platform at the upper end of the gallery. They first let down therefore from the scaffold on the esplanade marked R, a stone of six feet, and pushed it into this passage as far as the entrance of the hall, into the place marked B. B. where it was stopped by the pavement of the hall, which was two fingers higher than the bottom of the passage. They then let down on the passage the six feet stone I have spoken of, suspended in the space Z. As soon, in short, as the workmen could get out of the cavity it occupied, by the aperture V. and that this aperture was shut, they let down two other stones of seven feet and a half, from the scaffold, by means of which this passage, which is only nineteen feet long, was completely filled.

It

It must be supposed, that to facilitate the execution of these works, they had fastened to the wall at the bottom of the gallery which terminates the platform, and over against the stones ranged on the scaffold, a strong iron crutch, with a substantial pulley, by the aid of which the workmen placed on the platform, could, with a strong rope, draw the stones from off the scaffold one after the other, and let them down on the platform itself; that then, on the side these stones presented to the workmen, they made a square hole, three or four fingers deep, and wider below than above, and had sunk two pieces of iron into this square aperture, thicker below than above, furnished at their extremity with two good rings, and separated from one another by a wedge of iron. By means of these contrivances they had a sure hold to draw the stones from off the scaffold with the rope which passed through the two rings, to suspend them by a pulley, and drop them gently at length on the esplanade or platform, from whence they

they were conveyed without much difficulty to the place of their destination.

After thus filling the first passage, they laboured to close up that of 118 feet, marked in the plate N. This passage led, as I have said, into the first hall, where the body of the queen was probably deposited. It will be found at the letter O. It was not difficult to accomplish this work; after which, as many stones were brought as were necessary, as well to cover the entrance of this passage, and to level the groove L, as to fill the platform of 10 feet, forming the triangle I have mentioned, marked L M, at the entrance of the gallery. They further took one hundred feet of these same stones to shut up the whole space of the passage H, by which the pyramid has been forced, and which is totally disfigured for the length of 80 feet. In short, they succeeded in letting down 124 feet of them, by means of which the passage marked P, at the bottom of the gallery between the benches, and over which the scaffold was raised, was completely closed. It must be observed, however, that the last stone, which shut this passage, could not
entirely

entirely advance, on account of an elevation of four or five fingers at the extremity of this passage, as I have already remarked; and it is not omitted in the plate.

What I have just said of the contrivances for shutting all the passages in the pyramid, and of the intention of the gallery, will appear perhaps novel, and bold enough to tempt some critic to treat it as a chimera, or at least as a conjecture; nor do I by any means exact an implicit confidence in this article. I shall not be denied the honour at least of having first imagined a very probable system, capable of elucidating at the first glance, wonders which have remained in perfect obscurity until this day. But I go farther, and venture to advance, that it is impossible for any person who will pay attention to the connection and conclusion of my observations on this subject, not to allow that my conjectures, should it please critics so to call them, are so well founded, that it is impossible not to look upon them as real truths. As for myself, after so many researches, after all the reflexions I have made on the interior disposition of the pyramid,

ramid,

ramid, I boldly declare, that it is not possible things should have been otherwise than I have described them. I know, in the first instance, that it never was possible, after the pyramid was finished, that is to say, after the grooves were formed, and the gallery was roofed, to make any stone enter into that gallery large enough to close the passages from within. I see on the contrary, that the attention of the architect has only been occupied to prevent those he had shut in there from being drawn out, in order one day to close it, in such a manner, as to be invisible. I discover the design of the same architect in the long groove at the bottom of the gallery. I conceive also that it was only contrived for the conveyance of the stones which might some day or other close the interior passage; and I judge from the stay which is at the upper end of this groove, that it was itself to be filled with stones as soon as the passage should be completely blocked. The fine polish of this groove confirms me in my opinion of this double use of it. I observe that its length is proportioned to that of the interior passage.

sage. I perceive that this passage is still partly shut, that is to say, at the place that forms the angle with the exterior canal. I can even discover that they have not penetrated into the pyramid by this true passage, but, that on the contrary, they have been obliged to clear out a false route, by which falling in with one of the sides of the passage, they could more easily work at the stones with which it was filled. I since find it disfigured, through its whole length, which convinces me that they were obliged to have recourse to violence to open it. I conclude, therefore, from its being so disfigured as far as the entrance of the gallery, that the stones which closed it must have been broken in the passage itself, and that in a space of 124 feet, there were in the groove, and behind these stones, 415 feet of other stones continually ready to succeed to those made use of in the passage, and to fill the vacancy they might leave. I even suspect that they who violated the pyramid knew of this collection of stones shut up within the groove. Had they been entirely ignorant of them, they would have
contented

contented themselves no doubt, with breaking the stones the passage was filled with, at the aperture they had made; this operation would have been easier for them, and it was only from the knowledge they had of the stones, which were ready to slip from the groove into the passage, in proportion as they emptied it, that they adopted another method.

I have already hinted that there may be other passages closed up, and undiscovered in the body of the pyramid, and it is possibly not without foundation, that researches have been made after them. Unfortunately, these have been ill directed, in attempting to discover them at the bottom of the two halls. If, besides those already known, there be still any other passage within the pyramid, the research ought unquestionably to be made between the two halls; and the entrance of such a passage can be no where but towards the middle of the groove.

I must take notice likewise, that the points in the plate near the letter M, mark certain hollows formed purposely at the time of the construction of the pyramid.

These

These hollows were meant to serve by way of ladder to those who from the passage of 118 feet, which leads to the first hall, wished to mount towards the top of the gutter, (which, as I have said, was interrupted in this place,) or who wanted to descend into the same passage. I have already observed, that from the bottom of the groove, a man might pass upright under the scaffold. There was undoubtedly on each side of the gallery, and from top to bottom under the scaffolding, ropes tied at intervals, to the beams which supported it, in order to give the persons who wished to go up into, or come down from the groove, the facility of doing it without slipping. They served the workmen in the first instance, in the construction of the gallery, and in closing the passages. They who have since visited the halls, they who conveyed thither the bodies of the king and queen, such persons, in short, as mounted into the royal chamber with the prince's coffin, to die near him, have availed themselves of the same assistance.

There is no doubt, therefore, that by means of stones placed on the scaffold, they had

had shut and opened all the passages formed in the interior of the pyramid.

After putting the last hand to all these works, nothing remained for the workmen but to get out of it, unless we suppose they began by breaking the scaffold and the pieces of wood it was composed of, and which they conveyed out in fragments by the way contrived for their retreat.

This was no other than the well I have spoken of, which is on the right hand entering the gallery. This well at the lower part of its entrance, occupies a part of the bench, and rises to the height of two feet in the wall. It is, as I have said, almost round or oval, and is marked in the plate I.

This well descends towards the bottom of the pyramid by a line perpendicular with the horizon, slanting however a little, and forms the figure of a spit, or Hebrew *Lamed*. This may be seen in the plan I have given of the pyramid. About sixty feet from the aperture, one meets with a square window in this passage, from whence one enters into a small grotto, hewn out of the mountain, which in this place is not of so-

lid stone, but of a sort of gravel, the grains of which are strongly attached to each other. This grotto extends from east to west, and may be about fifteen feet long; one then meets with another groove, hollowed also out of the rock, very much on the slant, nay, almost perpendicular. It is two feet four inches wide, by two and a half high. It descends through a space of one hundred and twenty-three feet; after which nothing is to be met with but sand and stones thrown there designedly, or which have fallen of themselves. I am convinced that this passage has never had any other destination than to serve as a retreat for the labourers who worked at the pyramid. The slope of this conduit, its winding road, its smallness, and its depth are certain proofs of it. I make no doubt even, that the way out of this well, which one could not arrive at until many other windings, perhaps even not without mounting towards its mouth; I make no doubt, I say, that this way out was formed by a passage, above which hung a row of stones, which they had discovered the secret of suspending,

suspending, and which falling down into the passage, by the means of some spring they set in motion, shut up the entrance for ever, as soon as the workmen were withdrawn from the pyramid. We do not, in fact, discover that they have tried to force that aperture, owing either to their ignorance of it, or to its smallness, which would not allow them to work. The pyramid has not been assailed but by the royal route, which served no doubt to convey the body of the king, and of all the persons dead or living, who were to be buried with him. It was also by this way certainly that the attendants of the funeral penetrated even to the interior of the building, and returned from it after rendering the last duties to the prince, and depositing his corpse in the mausoleum he himself had chosen.

It must not be imagined, however, that all the persons who worked at this great edifice, were acquainted with the secrets of the inside of it, nor even that nothing more was necessary to acquire such knowledge, but to have entered the pyramid after it was finished, and before it was closed. This

mystery was reserved to the architects alone who had the management of this superb monument, or at least, to a very few persons selected to work under their directions, in forming the passages I have spoken of in my description of this pyramid. It is highly probable even, that the workmen destined to this particular business, were not mercenary beings, capable of betraying a secret of that nature for any consideration. They were, doubtless, all persons chosen amongst the most opulent, and the persons most attached to the king in the different branches of workmanship supported by him, and on whose zeal, probity, gratitude, and religion they could safely rely. I should even readily believe, that the prince might himself have named them before his death, and have secured them a quiet, convenient, and honourable retreat in these temples, (*d*) enriched with the donations of those sovereigns, which must necessarily have been

(*d*) Before the pyramids one sees the ruins of ancient edifices, which were temples probably, where offerings were made for the princes, whose bodies were deposited in these superb mausolea.

bestowed

bestowed on persons employed in edifices of this sort, and which, in fact, accompanied them, as I have already demonstrated.

Such is the opinion of Mr. Maillet on the subject of the inside of the great pyramid. After examining it twice, with his book in my hand, I could not help admiring the justness of his observations. The means he supposes to have been employed in closing the passages appear probable to me, and it is certain that they have been cleared in the manner he describes.

Some Arabian authors pretend that it was the thirst after wealth, which induced the Caliph *Mahmoud*, towards the beginning of the eighth century, to violate this ancient monument. He expected to find treasures there; but he was deceived in his expectations. Some golden idols which accompanied the king's mummy, were the sole fruit of several years labour, and immense expences. Other oriental writers attribute this undertaking to the famous caliph *Aaroun el Raschid*, who lived in the time of Charlemagne, to whom he sent a water-clock, the first that had been seen in

France. This prince, who patronized the sciences, and had the best Greek and Roman authors translated into Arabic, was curious of knowing the inside of that astonishing edifice, and made them open it. Without deciding respecting these different opinions, it is beyond a doubt that the violation of this pyramid was executed under the government of the Arabs.

It is also an unquestionable fact, that it served as a mausoleum to an Egyptian Pharaoh. The tombs dispersed over the plain at the end of which it is built, the sarcophagus of the great hall, the niche in the lower one, the testimony of Herodotus, and of Strabo, that of the Arabian historians, every thing proves the truth of this opinion. I know that Mr. Paw, (e) who, from the recesses of his closet sees every thing better than all the travellers, tells them, that this pyramid was the *tomb of Osiris*. But he stands single in this opinion, which is belied by facts and history. Whilst I do justice

(e) *Recherches philosophiques sur les Egyptiens & Chinois*, p. 50.

to the knowledge of this learned man, I cannot avoid correcting the errors he has committed respecting the dietetic system of the Egyptians, and the climate of the country, in the course of these letters.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LET-4

L E T T E R XIX.

Description of the other pyramids; the adjacent country; the grotto of Santo; the great Sphinx, with an account of its mythology, and the return to Giza.

To Mr. L. M.

Giza.

I Have laid before you, Sir, the ancient and modern enquiries on the subject of the great pyramid, to which I have added such observations as occurred to me from the presence of the objects; I hope they will give you a satisfactory idea of it, and save you the trouble of reading a number of volumes, the attentive perusal of which might only augment your doubts, as long as you do not go yourself to examine it more minutely on the spot. I will own to you, Sir, that after meditating on the descriptions which have appeared of these ancient monuments, I found it impossible

to

to adopt any fixed opinion, and I remained in a painful uncertainty. The truth I sought after was hid in the obscurity of so many different opinions, that the more I studied, the less I was informed. I flatter myself, however, to have discovered it since at the foot of the pyramid, in the gloomy recesses of its interior, and on its lofty summit; the torch of reflexion has always guided my footsteps: may it also have directed my pen, and produced conviction in your mind; for in matters of science, to doubt, is to be in torment.

(f) Herodotus informs us that the expence of building it, in the article of vegetables

(f) “ One sees Egyptian characters engraved on
 “ the marble of the pyramid, which inform us how
 “ much it cost in onions, and other vegetables, for
 “ the food of the workmen only who laboured at it.
 “ The priest who interpreted these hieroglyphics to
 “ me, told me that the expence of this article alone
 “ amounted to 1600 talents. *Herodotus, Euterpe.*”

This sum may appear chimerical to a person who calculates in his cabinet; but the observer who has seen this mountain, built with large pieces of rocks, is not astonished at it. This passage proves that in the most distant ages, as well as at the present day,
 vegetables

vegetables only, for feeding the workmen, was inscribed in Egyptian characters on the marble of the great pyramid. These hieroglyphics have perished with the covering, but were they even remaining, as they do still subsist in a thousand places in Egypt, these characters no longer would convey to us the thought. At this day they are mute traces, as insensible as the stone they are engraved on. Must then a language, the knowledge of which would teach us the history of ancient Egypt, and cast a ray of light through the darkness which covered the first ages of the world, lie buried with the priests who invented it!

It is time, Sir, to resume the sequel of our journey. After observing every thing interesting, we went to see the second pyramid, which appeared almost as lofty as the first. Strabo says they are of the same height. Diodorus Siculus is of the same opinion, but thinks that the base of the second is not so wide (*g*). This historian vegetables constituted the principal part of the food of the Egyptians.

(*g*) Diodorus Siculus, lib. i. sect. 2.

ascribes

ascribes the building of it to *Cephren*, brother and successor of *Chemmis*, who built that I have been giving an account of. The coating of this pyramid is destroyed in many places, but the holes effected by force proclaim that this injury is the work of men, and not produced by the ravages of time. All the upper part, for sixty feet downwards, is quite perfect, because it was doubtless the most difficult to be carried off. Perhaps they who attempted to violate this ancient mausoleum, discouraged by the length and difficulties of so expensive an undertaking, contented themselves with taking away the marble it was covered with.

To the east of these two pyramids is a third, which appears very diminutive, compared with the other two. It is, however, about three hundred feet square (*b*). It was built by *Micerinus*. Desirous of emulating the glory of his father *Chemmis*, he intended covering it with Thebaic mar-

(*b*) Strabo, lib. 17.

ble (*i*), with that beautiful marble, with black spots, whose fine grain and extreme hardness enables it to receive the most perfect polish. This prince died when the work was only half finished. The beauty of the marble has tempted the Arabs to tear it off. Some pieces of it are still in their places, and its ruins around the base. The name of *Micerinus* (*k*) was inscribed on the north side of it. It has undergone the fate of the hieroglyphics of the great pyramid, which have been carried off with the covering.

Historians relate many fables on the subject of this pyramid. According to some of them, a famous courtesan built it with the produce of her gallantries; others say,

(*i*) The quarries of this beautiful marble are situated at the extremity of Egypt, in the mountain, at the foot of which Sienna was built. There are three sorts of it; the first of a perfect black; the second is only spotted with it; and the last is speckled with red. The granite of the two former kinds was employed in the construction of the tombs. The other was made use of for columns and obelisks.

(*k*) Diodorus Siculus, lib. i. sect. 2.

that

that an eagle having carried off the slipper of the beautiful Rhodope, who had come to Naucrates, let it fall at Memphis; that Pharaoh, charmed with the delightful shape of it, was desirous of seeing the female model; that falling in love with the charming Greek, he married her, and raised this pyramid in her honour. The Arabs, fond of the marvellous, have greedily adopted these childish tales, and bestowed on this pyramid the name of *Heram elbent*, *The ancient edifice of the girl*. Round this monument are the ruins of (1) three other small pyramids, which were built, according to Diodorus Siculus, to serve as mausolea for the queens of those sovereigns who built the great ones.

Facing the second pyramid, on the eastern side, is the enormous sphynx, whose whole body, as I have observed, is buried in the sand. The top of its back only is visible, which is more than one hundred feet long. It is of one single

(1) Salah Eddin demolished them, and employed the stones in building the walls of Cairo, and of the castle on mount Mokattam.

stone, making part of the rock on which the pyramids are placed. Its head rises about twenty-seven feet above the sand. The Arabs, inspired by Mahomet with a horror for all representations of men and animals, have disfigured its face with arrows and lances (*m*). Pliny pretends that the body of Amasis was deposited within this monster. Several others think that the well of the great pyramid led to it, and that the priests resorted thither at certain times to pronounce their oracles (*n*). But these are mere conjectures.

Mr. Paw (*o*) says that the sphinxes found in Egypt, composed of the body of a virgin grafted on that of a lion, are images of the divinity who was represented as a hermaphrodite. This explanation appears to me not more fortunate than that

(*m*) Pliny the naturalist.

(*n*) They adduce, in proof of this, a hole placed at the top of the sphinx's head, from whence the priests delivered their oracles; but this hole is only five feet deep, and communicates neither with the mouth, nor with the inside of the monster.

(*o*) *Recherches philosophiques sur les Egyptiens et les Chinois.*

of his *Tomb of Osiris*. It is under the sign of the Lion and of the Virgin that the Nile swells, overflows its banks, and gives fertility to Egypt. The sphynx was an hieroglyphic, which taught the people the period of the most important event of the whole year. We see accordingly, that they were multiplied without end. They are to be seen before all their temples, before all their remarkable monuments. This hieroglyphic was equivalent to the following phrase: *People, under this sign, at such a time, the river shall overflow your fields, and bring you fertility.*

Whilst we were admiring the wonders of ancient Egypt, and that Mr. Adanson, the king's first interpreter at Alexandria, was occupied in drawing them, we saw ten Arabs coming towards us full gallop, with lances in their hands. They came within pistol-shot of us, with the intention of attacking, or exacting a contribution from us. We were armed with fusils and pistols, and every way prepared to repulse them; but at the first discharge we should have had a whole hord of them upon us.

We

We commissioned our two Cheiks therefore to speak to them, who stated, that we were their guests, and under their protection. This word alone disarmed them, for they respect infinitely the rights of hospitality. They dismounted, and offered to accompany us wherever we wished to go. As they are not fond however of taking trouble for nothing, they politely asked us for some small pieces of money, which we gave them. After we had ratified our peace with this small present, I heard them say in a low voice; "Let us visit the "faint;" whither they went, and I followed them. They passed the whole length of the second pyramid, and stopped at the entrance of a grotto cut out of the rock. They took off their shoes and stockings, and went in. I was the only European who followed their example. The grotto was spacious, neat, and handsome, and one breathed in it a most agreeable coolness. At one of the extremities was a niche six feet high, before which hung a tattered curtain, full of holes. The Arabs stood near it with a most respectful
air.

air. Each of them in his turn knelt and kissed a foot which stretched itself out from behind the curtain. I perceived through the holes, that there was a naked man who gave them his foot to kiss. When my turn was come, I approached, and said to him: O! great saint, discover your face to me! He took my compliment for an insult, and concluding from my pronunciation that I was not an Arab, he answered sharply: *Roub anni ia kelb: Get you gone from me, dog.* At these words all the Mussulmen darted a furious look at me. I made a precipitate retreat, congratulating myself that my indiscretion had only cost me a hard word; and I determined to have no further conversation with Egyptian fantons.

These men are vagabonds, who affect a total alienation from all worldly goods, and who live on public alms. They commit a thousand extravagancies, which make them pass for inspired persons. They go absolutely naked into the middle of towns, and violating every rule of decency, do not

blush to commit publicly actions, which the rest of mankind cover with the obscurity of night, or with the veil of mystery (*p*). I cannot express to you to what a degree the populace carry their veneration for these brazen-faced cynics. The women, above all, naturally timid and modest, forget, for them, that reserve and bashfulness which ought to be the inseparable companions of their sex, and that men who impudently abandon themselves to all the appetites of nature, never can have any claim to such respect.

When we were fatiated with seeing and admiring, we returned to Gisa, where we passed some days in visiting its environs. In our route we met with several jackalls, which were running with great swiftness towards the hills. These wild animals, of

(*p*) A friend writes me from Tunis that a scene of this sort passed in the middle of the square of that town, between a fanton and a woman. The people surrounded with a respectful air the temporary married couple; and an European who should have ventured a pleasantry at the sight of this spectacle, would have run the risk of being stoned to death.

the

the size of a dog, have a hanging tail, and a pointed muzzle. They live on prey procured by hunting, and eat fish on the banks of the lakes. The Arabs call them *Dib*. They are the African wolf.

I have the honour to be, &c.

U 2

LET-

LETTER XX.

Description of Giza, the ancient suburb of Fostat. Refutation of the authors who suppose it to be the same with Memphis. A charming view of the Nile; the island of Raouda, Old Cairo, and the boats which are constantly passing along the river; with an account of the manufacture of sal ammoniac.

To Mr. L. M.

Giza.

GIZA, as you have seen, Sir, is a small town governed by a *Kiachef*. It takes its origin from the choice the governors of the caliphs made of *Mafr Fostat* to be their seat of residence. The ancients, who have described with precision the environs of the pyramids, say nothing of Giza, which was founded by the Arabs, as its name bespeaks (*q*). Mr. Shaw mistakes, in placing it

(*q*) *Gizé* signifies *angle, extremity*, in Arabic. It was so called, because at the time that *Mafr Fostat* flourished,

it on the site of Memphis. Besides that there exist no ruins, no ancient monument, the Greeks, the Romans, and above all the Arabs, have pointed out so accurately the situation of the ancient capital of Egypt, that it is impossible, on reading them attentively, to be mistaken. I propose to give you, in the following letter, proofs of what I advance.

Gisa is surrounded by immense plains, where vegetables, flax, and corn grow in abundance. The *chartame*, improperly called *saffranum* by the people of Provence, is cultivated there. They purchase the flowers of it, cargoes of which are sent to Marseilles. It is employed in dying the cloths of Languedoc. The Egyptians, who are in want of wood, burn the stalk of it for fuel. The pod contains a seed, from which

flourished, Gisé, which was only separated from it by the Nile, formed one of its suburbs. In the account given by Macrizi of the descent of Saint Lewis in Egypt, in speaking of the *extremity* of Damietta, he says, The *Giza* of Damietta.

is extracted an oil, called *Zeit below*, sweet oil. It has an insipid taste, and is eaten by the people; but the rich only make use of it in their illuminations, which are frequent in Egypt.

This little town has a manufacture of sal ammoniac. I have frequently gone into the laboratory, and, in spite of a horrible, infectious smoke, I have followed the process of its manufacture. Figure to yourself some arches with parallel slits, to receive globes of glass, the necks of which are only two inches long, and the same in diameter. Before they are placed, they are covered with a fat earth, with which also all the interstices between them are closed up. The body of the vessels is contained within the vault, and they are supported by walls. The neck alone is exposed to the action of the open air. These balloons are filled with soot collected from the chimneys of the common people, who burn nothing but the dung of animals dried in the sun, and mixed with chopped straw. The fire which is lighted below is of the same materials.

rials. It is kept burning three days and three nights. The vases remain open, and the steam which exhales from the heated foot gradually adheres to the neck of the bottle. It there condenses, crySTALLIZES, and forms a brilliant and solid mass of about two inches thick. When the operation is finished, the vase is broken, the ashes are thrown away, and the cake of sal ammoniac is taken off, such as it is sent to Europe. Previous to this, however, a black crust is detached from the lower part of it, which has not acquired the proper degree of perfection. The globes which are filled with this on a second operation, give the most perfect, and the most esteemed sal ammoniac. About two thousand quintals a year are manufactured in different places in the country. It is a considerable article of commerce between the Egyptians and the Europeans. The tanners, the goldsmiths, the founders, and the chymists make use of it in their preparations.

The French merchants settled at Grand Cairo have a country-house at Gisa, with a small garden planted with orange, lemon, and date-trees. It is situated on the banks of the Nile. From the windows one has a view of the beautiful isle of *Raouda*, and its perfumed groves, the Mekias, against which the waters of the river dash with violence; Old Cairo, surrounded with gardens, and a crowd of boats perpetually crossing from one shore to the other. Various clusters of verdure, between which appear houses, and mosques, or the tops only of the minarets, present most delightful points of view. One passes delicious hours in contemplating these gay objects; for whilst one is thus amused, the coolness arising from the current of air which follows the course of the Nile, invigorates the senses, and gives the mind that energy it stands in need of to feel the beautiful, and enjoy every thing around it. It is to Gisa, therefore, that the French, suffocated by the heats of Grand Cairo, and the reverberation of the burning sands of Mokattam,

kattam, come to refresh themselves after their business. It is to Gisa that they come to recover their health, and to respire life in a pure, fresh air, impregnated with aromatic exhalations from plants and flowers.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LET-

LETTER XXI.

An inquiry into the true situation of ancient Memphis, confirmed by the testimony of Herodotus, Strabo, Pliny, and Arabian writers; with a refutation of the modern travellers who affirm this capital to have been at Giza. Description of the city as it was in the time of Herodotus, and Diodorus Siculus; its temples, palaces, and lakes. A passage in Abulfeda, proving that it was demolished by Amrou. The ruins which are now to be seen in the neighbourhood of the village of Menph, the small remains of the ancient Memphis.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

IT is time, Sir, to speak of Memphis, and to discuss the opinions of different writers on the subject of that celebrated city, which are very opposite. Some of these pretend that it was situated where Giza now stands, others place it five leagues further

ther to the southward. Is it not astonishing that the position of the ancient capital of Egypt, of a city which was seven leagues in circumference (*r*), which contained magnificent temples and palaces, which art exerted herself to render everlasting, should at this day be a subject of dispute amongst the learned? Thus are all the monuments of man in their turn buried in the dust! I hope, however, that the evidence of history will still point out the traces which Memphis has left behind her, and dissipate that darkness, with which erudition itself has laboured to cover them: Let us examine the passages.

“ It was queen Semiramis who built
 “ the castle (*s*) of Grand Cairo. She
 “ placed there a numerous garrison of Ba-
 “ bylonians, in order to keep Memphis
 “ in awe, situated opposite to it, to the

(*r*) Diodorus Siculus makes it 150 stadia round, lib. i. sect. 2.

(*s*) I think I have corrected the first of these errors, in the 7th letter, by shewing that it was built by *Salah Eddin*.

“ west-

“ westward of the Nile, and to prevent
 “ that capital from revolting (t).”

Doctor Shaw is of the same opinion.

“ Opposite to Cairo, on the bank of the
 “ Nile, which looks towards Lybia, is
 “ the village of Gifa, where the ancient
 “ Memphis stood, the ruins of which
 “ are now buried and covered with
 “ earth (u).”

Pocock, an accurate observer, then follows; instructed by the inspection of the places, and ancient literature, he declares himself of a different opinion (x). War was declared between the English literati; and the authors of the *Modern Universal History* have pronounced the following decree:

“ Memphis (y) was situated on the
 “ spot now occupied by Gifa; so Doctor
 “ Shaw informs us, whose geographical

(t) Father Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes*, p. 471.

(u) Geographical observations on Syria and on Egypt, p. 25.

(x) Description of the East, lib. i. at the article of Memphis and the pyramids.

(y) First part, p. 328.

“ observations on Egypt and Arabia Pe-
 “ træa, the best ever made, ought to be
 “ preferred to all the descriptions of mo-
 “ dern travellers, as well for their truth,
 “ at least their probability, as for erudi-
 “ tion, accuracy, and sound criticism. . . .
 “ In one word, his book will maintain its
 “ reputation against the attacks of envy
 “ and of malice ; it will still live, when
 “ the publications of those who have taken
 “ up the pen to imitate, or decry him,
 “ will be buried in oblivion, or at least
 “ covered with the contempt they so just-
 “ ly merit.”

This, Sir, is a very despotic judgment
 pronounced against every traveller who shall
 presume to combat the opinion of Doctor
 Shaw. If the authors of the *Modern Uni-
 versal History* thought they might dispense
 with reading the works of the *Ancients*,
 they should at least have had recourse to
 the books of the *Arabian* geographers.
 Enlightened by their perusal, they would
 have been cautious of maintaining a pal-
 pable error with so much emphasis. Al-
 low me to quote authorities.

“ Memphis

“ Memphis (*z*) is situated on the narrowest spot in Egypt, on the western bank of the Nile; a lake formed by the waters of the river surrounds it to the north and to the west.”

This is a vague description. To have marked the situation of Memphis in a decisive manner, the lake must have existed in our days, and the valley of Egypt have been measured, to discover the narrowest part (*3*). Strabo gives us more circumstantial details.

“ From the castle of Babylon (*a*) one discovers, on the other side of the Nile, the pyramids, which are near to Memphis. . . . It is partly surrounded by lakes. The buildings which formed the palaces of the kings, are at present in ruins. They extended from the mountain as far as the plain where the city is built, and even to the banks of the lake. They

(*z*) Herodotus, Euterpe.

(*3*) Strabo, lib. 17.

(*a*) I have pointed out its situation near Old Cairo in the 8th letter.

“ were

“ were shaded by a sacred wood. At
“ forty stadia from Memphis rises a stony
“ hill, where a great number of pyramids
“ are built.”

It is not surprizing that Strabo should have discovered the pyramids from the castle of Babylon, since they are seen from the fortress which overtops Grand Cairo, and from a much greater distance. He adds, that they were near Memphis, on a hill which is only forty stadia, or a league and a quarter distance. This situation does not correspond with that of Gisa, which is three leagues from the nearest pyramids, and six from those of Saccara. I shall not dwell on this description, as Pliny (*b*) settles the difficulty, so as not to leave a doubt.

“ The three great pyramids, which are
“ seen by navigators from all parts, are
“ situated on a barren and stony hill, be-
“ tween Memphis and the Delta, one
“ league from the Nile, two from Mem-
“ phis, and near the village of Busiris.”

(*b*) Pliny the naturalist, lib. 36.

This

This passage irrevocably fixes the disputed places, and displays the truth in the clearest light. Since the pyramids, in fact, are between Memphis and the Delta, as it is certain that Giza is between the pyramids and the Delta, it is impossible that Memphis could have been situated on the spot where Giza stands; or, which comes to the same thing, Memphis, in Pliny's description, is two leagues to the southward of the pyramids; now the town of Giza is three leagues distant from them to the northward, it could not therefore be built on the ground occupied by Memphis. Nor can Pliny be accused of having been deceived, for the positions he has laid down are extremely accurate. The village of *Busiris* still exists under the name of *Bou-sir*, at a small distance from the pyramids; they are still a league from the river; and the small town of *Menph*, formerly Memphis, is about two leagues to the southward of these monuments. Had the authors of the *Modern Universal History* read this passage, they would have been careful not to put implicit faith in assertions, nor
blindly

blindly to adopt an opinion subject to criticism, more especially as one of their countrymen (*c*), a judicious and enlightened observer, had already disputed it. Above all, they would not have thundered out their anathema against whoever refuses to embrace the creed of Doctor Shaw. With them I do homage to the merits of that learned man; his book is replete with valuable enquiries; but as some errors have crept in amongst the truths he has established, I cannot help correcting them when occasion offers.

After a king of Egypt had turned the course of the Nile (*d*), which lost itself in the sands of Lybia, and that the Delta was formed out of the mud (*e*) deposited by its waters, canals were cut to drain

(*c*) Pocock, journey to the East.

(*d*) See the first letter.

(*e*) Should even the evidence of history, which proves that the Delta originates only in the sand and mud deposited by the Nile, no longer exist; should we even reject the opinions of Herodotus, of Strabo, of Diodorus Siculus, of Pliny, &c. who all of them assert the fact, it would be impossible not to admit it,

drain the lower Egypt. The monarchs, who, till then, had fixed their residence at Thebes, were desirous of coming nearer the mouth of the river, to enjoy a more temperate air, and to be more ready to defend the entrance of their empire. They founded the city of Memphis, and strove to make it a rival worthy of the ancient capital. They adorned it with several temples (*f*), amongst which that of Vulcan attracted the attention of travellers. The grandeur, the sumptuousness of the edifice, the richness of its ornaments, alternately excited admiration. On the side of the barren plain was raised another temple, not less an object of wonder, dedicated to Serapis. An avenue of prodigious sphinxes ornamented the principal approach. The

on considering this beautiful part of Egypt. One sees, in fact, throughout its whole extent, no other stones than such as have been brought thither for the building of temples and great edifices; and on digging twenty feet deep in any part of it whatever, nothing is to be found but the black mud of the Nile, mixed with sand.

(*f*) Strabo, lib. 17.

sands,

sands, the scourge of Egypt, heaped up successively around them, so that in the time of Strabo some were buried to the middle of the body, and others up to the head; at present they have totally disappeared. To prevent this disaster, however, they had built to the southward a long and lofty dyke (g), which served also as a rampart against the overflowings of the river, and the surprizes of the enemy. The king's palaces, and a fortress built on the mountain, defended it to the west. On the east it was bounded by the Nile. To the northward were lakes terminated by the plain of mummies, and by the causeway which leads from Bufiris to the great pyramids. Thus situated, Memphis commanded the valley of Egypt, and communicated by canals with lake *Mæris*, and lake *Mareotis*. The citizen who inhabited it, from his own house could travel over all Egypt in a boat; it became accordingly the centre of wealth, of commerce, and the arts. Astronomy and geometry, invented

(g) Diodorus Siculus, lib. 1.

by the Egyptians, flourished there (*b*). Thither the Greeks repaired to acquire that knowledge which they carried into, and brought to perfection in their own country. The new capital threw Thebes and her hundred gates into oblivion; and she saw rise upon her neighbouring mountain those proud monuments, those superb mausolea, which alone, of all the wonders that the world admired, have braved the ravages of time, and of still more destructive man. The glory of Memphis lasted many ages. She maintained her splendor till Cambyfes laid waste Egypt at the head of a formidable army. This ferocious conqueror destroyed, as far as he could, her temples and her famous buildings. Above all, he strove to extinguish the torch of the sciences, which this people, surrounded by waves and deserts, had lighted in their fertile valley. The colleges of the priests, with a part of their privileges, lost the knowledge which result-

(*b*) Strabo, lib. 17. attributes the invention of astronomy and geometry to the Egyptians.

ed from them. Memphis, however mutilated by a barbarian, preserved so many remains of her magnificence, as to be still the first city in the world. For upwards of two hundred years, she laboured to shake off the odious Persian yoke. Alexander, to whom she surrendered, amply avenged the outrages she had sustained. This conqueror, abandoning himself to a guilty delirium, renewed, within the walls of Persepolis (*i*), the horrors Cambyfes had committed at Thebes and at Memphis. Is there no retributive justice for empires, as well as for individuals? Charmed with the beauty of this country, whose antiquities he visited several ages before the Christian æra, he there founded a town bearing his name. It was embellished by the Ptolemies, his successors. In the decoration of their buildings they endeavoured to unite with the majesty of the Egyptian, the elegance of the Grecian architecture. The Pharos appeared, and merited the admiration of the universe. Alexan-

(*i*) Quintus Curtius.

dria was another Rome. The arts and sciences, under the sovereign's eye, spread their reputation far and near. Commerce attracted thither wealth and abundance from all parts. Memphis was every day depopulated; her inhabitants passed to the new capital (*k*). Under Augustus it was still a great city, populous, and full of strangers, but it then held only the rank of the second city of Egypt. Six hundred years after, it became the first conquest of the Arabs, who besieged its walls. The siege was long and bloody; but it was carried at length by storm, and destroyed, as Abulfeda informs us. I shall give the passage of that learned historian; it confirms the position of Memphis, given by Pliny, and destroys the error of several authors (*l*), who pretend, that the governors for the emperors of Constantinople resided at Old Cairo, when Amrou made the conquest of Egypt. I think I have already demonstrated in my eighth letter, that that town

(*k*) Strabo, lib. 17.

(*l*) Maillet, *description de l'Egypte*. Father Sicard, *lettres edifiantes*.

did not then exist; and what follows will furnish a fresh proof of it.

(*m*) “ *Menf*, (that is to say, Memphis) is
 “ the ancient *Mafr* (*n*) of Egypt. It
 “ is situated on the western bank of
 “ the Nile. Amrou, son of *El Aas*,
 “ having taken it by storm, rased it
 “ to the ground, and went to build the
 “ town of *Fostat* by order of Omar, son of

(*m*) “ *Menf* hié *Mafr elcadimé* oua hié an garbi
 el Nil. Oua lemma *fatahha* Omar ebn el Aas *khar-*
abha oua *bena* el *Fostat* men elbar elakhar el charqui
 be amr Omar ebn el khattab. Oua be *menf* atar
cadimo *azimé* *madfalo* men el*fakhour* oua el *menhouté*
 el *masoura*. Oua *alaiha* *dehan* *akhdar*, our *khairo*
baki *ila* *zamanna*, *hadé* *lam* *ietkhaïer* men el *chams*
 oua *khairha* *ala* *toul* *hadé* *eldemmé*. Oua *menf* men
mafr *ala* *marhelé* *caribé*.”

Abulfeda, Description of Egypt.

(*n*) I have already said, in the letter on Old Cairo, that the Arabs have always given the name of *Mafr* to the capital of Egypt. Memphis bore that title until it was ruined by Amrou. It was then transferred to *Fostat*, which preserved it until it was set on fire by Schaouar, to hinder it from falling into the hands of the French. From that time Grand Cairo has received the name of *Mafr*, and *Fostat* that of *Mafr el atik*, the ancient *Mafr*, or capital.

“ Kettab, on the opposite side. At Menf
 “ are remarkable ruins, the remains of its
 “ ancient splendor, and which are suffered
 “ to fall into decay ; one there fees stones,
 “ the sculpture and painting of which ex-
 “ cite admiration ; the fun and the injuries
 “ of time not hitherto having been able
 “ to efface the colours. *Menf* is distant a
 “ short day’s journey from Grand Cairo.”

These particulars agree both with the description of Pliny, and with what still remains in our days. The village of *Menf*, sad remains of an immense city, is fix leagues from Grand Cairo, on the west-ern bank of the Nile. This is precisely the position of the learned naturalist, for they reckon four leagues from Grand Cairo to the pyramids, and two from these monuments to the village of *Menf*. The ruins around it confirm the account of Abulfeda. (o) Even the lakes, spoken of

(o) These lakes, which all antiquity represents as near to Memphis, are a demonstrative proof that it was situated at the village of *Menf*, and not at Gisa ; for there is not the smallest appearance of a lake for three leagues around that little town.

by

by Herodotus and Strabo, have not entirely disappeared. One of them is near Saccara, with a wood of Acacia, situated to the westward of Menf; the other is precisely north of it. In the time of the inundation, it reaches as far as the raised causeway in the marshes which separate the great pyramids from the Nile. This was thrown up (*p*) to facilitate the carriage of the marble, which formed the passages, and covering of these buildings; and the dyke still subsists, with bridges in it, to leave a free passage for the waters. One goes along it, in going to see the pyramids, in a boat during the inundation.

These, Sir, are the lakes which the inhabitants of Memphis were obliged to cross, in order to convey their dead into the plains, where they had established their mausolea. As temples were built there (*q*), in which expiatory sacrifices were offered

(*p*) Herodotus, Euterpe.

(*q*) Each large pyramid had its temple, and priests, whose duty it was to slay expiatory victims, and to pray for the dead.

up for the dead; as these places of silence were an inviolable asylum, and the sacrilegious wretch would have paid the forfeit of his life, who dared to profane them, and trouble their profound peace, all the Egyptians were desirous of making it their place of sepulture. Each family dug for itself a still habitation out of the rock covered with sand, where father and son were deposited one after the other with a religious piety. They never imagined that the enlightened people of Europe would one day come and tear them from their tombs, and that their bodies, so carefully buried and preserved, would become the object of an infamous traffic. (r) The Greeks, who had assisted at the judgments which the Egyptians alone, of all the people of the earth, pronounced against the memory of the dead, and who saw the places where they were carried in a boat, paying a small tribute, invented from thence the fable of Charon and of hell. The beauty of the plains beyond

(r) Orpheus was initiated in the mysteries of Osiris.
Diodorus Siculus, p. 37.

that

that vast solitude of sand, the canals which water them, and which preserve there an ever-verdant foliage, furnished them with the idea of Styx, of Lethe, and of the Elysian fields. Their brilliant and fertile imagination has embellished these places with all the treasures of poetry. This fable gained credit amongst the people, and became an article of Pagan faith.

Such, Sir, are the reflexions which have occurred to me from an attentive perusal of the ancients, and the sight of the environs of the pyramids. May they prove worthy of your attention, and possess in your eyes the merit of truth.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LET-

LETTER XXII.

Journey from Boulac to Damietta. Description of the great branch of the Nile which stretches thither; the canals which go off from it; the towns and villages situated on their banks, and the ancient monuments which remain. A particular account of the fair of Tanta; the manners of the inhabitants in this part of Egypt; the woods in the neighbourhood of Same-nout; the chicken-ovens of Mansoure, where the French army was defeated; and the navigation of the river.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo, 1779.

YOU reckon, Sir, an interval of sixteen months since my last letter, and during this long space of time your friendly apprehensions have often painted to you the dangers to which one is exposed in a barbarous country. They have more than
once

once made you tremble for my life. Honoured be those sentiments so dear to me, and which my heart returns you ! But calm your uneasiness. There is a tutelar deity for travellers, who exacts no other homage than prudence and perseverance. Paying him religiously that tribute, you are out of reach of danger. Cease therefore to be alarmed, and attribute my silence to my continual labours and expeditions. As for you, Sir, continue to write to me. It is here one knows the value of a letter. With what transport one opens it ! With what avidity one reads it ! The day of receiving it is a day of festival. It is under a burning sky, in the midst of deserts, that one feels cruelly the want of a friend. Every thing is precious which can recall his memory. Amongst the Turks and Arabs, a Frenchman rarely finds a heart into which he can pour out his own. A crowd of sentiments grow up and die in it, without being participated. Take pity on me then, and procure me frequently the only consolation of the absent. When I read the characters traced out by your hand, I seem to see, and hear you. The imagination,

nation, that happy enchantress, affords me an agreeable illusion; these are at least some happy moments; these are some flowers strewed over the thorny road of life. Let us return to our correspondence.

Two journeys into lower Egypt, visiting the towns and canals of the eastern branch of the Nile, a residence of a year at Damietta, dedicated to perfecting myself in the Arabic dialect, spoken in Syria, this, Sir, has been my employment during the long silence you complain of. A thousand times have I run over the delicious environs of this city. One is never fatiated with contemplating the beauties of nature, and with viewing the happy image of abundance. I have followed the traces of the army of Saint Lewis, from his disembarkation to Mansoura. The frank, ingenuous Joinville has written an account of this expedition, the commencement of which was so brilliant, and the conclusion so unfortunate. His narrative is obscure, and leaves a great deal to be said. The curious details preserved by the Arabian authors, and the inspection of the scene of action

action will furnish me the means of explaining him, and of supplying that information he was in want of. As soon as I have finished the account of my journey, I will endeavour to trace out to you this interesting passage of our history.

The 15th of February I hired a *Canje* to carry me to Damietta. It is a boat smaller than a *Mach*, and designed for voyages of pleasure. It contained a cabinet, and a handsome chamber, where we spread a carpet. A mat was raised forward in the form of a canopy, from whence one might see the country without being incommoded by the sun. A tried janissary, who had served in the campaigns of the famous *Ali Bey*, and an Arab servant, accompanied me. We were well armed, a necessary precaution on the canal of Damietta, where one is almost always attacked. The *Fellah* (*r*) who live upon its banks, attack the boats under cover of night, and if they meet with no resistance, murder the passengers, and take possession of their riches. A stranger ought

(*r*) The name of the Egyptian labourers.

to be very sure both of the domestics, he takes with him, and of the fidelity of the master of the boat, who have frequently an understanding with the robbers, and share with them. Instructed by experience, I give this advice to travellers who may come after me. I had very nearly lost my life by not having followed it myself.

We had taken care to provide our bark with rice and coffee; these are the most essential provisions. One finds eggs, milk, and poultry in all the villages. We had laid in a few magnumbonums of old Cyprus wine (*s*). *Mahamet Affalamé*, though a good muselman, was very glad to empty a few glasses of it from time to time; but he did it underhand, and avoided being seen even by the boatmen.

We left the port of Boulak about one o'clock in the afternoon. The sky was serene, the heat as temperate as in our

(*s*) *Mahamet Affalamé* is the name of the Janissary who accompanied me. He is an upright, brave, and faithful fellow, to whom I have been under great obligations during my travels. At my departure he entered into the service of the Consul of France at Alexandria.

finest

finest days of spring. The Nile, returned into its bed six weeks before, was gradually falling. The current, which was not rapid, and the north wind, obliged us to have recourse to oars. The barley and the corn began to ripen. The *chartame*, and the dorra, or India millet, was a foot above the ground. The lucern was springing for the third time. The cucumbers and water-melons were extending their flexible branches on the banks of the river. The flax and beans were approaching to maturity. The foliage of the trees offered different tints of verdure. The orange and lemon-trees were decked with flowers. Such was the appearance of Egypt the 15th of February.

We were rowed along, and in an hour we passed the mouth of the canal of Adrian Cæsar, which went into that of the Red Sea. It crosses the little town of *Kelioub*, and passes to the north of *Heliopolis*. Two leagues lower is the village of *Charakhanié*, below which the Nile separates itself to form the Delta.

This is the spot (*t*) where Herodotus and Pomponius Mela place the ancient town of *Cercaforum*. Mr. Danville, following the opinion of Strabo, places it on the western bank of the Nile at the village of *El-Arkfas*.

We advanced slowly, but the constant spectacle of a great number of boats going up and coming down the river, the sight of a country enriched with varied productions, and covered with flocks, amused our eyes, and compensated for the obstacles we met with. Arrived at *Batn el bakara*, the place of the division of the Nile, we left the branch of Rosetta to the left, and entered that of Damietta. The first makes an elbow to the eastward; the second going towards the north, and continuing in the direction of the former bed, receives a greater quantity of water. It is from hence accordingly that the most considerable ca-

(*t*) Herodotus, lib. 2. and Pomponius Mela, say that the town of *Cercaforum* was situated near the separation of the Nile on the eastern bank. Its ancient site is occupied in our time by the village of *Charakbania*.

nals branch out. I shall point them out as we go on.

The sun was on the decline. Our mariners were afraid to pass the night before the little town of *Dagoué*, an old haunt for robbers. In the time of Father Sicard, a man of the name of *Habib* had established himself a petty tyrant there, and by the aid of well-timed presents to the powers of Cairo, he laid all the navigators under contribution. This place is still infested with pirates. A large boat I was in last year, with upwards of thirty Turks, was attacked there. Our arms, and the good countenance we shewed, drove off the enemy, whose intention was to plunder, not to fight. These considerations determined us to stop before the little hamlet of *Zoufeti*, where we cast anchor; and whilst the servant was preparing supper, I took a walk with the janissary in an adjacent wood. We carried each of us a pair of pistols at his belt, a large couteau de chasse at his side, and a double barrelled gun on his shoulder.

Several rows of trees planted round a vast field formed a semicircular enclosure, whose

fides extended to the river. Towards the middle, a few round earthen huts rose up under the shade of the sycamore. To the right and left, pomegranate, palm, tamarind, and orange-trees, irregularly dispersed, formed several small groves. They were interspersed with tufts of *benné*, a beautiful shrub, whose flower serves to dye yellow. The freshness of the grass, the variety of the trees, the scattered thickets, the flowers of lemon and orange-trees, a multitude of turtle-doves, seeking an asylum under their thick foliage, the numerous herds they were driving back from pasture, formed altogether a pleasant and animated scene, which produced a tranquil joy, a sentiment of happiness in the mind, always resulting from the sight of the beauties of nature.

We advanced to the labourers cabins. The women who were round them went in at our approach. The men alone remained, and taking us from our dress for the officers of some Bey, coming to exact a contribution from them, they seemed alarmed. We removed their fears, by telling them that we only demanded a few
fresh

fresh eggs, and some milk. These words having dissipated their apprehensions, they were eager to satisfy us, and conduct us back to our boat. Notwithstanding these friendly tokens, we kept watch all night. Each of us mounted guard in his turn; but no accident happened to disturb our tranquillity.

16th of February.

I had slept some hours wrapped up in my cloak, in the Arabian fashion, when the cries of the mariners preparing to depart awakened me. The sun was rising, and the dew having fallen plentifully, the sky was pure, and without clouds. Casting my eyes towards the wood we had been walking in, in the evening, I saw flocks of birds as white as snow, hovering over the tops of the trees. The Arabs call them *Garde Boeuf*, or *Watch Oxen*, from their always accompanying these animals. They are of the size of a pheasant, with red feet, and a black bill. Their silver plumage formed an agreeable contrast with the deep green of the date-trees. Thou-

flocks of turtle-doves were flying from one orange-tree to another, and celebrating by their accents the rising day. Flights of pigeons were descending from the dove-cotes to the banks of the river. All these birds seemed as if they were tame. As they are not pursued, and seldom or never hear the frightful sound of gunpowder, they appear with confidence, and do not fly the approach of man.

We weighed anchor, and coasted along the left bank of the river, by the aid of oars and the current, for the wind was still contrary. We passed near *Cafr (u) Farraounié*, situated at the head of a large canal, which obliquely crossing the Delta, discharges itself into the branch of Rosetta. We perceived on the right bank of the Nile several distant hamlets. We often passed between numerous isles with which its bed is strewn, and presently saw the little fort of *Tant*, surrounded by a small canal.

An hour after leaving it, we arrived before the small town of *Dagoué*. The Nile

(u) *Cafr* signifies village.

here

here makes a great bend, as if purposely to detain travellers the longer before this haunt of robbers. From this elbow a river strikes off, formed by the hand of man, and as large as the Saone. It joins the canal of *Faraounié*, before it reaches *Menouf*, the capital of the first province of the Delta. It is navigable from the month of August to December, for the largest boats. I have gone up the whole length of it from *Nadir* on the branch of Rosetta, unto that of Damietta. Its direction is from north-east to south-west. Nothing can be fresher, richer, or gayer than its banks. It seems to pass through the terrestrial paradise. This beautiful river furnishes other canals with water, which I shall point out in the map. One of them in its course to lake *Bourlos*, passes by the large burgh of Tanta, where a considerable fair is annually held. The inhabitants of Upper and Lower Egypt collect there in great numbers. It continues eight days, and the productions of the country are exchanged for India stuffs, Moka coffee, and French cloths. The thirst of gain

draws a part of the Egyptians there. Others are attracted by pleasure. Ten thousand boats cover the canal at this period. All of them are well provided with provisions. They make good cheer, have music, and give themselves up to joy. Almost as many tents are pitched upon the bank. The most celebrated courtezans of Egypt are sure to have their pavillions there. They are introduced into the boats, where they display their talents for dancing, singing, and gallantry. Several glass lamps are lighted every night on each mast, whose light infinitely reflected, forms in the water innumerable stars. The tents are also lighted (*x*). This wonderful illumination, a league in length, produces on the verdure, and in the crystal of the water, the most admirable effects. These fairs, the remains of the ancient pilgrimages to Canopus, to Sais, and Bubastis, are not uncommon in Egypt, and are always greatly frequented.

(*x*) Herodotus informs us that similar illuminations were made at the feasts of Isis, in the city of Busris, at Bubastis, during the festivals of Diana, and in other towns in Egypt. *Euterpe*, lib. 2.

We

We got away from *Dagoué* with pleasure; and after passing several hamlets, discovered the village of *Atrib*(y), on the right banks. It has nothing remarkable but its name. The cottages it is composed of, cover the ruins of the ancient *Atribis*. Ammianus Marcellinus asserts that this town was one of the most considerable in Egypt. If this opinion be not exaggerated, it is rather astonishing that it has not preserved one single remarkable monument. A little below *Atrib* runs a large canal which empties itself into Lake *Menzale* towards the eastern part of it. Another sprout from the Nile, which began towards the point of the Delta (z), joined it here, and they formed together the Pelusiac branch. Following its course, one fell in with *Phacusa*, where the canal which communicated with the Red Sea began, and the

(y) The learned Danville places both this town and canal too low in his map of Egypt.

(z) Herodotus and Pomponius Mela say positively that below *Cercaforum*, whose situation I have pointed out, the Nile was *triple*, from dividing itself into three branches. The easternmost, which was that of Bubastis or Pelusium, is not navigable; the other two still are.

great

great city of Bubastis, where Diana was adored. She there had a magnificent temple. Herodotus has given us a picturesque description of the worship of that goddess. I shall give the passage, because it serves to prove how little the Egyptian manners have changed since the time of that excellent historian.

“ The people repair in crowds from all
 “ parts of Egypt to the feast of Diana, at
 “ Bubastis. A multitude of boats sail to-
 “ wards that city. In every boat female
 “ musicians accompany their songs with
 “ cymbals, and tambours de basque ; men
 “ play on the flute, others sing and beat
 “ time with their hands. They stop be-
 “ fore all the towns in their passage, and the
 “ music strikes up (*a*). The women, aban-
 “ doning themselves to the intoxication of
 “ joy, incite those they meet by the most
 “ licentious invitations ; they sing lewd
 “ songs, and perform lascivious dances. On
 “ their arrival at *Bubastis*, innumerable

(*a*) These women are doubtless the dancing and singing Egyptian girls of Herodotus, who were not more decent then, than they are in our days.

“ victims

“ victims are sacrificed during the solemnity, and more wine is drank in one day, than in the rest of the whole year. More than seven hundred thousand persons are assembled.”

Since the days of Herodotus, the Egyptians have passed under different governments, and are at length plunged into the depth of ignorance and slavery; but their character is not essentially changed. All the mad ceremonies, sanctified by the heathen religion, are renewed at this day around the tombs of the *santons* (*b*), before the churches of the Copti (*c*), and at the fairs I have spoken of. The taste for pilgrimages still subsists amongst them. Their dances, their music are the same. In spite of the shackles with which the Mahometan religion has enchained them, their natural character breaks forth, and the inclinations

(*b*) The Mahometans repair on certain days of the year to the tombs of some persons they regard as saints, and celebrate their festival by giving themselves up to joy, good cheer, and licentiousness.

(*c*) The Copti celebrate pretty nearly in the same manner the feast of St. Gemiane in Lower Egypt.

of

of their forefathers prevail; fo true it is, that old habits, arifing from climate, triumph at length over every law. It is a torrent which continually follows an irrefiftible declivity. The art of the legiflator confifts not in oppofing a dyke to its courfe, but in artfully diverting it, fo as to prevent its ravages, and render it ufeul. Let us refume our voyage.

Below *Atrib* the villages are fo near each other, that the banks of the Nile have the appearance of a long town, interrupted only by gardens, and fweet fcented groves. In contemplating the beauty of the heavens, the variety of the trees, its numerous herds, the perpetually renewing riches of an inexhauftible foil, one cannot help faying to one's felf; Let us not be furprifed that the Egyptians erected the greateft monuments in the univerfe; they were enlightened, they inhabited the moft beautiful climate in the world, and an earth which only demanded of man to deposite feeds within its bofom. Defpotifm and barbarifm have marked everywhere the traces of defolation, but what *might* not a people, friends to the arts

arts and sciences undertake in that country? What treasures might they not draw from agriculture and commerce? What knowledge, buried under the veil of hieroglyphics, might they not restore to sciences and to history? Pardon a traveller these reflexions, and these wishes, who has before his eyes the misfortune and the riches of so fine a country.

After failing several hours amongst isles and hamlets, we cast anchor at *Mit rhamr*. I landed there, and ran through that small but very populous and commercial town. It contains nothing remarkable, nothing that bears the appearance of antiquity. The market-places are narrow and ill-lighted, the streets crooked and dirty. One sees a mosque here with a square tower, which appears to me to have served as a church for the Christians, before the Arabian conquest. Through all Egypt, in fact, there is not a similar minaret; they are all round, narrow, and lofty.

After visiting *Mit rhamr*, we crossed the river, and descended to *Zephté*, situated opposite. This little town, as well as
the

the former, does not merit the pains we took to survey it. Part of the houses are built of earth, the rest of brick. Several of them fall into ruins, and nobody repairs them. The people appear miserable there, and it appears very evident, that it is not for them that the luxuriant fields of the neighbourhood are cultivated.

The sun being still above the horizon, we continued our journey. The villages succeeded each other always at the same distance. They are much more frequent on this branch, than on that of Rosetta. This must be ascribed to the destruction of several large towns, which were in the eastern part of the Delta. In proportion as they were laid waste, the support of the canals which conveyed thither the waters of the Nile, has been neglected, the lands have remained uncultivated, the people have got nearer the river, and have fixed their habitations on its banks. What a quantity of barren country would an enlightened government restore to agriculture? The wind continuing contrary, the rowers being fatigued, and night approaching,

proaching, we cast anchor between an island and *Mit Demfis*. This was by no means a safe place, but we determined to keep a good look out.

17th.

We were sleeping quietly, when towards midnight, two men swimming, approached the boat under cover of the darkness. The janissary who had the watch, perceiving them by the light of the stars, cried out, and discharged his fusil, and they disappeared. The noise having awakened us, we took to our arms, but he calmed our uneasiness, by telling us the occasion of it. These robbers are so adroit, that when they find the passengers asleep, they carry off part of their effects, and even large bales, which they swim off with. On being surprized, they plunge into the river, and escape from all pursuit. This *alert* kept us awake the rest of the night; and to pass the time, Mahomet Affalamé recounted to us all the battles of *Ali Bey*. These tales were seasoned with large cups of moka, which we emptied

emptied from time to time. They take it at all hours. The Turks esteem it an excellent fortifier, and necessary in a country where the stomach, relaxed by heat, with difficulty performs its functions. From this opinion they call it *Cahoué* (*d*), which signifies *force*. However this may be, it is at least certain that the Egyptians commonly take two cups of it a day, and frequently much more, without experiencing any of those mischievous effects ascribed to it by the European physicians.

The day, too tardy in appearing for our impatience, came at length, and the sun at his rising shewed himself paler than usual, a sign of a southerly wind. Accordingly it soon began to blow. We set sail; and perceived, in passing, a canal, which taking its rise below *Mit demsis*, empties its waters into Lake Menzalé. The wind freshened, and our vessel cut the waves with rapidity.

(*d*) The Arabs call the coffee in grain *Boun*, and what they drink, *Cahoué*, from whence the Europeans have derived the word *Coffee*.

We

We soon reached the village of *Boufir* (e), situated on the western bank of the Nile, two leagues from *Semennoud*. This situation agrees perfectly with that of the ancient city of *Busiris*, capital of a district, as laid down by Herodotus and Strabo. A superb temple, dedicated to the goddess *Isis*, the same with *Ceres*, attracted there a prodigious concourse of people. It was one of the most frequented pilgrimages of Egypt. *Boufir* preserves no vestiges of its ancient splendor. The precious marbles, with which the temple was built, have been carried off from it, no doubt from its situ-

(e) Abulfeda reckons four cities of this name in Upper, and one in Lower Egypt, which is that I speak of, and is called *Boufir bana*, to distinguish it from the others.

Herodotus, lib. 2, and Strabo, lib. 17, place *Busiris* above *Sebennyus*, the modern *Semennoud*, in going up towards the point of the Delta. This is exactly the position of the village of *Boufir*.

Strabo, in speaking of this town, asserts, that the fables told of the cruelties of *Busiris*, are totally without foundation, that there never was a king of that name in Egypt, and that they were invented by malignity, by way of revenge for the inhospitality of the Egyptians, who did not like strangers.

ation on the banks of the river. Perhaps, too, some remains of it might be discovered under the wretched dwellings built on the same spot.

A league below *Boufir*, is the entrance of a canal, which, joining one of the branches of that of Menouf, passes near *Meballé*, and empties itself into lake *Bourlos* (*f*). A little farther, I discovered a small wood where I had landed in a former voyage: as its situation is charming, I resolved to dine there. The sail was lowered, and we went on shore. A long alley of thick and lofty willows of Babylon, extend along the bank of the river. Their bending branches bathe themselves in the water; behind this alley, pomegranate trees, planted in quincunxes, formed a pleasant grove, surrounded by a canal of the Nile. At the extremity, is a field enriched with variegated harvests, and terminated by cottages, situated amidst orange-trees in flower. Seated under the willows,

(*f*) This lake is known amongst sailors by the name of *Brulos*, as well as the cape that forms the most advanced point of it.

the

the feet hanging over the river, you have before you an island, which separates its bed in two. The thick grass with which it is covered, is so fresh as to invite the eye to dwell upon it. On the opposite bank, one sees the villages of *Salanié*, of *Mit Abulbari*, and of *Gerab*. They are only separated by tufts of date and orange-trees, and some fields planted with vegetables and different crops ; on the right is *Boufir*, which is lost in the horizon ; on the left the town of *Semennoud*, crowned with lofty minarets. I never saw a more agreeable situation than this. The heavens, the earth, the waters, the shades, the verdure, the flowers, the sight of hamlets and of towns, every thing combines to give pleasure to the eye. We dined in this delicious spot. Twice I halted there, and twice have I experienced the involuntary charm which all beautiful objects produce in the mind, that pure contentment and tranquillity, with which they penetrate the soul, and which force it to diffuse on the surrounding objects that profusion of delight, which overwhelms it. Happy they, who at that

moment find a heart wherein they can pour the delicious sentiments they feel, and transport it by the communication !

A league and a half to the westward of this wood is *Meballé el Kebiré*, capital of *Garbia*, the second province of the Delta, and the residence of a Bey. As there is no town more considerable in the Delta, it is called *Kebira* the Great. It has manufactories of linen, and some sal ammoniac works. A great deal of business is done there. The rivers which surround it serve for the conveyance of its merchandize throughout Egypt. Its environs are covered with villages, flocks, and the various productions of an ever fertile soil. *Meballé* has replaced the cities of *Sebennytus* and *Busiris*, but has retained nothing of their magnificence. There is no remarkable building to be seen there.

Whilst we were quietly reposing on the bank of the river, the wind shifted to the south-east, and blew with violence. Becoming soon a furious hurricane, it raised vast clouds of hot dust, which darkened the heavens, and diffused a gloomy paleness

ness over all nature. This dark veil, through which the sun's disk appeared like blood, lasted two hours, and subsided. When such whirlwinds surprise the traveller in the midst of the desert, he is buried under them, unless he has time to shelter himself in a tent; but if the storm lasts long, even that asylum becomes his tomb; a hillock of sand rises round him, and he is smothered. The wind falling, the sky resumed its serenity; we went on board our bark, and fell down to *Semennoud*.

This is the ancient *Sebennytus*, capital of a district. It is of a moderate size, populous and commercial. The market-places, occupied by shopkeepers, afford various articles in great plenty, and very cheap. Excepting the mosques, all the buildings are of brick. I could discover in it no remains of antiquity.

Half a league to the northward of *Semennoud*, is the canal of *Thebania*, which falls into Lake Bourlos, near the ruins of the great *Butis* (g). This city was

(g) Herodotus, lib. 2. Euterpe.

decorated with two temples built in honour of Apollo and Diana. It was rendered famous from the oracle of *Lato-na*, which was consulted from all parts of Egypt. The temple of that divinity was vast and magnificent. It was surrounded by a portico fifty feet high, supported by marble columns (*b*). A mass of granite, hollowed out by the hammer, and whose external surfaces were sixty feet square, formed the sanctuary. It was completely shut by a stone of equal size, and six feet thick. No modern traveller has visited *Butis*; the journey would be attended with great danger; so that it is impossible to know whether the description of Herodotus be accurate. After seeing the pillar of Alexandria, however, and other monuments not less astonishing, one

(*b*) This enormous mass of granite, which was 240 feet in circumference, was hewn in a quarry which is still to be seen in the Isle of *Philé*, near the cataracts. It was brought on rafts the distance of 200 leagues to the place where it was deposited. It is without doubt the heaviest load ever moved by human power.

is induced to believe that this historian, who had been on the spot, has not imposed upon posterity.

A league and a half from *Semennoud*, near the canal of *Thebania*, is a large mound of earth, covered with ruins. Pocock and Father Sicard call this place *Bha beit*, House of beauty; the Turks, with whom I have been, call it *Hajar beit*, House of stone. However that may be, these are the ruins of a large temple, built entirely of marble. The walls were ten feet thick towards the foundation, and were composed of beautiful granite, spotted with red, which is found in the quarries of Sienna, and which receives a perfect polish. The pillars were four feet diameter. The head of Isis served by way of capital. One meets with pieces of precious marble amongst the ruins, the remains of statues which decorated this superb edifice. The greatest part of the stones are covered with hieroglyphics, amongst which one distinguishes some men with painted bonnets, some young girls, birds, and different animals. All these figures

are of most delightful sculpture. The attitudes are excellent, nor is the Egyptian taste any where so pure, nor the sculpture so well executed. These beautiful ruins are abandoned to the barbarism of the Turks, who daily carry off blocks of marble, or saw the pillars to make millstones of them.

Mr. Pocock and Father Sicard agree in saying, that this temple is that built by Busiris, in honour of the goddess Isis; but its situation does not agree with what is mentioned of that town by Herodotus and Strabo, according to whom, as I have said, it was two leagues above *Semennoud*, where the village of *Boufir* now stands. I am rather inclined to think with Danville, that the edifice in question was in the city of Isis itself, which Pliny and Stephen of Byzantium place towards the bottom of the Delta. This appears to me the most probable opinion. If Egypt was not in the hands of barbarians, if one was allowed to search there, a great many doubts would be cleared up, which at present obscure the ancient history of this country. In spite of every possible

possible information, there are some points in which we only can approach the truth, without presuming to flatter ourselves we have attained it.

We returned from our expedition in the evening. *Mahamet Affalame*, for whom, to remain seated with his pipe, was a pleasure a thousand times greater than the most wonderful ruins in the universe, invited me to go to a coffee-house where he heard music. I accepted his offer the more readily, as from my speaking Arabic, I could pass for a Turk. We accordingly went. Our arms, our military dress, which were very neat, made them take us for Janissary officers. The townsmen of *Semennoud* rose up and gave us the place of honour. They were sitting squat on estrades covered with mats. We sat down on a raised sofa. The master of the coffee-house himself presented us with moka, and lighted our pipes. Presently a dancing girl, who was amusing the assembly, began to leap about before us. She threw herself, according to the custom of the country, into the
most

most lascivious attitudes. The tambour de basque, and cymbals regulated her steps. The more indecent her gestures were, and the more significant her movements, the more did they lavish their applauses on her, consequently she was not sparing of them. After the dance was finished, she came and sat down by us, and chaunted *moals*, in praise of some Musulmen, then sang some very lively airs. This courtezan was called *Bedaoui*. She was fourteen years old, and a perfect beauty. Her silken garments, which were extremely light, and slightly fastened by a long sash, let us lose no part of the beautiful contours of her body: her ebon locks, perfumed with essences, fell in several tresses, to her very heels. A veil, gracefully lifted up, covered her shoulders. She had large black eyes, a complexion less brown than the women of the lower class, a delicate mouth, and an agreeable smile; but two blue spots made on her cheeks with gunpowder, and a ring at one of her nostrils, disfigured her in my eyes. Such was the young *Bedaoui*. She had
come

come from Cairo, and was seeking her fortune. Finding that we had paid her generously for dancing and singing, she offered to accompany us in our voyage. We thanked for her kind intention, and returned to pass the rest of the night in our boat.

18th.

We had taken care to renew our stock of provisions at *Semennoud*, where one meets with excellent pigeons, good poultry and fresh butter of a most exquisite flavour. We set out at sunrise. The wind being almost easterly, allowed us to carry sail. After two hours navigation, we perceived the minarets of *Mansoura*, where we soon came to anchor. I landed, curious to examine this town, celebrated by the courage and the misfortunes of St. Louis. It is tolerably large, but without any fortification. The streets are narrow, and the houses built of brick, as in the rest of the Delta. One quarter of it is almost in ruins. It was in the midst of these ruins, doubtless,

doubtless, that the brave Joinville, who had penetrated thus far, defended himself a long time against the efforts of the Egyptians. He escaped from thence covered with wounds. Peter, Duke of Britany, lost an eye there; but I reserve these particulars for the piece of history which I have promised you.

Manfoura is a modern town, the origin of which is given us by Abulfeda in these words (*i*); “King Camel (*k*), son of “Eladel, laid the foundation of Manfoura, “at the place where the Nile separates “into two branches, one of which flows “towards Damietta, the other towards

(*i*) “Oua el Manfoura benaha el melec el camel “ebn el adel, and masterek el Nil ila doumiat, oua “*achmoun* benaha fi ouegg el adou lamma haserou “doumiat.”

This passage proves that the learned Pocock was deceived, in taking this city for that of *Tanis* or *Zoan* of the scriptures.

(*k*) This prince was the seventh king of the posterity of the Aïoubites. He died at Damascus, in the year 635 of the hegira.

“*Achmoun*.

“ Achmoun (l). He built it by way of
 “ rampart against the enemy, whilst they
 “ were besieging Damietta (m).”

The Christians of Syria established at Mansoura (n) carry on almost all the trade. The chief articles are the fine rice, which grows on the borders of the lake, and sal ammoniac. One sees vast ovens here for hatching eggs. As Egypt is the only country where the artificial incubation of eggs is practised, I will give you the description of it.

Figure to yourself a building of two stories, the first of which is under ground, and the second very little elevated. A narrow corridor, which divides each story

(l) *Achmoun* is a town built by the Arabs, near lake Menzalé. They sometimes call it Achmoun Tanis, from its standing on the site of the ancient city of *Tanis*, whose ruins are to be seen in an isle of the same lake. The foundation of this town was laid in the reign of Elmetouakkel. *Elmacin*.

(m) It was during the time that the Crusaders laid siege to Damietta, one and thirty years before the expedition of St. Louis, that King Camel built Mansoura. *Macrizi*.

(n) *Mansoura* signifies in Arabic, *the Victorious*.

into

into two equal parts, runs the whole length of it. To the right and left are little cells, where the eggs are deposited. The upper story is vaulted with an ox-eye at the top. There is a similar aperture in the floor by which the heat communicates below. Both have a small window, which is carefully blocked up. The door of entrance is very low, and serves for a communication with the whole building. The eggs are first ranged in heaps in the lower story. The fire is then lighted in the upper story, for an hour in the morning, and an hour in the evening. Cows dung dried in the sun serves for fuel. This operation lasts eight days. When the building has received the proper degree of heat, the fire is extinguished, all the apertures are shut, and part of the eggs heaped up below, are carried into the upper story. The man who looks after this operation, enters from time to time to examine if it be necessary to preserve the same heat, or to diminish it. The nineteenth day of the incubation, the chickens begin to stir in their shell; the twentieth

tieth they make use of their beak, and try to get out of prison. They all usually hatch the one-and-twentieth day. Then it is that one sees these heaps of eggs, hitherto immoveable, in agitation, and rolling on the floor, and that thousands of little flutterers of various colours, are to be seen hopping about the apartment. This sight is really amusing. The next day they are carried about the town in baskets, and cried in the streets. Each family purchases their provision of them at a halfpenny a piece. Several authors have asserted that these chickens never become such good poultry as those hatched under the hen. This is a mistake. A French cook I saw at Grand Cairo, bought them every year, and by feeding them well, made excellent pullets of them. It is said here that the inhabitants of the village of *Bermé* alone, have the secret of this incubation. This is a fact however I have not ascertained.

After surveying Mansoura, we went to see the canal which bounds it to the northward. It is wide and deep, and falls
into

into lake Menzalé, below *Achmoun*. The passage of this river was fatal to the French army, and its waters were tinged with their blood, and filled with their dead bodies. Our curiosity being satisfied, we again set sail in the evening. Near Mansoura the Nile changes its direction, and runs north-east. The country on its banks, presents every where the same abundance, but the villages are less frequent. We passed at dusk before *Diaft*, a small town a day's journey distant from St. Gemiane, where the Copti go in pilgrimage. At the time of that festival, the plain is covered with tents. The Christians and Mahometans promiscuously rejoice together for eight days. There are horse-races, and they give themselves up to wine and good cheer. The dancing girls come thither in great numbers, and Bacchus and Venus preside at the entertainment.

Night had thrown his shade over the earth; but it is not here thick and impenetrable. It is a transparent veil which only half conceals the objects. One sees
through

through it the azure of a serene sky, and an infinite number of stars which shine in the firmament. They have a more brilliant light, and appear larger than in temperate climates. The night in Egypt has a thousand charms we rarely experience in Europe. Thick darkness never covers her brow. The blast of tempests never disturbs its tranquillity. Deluges of rain do not render it the image of chaos. The wind falls usually with the sun. Nature remains in a perfect calm. It is then that the man who is fond of contemplation, resigns himself without trouble to the study of his existence. It is then that the astronomer who views the heavens, enjoying the sight of a firmament without clouds, can follow the motion of the stars through the immensity of space.

Whilst we were descending, and the straggling lights apprized us of the approach of boats which were coming up the river, one of them in an eddy gave us a severe shock, and was very near sending us to the bottom. We immediately gained

the shore, to examine if we made no water, and resolved to pass the night there. This accident happened to us near the little village of *Saoualim*. This place has twice been nearly fatal to me, as I am going to inform you, for the benefit of those who may be led by curiosity into Egypt.

Last year I went down from Cairo with a French officer, who was going to embark at Damietta, to return to India by Bassora. We had only one servant and three sailors with us. The officer opened during the voyage a little box filled with sequins, and counted them. This was enough to endanger our lives. I told him so, but he paid no attention to me. The sailors, tempted by the sight of the gold, formed the project of murdering us. The two first nights they had no opportunity of carrying it into execution, as we were upon our guard. The third, a contrary wind having forced us to lie-to, they fastened the boat to the shore, and one of them went to form the plot at a neighbouring hamlet.

He

He returned an hour after, and lay down with the others. The fatigue of long watching, and the heat, made us fall asleep. I had slept soundly for about an hour, when I suddenly found myself as if shaken by something, and perfectly awakened, without being able to conceive the cause of it. It was clear moon-light, and I immediately perceived a man with one foot already in the boat, who held a naked, poniard. I fly to my two barrelled gun, and clapping it to his breast, I cry out to him in Arabic, that he is a dead man if he does not immediately make off. His two arms drop, and he remains motionless with surprise. At the same instant I perceive a few paces from him, three more robbers armed with sabres and pistols. I watched their motions, determined to fire at the first who should assume a threatening attitude. I durst not turn my head to alarm my companion, lest they should take that opportunity to fire at me. He, however, whom I presented my piece at, getting off to a distance, I awakened the officer. He arm-

ed himself, and whilst the rogues were holding a council together, I loosed the boat, and we passed to the other side of the river. During this whole scene, the boatmen and the servant pretended to be in a profound sleep. My cries did not awaken them, and we were obliged to have recourse to blows to effect it. At Damietta, I discovered that these villains had stolen several things from me ; but the fear of the bastinado obliged them to restore them. I could not help returning thanks to providence for my escape from this danger, by awakening so opportunely. Two minutes later, and all was over.

19th.

The remembrance of what had happened to me at that time, made us keep watch the rest of the night. This precaution was unnecessary, Nobody disturbed us. Our boat having only received a slight damage towards the extremity, we set sail early in the morning. We passed before *Farescour*, which is not far from Damietta, and two
hours

hours after we discovered that handsome town, which forms a vast crescent on the eastern bank of the Nile. A multitude of boats and small vessels were at anchor there. We landed before the custom-house.

L E T T E R XXIII.

History of ancient and modern Damietta. Epoch of their foundation. A geographical account of the position of those two cities. Refutation of travellers, who have universally confounded or misplaced them in their charts and narratives. Description of modern Damietta, its extent, commerce, baths, and inhabitants. Description of the beautiful environs of this town, the woods, and groves of orange-trees; with an account of the lotus, denominated by Herodotus the lilly of the Nile; the papyrus, the existence of which has been denied by several modern writers; the excellent rice cultivated by the people of Damietta, and which they export to Syria, the islands in the Archipelago, and the city of Marseilles.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

THE history of Damietta, Sir, is very obscure. Almost all the writers have
confounded

confounded the ancient with the modern town. Their repeated errors have thrown obscurity and uncertainty over this important point of Egyptian geography. To clear them up, it is necessary to follow the succession of time, and to begin with that celebrated Damietta, so repeatedly attacked by the European princes. The knowledge of the several places, and epochas, will class the objects in your mind, and the facts represented as they ought to be, will furnish you with clear and distinct ideas on the subject.

“ Damietta, says Abulfeda, (o) was a
 “ town surrounded by walls, and situated
 “ at

(o) *Oua doumiat canet mediné mesaoura ala el babr and mesaab el Nil el charki.* Description of Egypt.

You see, Sir, that I am always obliged to express the sound of the Arabic words in French characters. I should have preferred giving the passages as they are written in the original, but you know that in France we have professors of Arabic, and no press for it. We are even the only learned people in Europe without that advantage. Nothing remains of those fine characters cast by order of Cardinal Richelieu, but the matrices. A foreign superintendant would be sufficient, with the aid of the learned, to teach the use of them; and

“ at the mouth of the eastern branch of (*p*)
 “ the Nile.” Let us content ourselves with
 this account of its situation, and trace out
 the origin of this town. Stephen of By-
 zantium informs us that it was called
Thamiatis under the government of the
 Greeks of the lower empire, but that it
 was then very inconsiderable. It increased
 in importance every day, in proportion as
 Pelusium, which was frequently plundered,
 lost its power. The total ruin of that
 ancient town occasioned the commerce
 of the eastern parts of the Delta to be
 transferred to Damietta. It was, however,
 no longer a place of strength, when, towards
 the year 238 of the Hegira, the emperors of
 Constantinople took possession of it a second
 time. The importance of a harbour so

we should by degrees put ourselves on a footing with
 Spain, Italy, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Holland
 and England, who all print Arabic.

(*p*) The Arabian Geographer calls it *the eastern branch*, because Pelusa having been so often sacked, and even totally destroyed by the Crusaders, the canals which conveyed the water there, ceased to be frequented, and the Damietta branch became the oriental one.

favourably

favourably situated, opened the eyes of the Caliphs. In the year 244 of the hegira, *Elmetouakkel* (q) furrounded it with strong walls. This obstacle did not prevent the brave Roger, king of Sicily, from taking it from the Mahometans, in the year 550 of the hegira. He did not long enjoy his conquest. *Salab Eddin*, who about that period mounted the throne of Egypt, expelled the Europeans from Damietta. Fifteen years after, they returned to besiege it, but this able Sultan baffled all their efforts. Notwithstanding their land army was supported by a fleet of twelve hundred sail (r),

(q) Egypt saw some great works completed during the reign of this emperor, such as the walls of Alexandria, those of Damietta, the foundations of *Achmoun*, of Rosetta, of Cataiah, &c. They were executed by order of *Ebn Toulon*, one of the most celebrated Governors of this country. This grandee, burning with ambition, and the desire of rendering himself independent, was desirous of having some strongholds, under shelter of which he might brave the power of the caliphs. No sooner did he find himself strongly fortified, than he hoisted the standard of rebellion, and being proclaimed King of Egypt, defended it against all the forces of Asia.

(r) *Macrizi*, history of the dynasties of Egypt.

they

they were obliged to make a disgraceful retreat.

It was the fate of this place to be constantly besieged. In the year 615 of the hegira, under the reign of *Eladel*, the crusaders attacked it with a very considerable force. They landed on the western shore of the Nile, and their first care was to surround their camp with a ditch and pallisado. The mouth of the river was defended by two towers, furnished with numerous garrisons. An enormous iron chain, stretching from one side to the other, hindered the approach of vessels. The crusaders carried by storm the tower on the same side with their camp, broke the chain, and opened the entrance of the river for their fleet. *Nejm Eddin* (s), the Sultan's son, who was encamped near Damietta, covered it with an army. To stop the enemies vessels, he threw a bridge over the

(s) This valiant prince was then very young. He made his first campaigns against the Europeans, gained several victories over the Syrian rebels, and died at Mansoura some time after the taking of Damietta by Saint Lewis.

Nile.

Nile. The Franks overturned it, and the prince adopted the measure of choking up the mouth of the river, which he almost rendered impassable, by several large boats he sunk there. After alternate and various successes, many bloody battles, and a siege of seventeen months, the Christian princes took Damietta by storm. They did not however long enjoy the fruit of so much blood spilt, and of an armament which had cost immense sums. Completely invested near the canal of *Achmoun (t)*, by the waters of the Nile, and by the Egyptian army, they purchased their lives and their liberty by the sacrifice of their conquest.

One-and-thirty years after this defeat, Saint Lewis carried Damietta without striking a stroke. The brilliant valour of a king who threw himself into the waves, in complete armour, to march to the enemy, entrenched upon the banks, and the vigour with which he attacked them, struck a panic into their army. They took flight, and

(t) This canal is a quarter of a league to the northward of Mansoura. It is the same where Saint Lewis finished his exploits.

shamefully abandoned a fortress filled with stores, and capable of a long resistance. The Arabs soon recovered it, as I shall have reason to mention in the history of the descent of Saint Lewis; but tired of keeping a place which continually drew upon them the most warlike nations of Europe, they totally destroyed it, and rebuilt it further up in the country. Abulfeda and all the oriental authors testify this fact. I shall lay before you the most important passages extracted from them.

“ Damietta being destroyed, a small
 “ town was built at some distance, called
 “ *Menchié*, which is become a considerable
 “ place. In our days (one hundred years after
 “ its foundation) we see several squares,
 “ market-places, and public baths. The
 “ ancient city was raised to the ground in the
 “ year 648 (*u*) of the hegira. The Caliph
 “ *Elmetouakkel*, of the family of the Abas-
 “ sides, built the walls. The misfortunes
 “ it had occasioned to the Mahometans,

(*u*) The other Arabian historians place this epocha four years farther back.

“ the

“ the wars to which it had given rise, drove
 “ them to that extremity. It seemed in
 “ fact, as if this fortress invited in a
 “ peculiar manner, the armies of the
 “ Franks, its who alternately laid siege to
 “ walls (v).”

Macrizi confirms *Abulfeda*, so as to leave no doubt. I shall give the passage of that historian, as translated by the learned Mr. Cardonne; for when it is necessary to establish a fact disfigured by the erroneous descriptions of a great many travellers, the demonstration must be perfect.

“ Two years after the departure of St.
 “ Lewis, under the reign of *Moaz, Eddin*
 “ *Aibeb*, the Turcoman, the first sultan
 “ of the dynasty of the Mamaluke Baha-

(v) “ Tom khorabet, oua bena men bel carb ba-
 “ lidé tefmi *elmenchié*. Oua hié médiné zat asouak,
 “ oua hamamat. Oua khorabet doumiat fi séné taman
 “ oua arbaïn oua sette maïat, oua canet asouarha men
 “ amarat *Elmetouakkal* el khalif el abassi. Can sabab
 “ tekhorabha mema cassaat elmeslemoun alaiha, men
 “ echchedde marat bad akhi, be cafd el frang aïaha be
 “ gemouahom marat bad akhi.” *Abulfeda, description*
of Egypt.

“ rites,

“ rites, it being reported that the French
 “ threatened Egypt a second time, a reso-
 “ lution was taken to destroy Damietta.
 “ This place was rased to the ground,
 “ so that there remained no vestige of it,
 “ except the great mosque (*). The ruin
 “ of Damietta did not free the Egyptians

(*) A large mosque is still to be seen at the village
 of *Esbé*, on the eastern bank of the Nile, a short league
 from the sea. I have made ten journeys to this place,
 the environs of which I have attentively examined.
 I remarked there the foundation of the walls of the
 ancient Damietta, the arch of a brick vault, of an-
 tique construction, which probably supported the end
 of the bridge thrown over the river before this town ;
 an old tower, half demolished, on which are placed
 two guns without carriages, and other ruins, which
 leave me no room to doubt of its situation. As to the
 distance of a league which there is at present from
Esbé to the sea, it is the distance gained by the Delta
 in the term of 600 years. This increase has obliged
 the Mamlouks to erect two small forts beyond the vil-
 lage, to defend the entrance of the river. That which
 is on the left bank is already at half a league's distance
 in the land. The other, more modern, will soon un-
 dergo the same fate ; for the bank on which it is built
 projects three leagues into the sea, and as it is almost
 on a level with the water, it will form a promontory
 in less than a century.

“ from

“ from apprehension, and eleven years after,
 “ under the reign of *Bibar, Elbondouk Dari*,
 “ the mouth of the Nile was choked up,
 “ (y) to prevent the enemy’s fleets from get-
 “ ting up the river. From that epocha
 “ its entrance is prohibited to all vessels,
 “ which are now obliged to anchor in the
 “ road.

“ The town of Damietta, at this day
 “ subsisting, was built after the destruction
 “ of the ancient one. It is situated a lit-
 “ tle above on the same side.”—And in
 fact, Sir, it is only a league and a half
 distant from the village of *Esbé*, where the
 traces of the former are discoverable. The
 modern Damietta, first called *Menchié*, as
 Abulfeda tells us, has preserved the memo-
 ry of its origin in a square still called by
 that name. Writers in general have con-
 founded these two towns, ascribing to the

(y) These two fillings up of the river have raised a
 terrible bar, which is called *Bogaz*, which is as dan-
 gerous as that of Rosetta, and is become impassable,
 even for boats, for several months of the year. Ship-
 wrecks are frequent there. I have passed it four times,
 but not without running great risks.

one the attributes of the other. The notes (z) at the bottom of the page will shew

(z) Father Sicard says; *Lake Menzalé commences at half a league from Damietta, formerly called Thamiatis, Lettres edifiantes, p. 340.* The Damietta he speaks of is not *Thamiatis*; it was the ancient one.

Pocock, after speaking of the modern Damietta, adds: *One sees at the northern extremity of this town a large round tower, of rough stones, and very well built, which was done doubtless by the Mamalukes, after they had retaken Damietta from the Christians.* Description of the East, vol. first. The learned Englishman confounds the town destroyed by the Egyptians with that subsisting in our days.

Prosper Alpinus falls into a much greater error, by mistaking Damietta for the ancient Pelusium. *Description d'Egypte, p. 38.* Damietta is 22 leagues from the ruins of Pelusium.

Mr. Maillet has committed the same fault. *The town of Damietta answers to that of the ancient Pelusium, which advanced half a league.* Description d'Egypte, p. 127.

Doctor Shaw has copied the passage of Mr. Maillet, and adopted the same error. *Geographical observations on Syria and Egypt.*

Mr. Nieburh also, who has given an excellent plan of Damietta, confounds it with that which was rased in the twelfth century, as may be seen by the following passage: *I have not discovered the smallest traces of*
the

shew you what great authorities had obscured this point of history and geography.

It is time, Sir, to make you acquainted with the modern Damietta, where I passed fourteen months. This place, larger, and not less agreeable than Rosetta, is rounded in a semicircle on the eastern bank of the Nile, two leagues and a half from the mouth of it. The eye, placed at one of the extremities of the crescent, takes in its whole extent. It is reckoned to contain 80,000 souls. It has several squares, the most considerable of which has retained the name of *Menchié*. The bazars are

the walls of Damiat; but the place where it is said the Nile was blocked by a chain, seems to be still discoverable; for on the northern bank within the town, there is an old and lofty tower. The river in this place is scarcely more than one hundred feet wide; (in this he is very much mistaken) and opposite to it, on the western bank, is another tower similar to it, of which every thing on the land side is already demolished. Journey into Arabia, vol. i. These towers, which have made them take the modern for the ancient Damietta, were built by the Mamelukes for the defence of the new town. As they were useless, they have demolished one, and employed its materials in the construction of a small fort which is at the mouth of the river.

filled with merchants. *Okals*, or *khans*, as spacious as those of *Boulak*, collecting under their porticos the stuffs of India, the silks of mount Lebanon, sal-ammoniac, and pyramids of rice, proclaim that it is a commercial town. The houses, those in particular which are on the banks of the river, are very lofty. They have in general handsome saloons built on the top of their terraces, which are cheerful belvederes, open to every wind, where the Turk, effeminately reclining on a sofa, passes his life in smoking, in looking on the sea, which bounds the horizon on one side, on the great lake that extends itself on the other, and on the Nile, which, running between them, traverses a rich country. Several large mosques, adorned with lofty minarets, are dispersed over the town. The public baths, lined with marble, are distributed in the same manner as those of Grand Cairo. The linen you are served with is clean, and the water very pure. The heat and the treatment in them, so far from injuring the health, serve to strengthen, nay, even to improve it, if used with moderation.

tion. This custom, founded on experience, is general in Egypt. The observations of several years, the astonishing effects arising from the use of them, compel me to look upon them as very salutary.

The port of Damietta is continually filled with a multitude of boats and small vessels. Those called *Scherm* serve to convey the merchandize on board the ships in the road, and to unload them; the others carry on the coasting trade. This town carries on a great trade with Syria, with Cyprus, and Marseilles. The rice called *Mezelaoui*, of the finest quality there is in Egypt, is cultivated in the neighbouring plains. The exports of it amount annually to about six millions of livres. The other articles of the produce of the country, are linens, sal-ammoniac, corn, &c. A ruinous policy for the country, prohibits the exportation of this last article; but the law is evaded, and it passes under the name of rice.

The Christians of Aleppo and Damascus, settled in this town, have for several ages carried on its principal commerce. Turk-

ish indolence, content with extorting from them from time to time, suffers them to become rich. The exportation of rice to foreign countries is prohibited, but by means of some *douceurs* to the custom-house officers, the people of Provence load annually several ships with it. The *Bogaz* preventing them from entering the Nile, their cargoes are conveyed on board by the boats of the country. This inconvenience is the source of endless vexation and abuses. The boat, which is loaded in the evening with rice of the first quality, is frequently not that which arrives at the ship; an inferior quality is substituted for it during the night. The Marseilles captains, aware of these rogueries, without being able to prevent them, endeavour to play off trick against trick, so that this commerce has become a general scene of knavery. But the badness of the port is still more detrimental to Damietta. The road where the vessels lie being exposed to every wind, the slightest gale obliges the captains to cut their cables, and take shelter at Cyprus, or to stand off to sea. It
would

would be easy, by cutting a canal only of half a league, to open a passage for ships into the Nile, where there is deep water. This work, which might be executed at very little expence, would render Damietta a noble harbour; but despotism, insensible to the interest of the people, is always surrounded by destruction in its progress, and wants both the will and the power to create. By what fatality is it, that the most beautiful country on the globe is destined for a prey to a handful of robbers, for whom public utility is nothing, and who sport with the lives of their fellow creatures?

The tongue of land on which Damietta is situated, straightened on one side by the river, and on the other by the western extremity of lake *Menzalé*, is only from two to six miles wide, from east to west. It is intersected by innumerable rivulets in every direction, which render it the most fertile spot in Egypt. The soil there produces, *communibus annis*, 80 bushels of rice for one. The other produce is in the same proportion. It is there that nature, lavishing profusely her pomp and riches, presents

flowers, fruits, and harvests at every season of the year. Winter never deprives it of these advantages; its beauties are never impaired by summer. Destructive heats, as well as chilling colds, are equally unknown in that happy spot. The thermometer varies only from nine to twenty-four degrees above the freezing point. (a) Damietta is indebted for this charming temperature to the immense quantity of water with which it is surrounded. At Grand Cairo the thermometer rises twelve degrees higher.

The verdure is no where so fresh; the trees are no where covered with such quantities of fruit. The rivulets around the fields of rice are lined with several kinds of reeds, some of which rise to a great height. The reed *calamus* is there found in abundance, which is made use of for writing by the orientals. Its slender stalk bears long narrow leaves, which hang

(a) I have pursued these observations for a whole year, but only in the day time. In the night the cold does not much increase, for frost, ice, and snow are not known at Damietta.

grace-

gracefully, and spreading branches covered with white flowers. I have there seen forests of papyrus, of which the ancient Egyptians made their paper. This triangular cane, nine feet high, and as thick as your thumb, is topped by a woolly tuft. Strabo, who calls it *Biblus* (*b*), gives an accurate description of it. It is there also that the *Lotus*, of which the Arabs have preserved the primitive name of *Nuphar*, exalts its lofty stalk above the waters. Its large calix blows either of an azure

(*b*) “ The papyrus grows spontaneously in Lower Egypt. I have seen it on the banks of lake Mæotis. It is a cane whose bare stalk rises about 10 feet high. It bears at the top a woolly tuft. The *publicans*, who farm that branch of commerce, only suffer it to grow in very few places, to enhance its value, and thereby injure the public interest.”

Strabo, lib. 17.

It is the avidity of these *publicans*, it is their care in destroying it, that occasions the scarcity of papyrus in Egypt. I only met with it in the neighbourhood of Damietta, and of lake *Menzalé*. Travellers in general, who have not visited this interesting part of Egypt, have not made mention of it. Others less circumspect, have denied its existence, and have circulated fables on the subject.

blue, or of a brilliant white, and it appears with the majesty of the king of the aquatic plants. The marshes and the canals in the interior parts of the country, are filled with this superb flower, which diffuses a most agreeable odour.

There are a great many villages around Damietta, in most of which are manufactures where the most beautiful linens of the country are fabricated. The finest napkins in particular are made there, fringed with silk. You are served at table with them, but especially on ceremonial visits, when the slave presents you with one to wipe your mouth with, after you have drank your sherbet (*c*), or ate the sweetmeats, which are carried round on a silver

(*c*) *Sherbet* comes from the Arabic word *chorté*, which signifies drink. It is the nectar of the orientals. It is composed of lemon-juice, sugar, and water, in which are dissolved perfumed cakes, made of excellent Damascus fruit, in which is usually infused some drops of rose-water. It is a most agreeable liquor. Sherbet is only served up amongst the great, or men in office. On several visits I have paid to the governors of Damietta, it was offered me, and I drank it with pleasure.

plate to all the company. These small towns, generally surrounded with little woods, or trees promiscuously planted, form a whimsical and picturesque assemblage. By the side of the sycamore and the melancholy tamarind, one sees the elegant cassia-tree, with its clusters of yellow flowers, like those of the cytissus. The top of the date-tree, loaded with enormous bunches, rises above the grove. The cassia, with its sweet-scented flower, grows under its shade. The orange and lemon-tree cover the labourer's cabin with their golden fruit. The banana-tree, with its long leaves, the pomegranate, with its scarlet flower, and the fig-tree, with its sugary fruit, throw a vast variety into these landscapes. In walking through these winding paths, shaded on one side by these different trees, and lined on the other by a curtain of reeds, impenetrable to the eye, I frequently found myself on a sudden on the banks of the great lake *Menzalé*. Here the prospect was very different; thousands of boats employed in fishing, or in spreading nets for the innumerable flocks of birds which resort

resort there to seek abundant food, and a temperate climate.

I am desirous, Sir, of painting nature to you, such as I have seen it a thousand times in the environs of Damietta; but I feel how much the painter is inferior to his model. Figure to yourself all the advantages arising from running streams, all the freshness of the most perfect verdure, all the perfumes of the orange-flower, the transcendent voluptuousness of a soft, sweet, and balsamic air, the delightful spectacle of the most beautiful sky, and you will have an imperfect idea of this tongue of land between the great lake and the course of the Nile.

At a mile from this town, to the south-west, is a grove of orange-trees, which serves as a walk for the inhabitants. The walks in it are formed in a straight line. It is the only one where art has added any graces to nature, for every where else the trees are planted without any order. I used to go thither almost every day, particularly in the months of February, March, and April, when the orange-trees are in flower.

flower. I cannot express to you the charms one experiences in respiring the cool air, and the perfumes under this cheerful shade. These trees, which have never been mutilated by the scissars, rise above 30 feet high; their intermingled branches, their thick foliage intercepted all the rays of the sun. They were flowered from the lowest bough up to the very top. Each orange-tree formed a distinct bouquet, where the leaves were with difficulty distinguished through the tufts of flowers. The whole together composed the most delightful canopy under which a mortal can repose. A little rivulet ran along each row, and a basin was opened twice a day, to water them. When one walked there at noon, one was intoxicated with pleasure. It was there, above all, that I experienced what a delicious enjoyment the sense of smelling is capable of procuring. It was there that I discovered, that in warm climates, odours, so far from injuring, are not only salutary, but become necessary to the health.

At the end of this walk is a canal filled with papyrus. At the left, on entering, is
the

the gardener's hut, and a clump of lemon and palm-trees, planted so near each other, that it is difficult to enter it. This spot, enclosed by ditches and palisades, is the asylum of mystery. The most beautiful Turkish women sometimes repair thither to enjoy, *as they say*, the balsamic air, below the shade of these trees.

I shall finish this letter, Sir, with a fact, which will prove to you, that the events which happened in the time of Jacob, are renewed in our days, in Egypt. Whole clouds of locusts covered the plains of Syria the last year. They laid waste the country, and destroyed the corn even to the very root. Famine was, as usual, the consequence of this scourge. A countryman in the neighbourhood of Damascus felt the effects of the general desolation. To supply the urgent necessities of his family, he was daily obliged to sell a part of his cattle. This resource was very soon exhausted; the unhappy father, borne down by the present calamity, foresaw still greater to come. Pressed by hunger, he went to the town to sell his implements of labour.

labour. The invifible hand of Providence guided his footsteps, as the angel formerly conducted the young Tobias. Whilst he was cheapening fome corn newly arrived from Damietta, he heard tell of the fuccesses of *Mourat Bey* (*d*), who, after vanquishing his enemies, had entered Grand Cairo in triumph. They painted the fize, the character, the origin of this warrior. They related the manner in which he had arifen from the ftate of flavery to his prefent greatnefs. The aftonifhed countryman immediately knew him to be one of his fons, carried off from him at eleven years old. A ray of hope revived in his breaft. He loft no time in conveying to

(*d*) *Mourat Bey* and *Ibrahim Bey* have been for the laft feven years the two moft powerful princes of Egypt. Ambition, which is their ruling paffion, has difunited them. They have been at war with each other. The equality of their forces again made them friends. At prefent, *Mourat Bey*, prevailing over his colleague, has obliged him to fly into Upper Egypt. The former reigns at Grand Cairo at this day. I fhall give their characters, and the principal tranfactions refpecting them which have happened under my eyes, in the fequel of thefe letters.

his

his family the provisions he had purchased, recounts what he had learnt, and determines to set out for Egypt. His wife and children bathed him with their tears, offering up their vows for his safe return. He went to the port of Alexandretta, where he embarked, and landed at Damietta.—A son who had quitted the religion of his forefathers to embrace Mahometism, and who saw himself encircled with all the splendor of the most brilliant fortune, is it likely that he will acknowledge him? This idea hung heavy on his heart. On the other hand, the desire of rescuing his family from the horrors of famine, the hopes of recovering a child, whose loss he had long bewailed, supported his courage, and animated him to continue his journey. He enters the capital, and repairs to the palace of *Mourat Bey*. He presents himself to the prince's attendants, and desires permission to speak to him. He urges, he ardently solicits an audience: his dress, and his whole appearance, which bespoke poverty and misfortune, were not calculated to obtain him what he sought for; but his
great

great age, that age so respected in the East, pleaded in his favour. One of his officers informed *Mourat Bey*, that a wretched old man desired to speak to him. "Let him enter," says he. The peasant advances with trembling steps on the rich carpet which covered the hall of the divan, and approaches the Bey, who was reposing on a sofa embroidered with silk and gold. The various feelings which oppressed his mind, deprived him of utterance. Recollecting at length the child that had been stolen from him, and the voice of nature getting the better of his fears, he throws himself at his feet, and embracing his knees, he cries out: "*You are my child.*" The Bey raises him up, endeavours to recollect him, and on a further explanation finding him to be his father, he seats him by his side, and loads him with caresses. After the tenderest effusions of the heart, the old man painted to him the deplorable situation in which he had left his mother and his brethren. The prince proposed to him to send for them to Egypt, and to make them partake of his riches and his power, pro-
vided

vided they would embrace Mahometism. The generous Christian had foreseen this proposal, and fearing lest young people might have been dazzled with it, had not suffered one of his children to accompany him. He stedfastly rejected therefore this offer of his son, and had even the courage to remonstrate with him on his change of religion. *Mourat Bey*, seeing that his father remained inflexible, and that the distress his family was in demanded immediate succour, ordered him a large sum of money, and sent him back into Syria with a small vessel laden with corn. The happy countryman returned as soon as possible to the plains of Damascus. His arrival banished misery and tears from his rural dwelling, and restored joy, comfort, and happiness.

You see, Sir, that this fact bears some resemblance to the history of Joseph, which would possibly have been even more striking, had one come at the knowledge of all the particulars.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T-

L E T T E R XXIV.

An inquiry concerning ancient Pelusium; unknown to modern travellers; its situation, and the epoch of its decline. An account of Farama, a place at a little distance, and where the Arabians place a monument, which seems to be that of Pompey the Great. Description of the great lake of Tanis, now called Menzalé; with the islands and towns which were anciently built at this place. Observations on the fishing of this lake; its mouths in the Mediterranean, and the innumerable birds which assemble there, especially in the winter.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

PELUSIUM, as I have already said, Sir, was placed at the eastern extremity of lake Menzalé. Its name, which signifies *mud* (*e*), proves its situation to be in the

(*e*) Πηλᾶσιον signifies mud; the Arabs have carried that appellation into their language, calling it *thineh*, mud.

midst of marshes. According to Strabo (*f*), it was only two miles from the sea. The period of its foundation, as well as that of the other ancient cities of Egypt, is lost in the obscurity of time. It flourished long before Herodotus. As it commanded the entrance of the country on the side of Asia, the Pharaohs rendered it a considerable fortress: one of them raised a rampart of thirty leagues in length from the walls of this town to Heliopolis; but we find from the history of nations that the long wall of China, those which the weakness of the Greek emperors led them to build round Constantinople, and many others, built at an immense expence, were but feeble barriers against a warlike people; these examples have taught us that a state, to be in security against a foreign yoke, must form warriors within itself, and that men must be opposed to men.

This rampart which covered Pelusium did not stop Cambyfes, who attacked it with a formidable army. The feeble cha-

(*f*) Strabo, lib. 17.

rafter of the fon of Amafis, unable to prevent the defection of two hundred thoufand Egyptians, who went to found a colony beyond the cataracts, had not force fufficient to oppofe that torrent which broke in upon his country. Cambyfes, after a bloody battle, wherein he cut his enemies to pieces, entered Pelufium in triumph. That memorable day, which faw the defection of one part of the Egyptian militia, and the ruin of the other, is the true epoch of the fubjugation of that rich country. Since that period, it has paffed under the yoke of the Perfians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, and the Turks. A continued flavery of more than two thoufand years feems to fecure them an eternal bondage.

Herodotus, who vifited Pelufium fome years after the conquest of Cambyfes, relates an anecdote, which I cannot omit : “ I furveyed (g),” fays he, “ the plain
“ where the two armies had fought ; it
“ was covered with human bones, collect-

(g) Herodotus, Thalia, lib. 3.

“ ed in heaps. Those of the Persians
“ were on one side, those of the Egyp-
“ tians on the other, the inhabitants of
“ the country having taken care to separate
“ them after the battle. They made me
“ take notice of a fact, which would have
“ appeared very astonishing to me, without
“ their explanation of it. The skulls of
“ the Persians, which were slight and fra-
“ gile, broke on being lightly struck with
“ a stone; those of the Egyptians, thicker
“ and more compact, resisted the blows of
“ flint. This difference of solidity they
“ attributed to the custom the Persians have
“ of covering their heads from their in-
“ fancy with the tiara, and to the Egyp-
“ tian custom of leaving the heads of their
“ children bare and shaved, exposed to the
“ heat of the sun. This explanation ap-
“ peared satisfactory to me.”

The same customs still subsist in Egypt
in our days; I have seen in all my travels
the children of the common people, whe-
ther running about the plains, or collected
round the villages, or swimming in the
river, always with their heads bare and
shaved.

shaved. When one reflects on the hardness the skull must acquire from being continually exposed to the action of a burning sun, we shall not be surprised at the remark of Herodotus.

Pelusium, after passing under the dominion of Persia, was taken by Alexander. The brave Antony, general of cavalry under Gabinius, took it from his successors, and Rome restored it to Ptolemy Auletes. Pompey, whose credit had established this young prince on the throne of Egypt, after the fatal battle of Pharsalia, took refuge at Pelusium; he landed at the entrance of the harbour, and on quitting his wife Cornelia, and his son, he repeated the two following verses of Sophocles: "The free man who seeks
"an asylum at the court of a king, will
"meet with slavery and chains." He there found death. Scarcely had he landed on the shore, when Theodore, the rhetorician, of the Isle of Chio, Septimius the courtier, and Achilles the eunuch, who commanded his troops, wishing for a victim to present to his conqueror, stabbed
him

him with their swords. At the sight of the assassins, Pompey covered his face with his mantle, and died like a Roman. They cut off his head, and embalmed it, to offer it to Cæsar, and left his body naked on the shore. It was thus that this great man, whose warlike talents had procured the liberty of the seas for the Romans, and added whole kingdoms to their extended empire, was basely slain in setting foot on the territory of a king who owed to him his crown. Philip, his freed man, collecting together, under favour of the night, the wreck of a boat, and stripping off his own cloak, to cover the sad remains of his master, burnt them according to the custom. An old soldier who had served under Pompey's colours, came to mingle his tears with those of Philip, and to assist him in performing the last offices to the manes of his general.

Pelusium was often taken and pillaged during the wars of the Romans, the Greeks, and the Arabs. But in spite of so many disasters, she preserved to the time of the Crusades, her riches and her commerce.

commerce. The Christian princes having taken it by storm, sacked it. It never again rose from its ruins, and the inhabitants went to Damietta, as I have mentioned in the preceding letter.

Farama, founded by the Arabs, a little to the eastward of Pelusium, took place of it. This town did not long subsist, for it was destroyed in the thirteenth century. Abulfeda (*b*), who quotes *Ebn Haukal*, says, that the tomb of Galen was to be seen there. This is a mistake; that celebrated physician was buried at Pergamos, his native country (*i*). The mausoleum the Arabian historian speaks of, must be that of Pompey, which Pliny places at

(*b*) Description of Egypt.

(*i*) Galen, after studying medicine at the school of Alexandria, went to Rome at the age of 34. His knowledge and his talents soon made him be distinguished there. Marcus Aurelius, a correct judge of merit, made choice of him for his physician, and he held the same post under two of his successors. Tired with living at court, Galen retired to Pergamos, his country, where he passed the remainder of his life in philosophic retirement, and died at the age of 63.

some distance from Mount Casius (*k*). Abulfeda adds, on the credit of *Ebn Said*, that the isthmus of Suez is only twenty-three leagues broad at this place, and that *Amrou* intended cutting it, to make a communication between the two seas. *Omar*, who had no marine, and who was afraid of giving the Grecian vessels an entrance into the heart of his dominions, prevented the execution of this project. It is probable, that he who had conquered Egypt, and who had made a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, would also have completed this noble enterprize.

Quitting the *Pelusiæ* branch, and travelling towards the west, along the sea-coast, one falls in with the *Tanitic* mouth of the river. It derives this name from *Tanis*. This considerable town, built in an island of the lake, and the capital of a tribe, still flourished under the reign of August-

(*k*) *Pliny the Naturalist*, lib. 5. ch. 12. The ruins of *Farama* are in the neighbourhood of Mount Casius. It appears that the tomb described by *Ebn Haukal*, is that of Pompey.

tus (1). Abulfeda informs us, that it did not exist in his time, and that the isle was uncultivated and desert (m).

During my residence at Damietta, several fishermen assured me they had seen in one of the islands of Menzalé, marbles, columns, and the ruins of large buildings. I had formed the project of going to visit them; but the considerable expences the voyage would have cost me, to purchase the governor's permission, to procure one of his officers, and some janissaries to accompany me, obliged me to lay aside the thoughts of it. I anxiously wish that some curious person, either richer than myself, or seconded by government, may survey this great lake, sound the depth of its outlets, describe the precious morsels of antiquity it may contain, and in short, do what not one of our modern travellers has ventured to undertake, and which my moderate fortune alone prevented me from carrying into execution. After the *Tanitic* comes, the *Mendesian* mouth, which takes

(1) Strabo, lib. 17.

(m) Abulfeda, Description of Egypt.

its name from the ancient city of *Mendes* (*n*), famous for its temple, and the indecency of the worship paid there to the ram. Herodotus gives the following account of its origin (*o*): “Hercules prayed
 “Jupiter with ardour to shew himself to
 “him. The God, deaf to his prayer, re-
 “fused him that favour. Overcome at
 “length by his intreaties, he consented,
 “on condition that it should be in the
 “shape of a ram. He covered him-
 “self with the skin of that animal, and
 “appeared to the hero. To preserve the
 “memory of this event, the Egyptians
 “represent Jupiter with a ram’s head. . . .
 “When the sacred animal dies, the *Mendesian*
 “province solemnizes his death by
 “a general mourning.”

Decency prevents me from giving the rest of this passage. They who are curious to be better informed of the point of madness to which fanaticism will transport an ignorant and superstitious populace, may consult the original.

(*n*) This Egyptian word signifies *Ram*. *Herodotus*.

(*o*) Herodotus, lib. 2. Euterpe.

The traveller, who may be desirous of finding the ruins of *Mendes*, if he consults Herodotus and Strabo, must look for it at some distance from the canal of *Achmoun*, on the side of *Menzalé*.

Before one arrives at the *Phatnitic* branch, I have marked a new one on the map, which no geographer has taken notice of. I observed it in a voyage I made in that quarter, during the swelling of the Nile. It is about 50 feet wide. The current in it was very rapid, but I do not know whether it is very deep, or is filled the whole year. It is a natural outlet which the waters of the lake have made for themselves into the sea. It would be easy to turn a part of the river into this canal, and to open a passage for vessels into its bed. The *Phatnitic*, at present the *Damiettic* branch, is a league further on. The Delta commences here. Cape *Bourlos*, near which is the *Sebennyitic* mouth, forms the most advanced point of it. The branch of *Rosetta*, formerly that of *Bolbitine*, terminates it. It extended formerly as far as the

the *Canopic* branch, which throws itself into the sea near to *Aboukir*.

These, Sir, are the seven mouths of the Nile, so celebrated by the poets (*p*). They were all formerly navigable. Those of *Rosetta* and of *Damietta* have alone preserved that advantage. Some of them might indeed be opened; but in the present enfeebled state of Egypt, her government seems more disposed to shut her ports to strangers, than to open new ones.

It now remains for me to give you some particulars, Sir, of the great lake, along whose borders you have been travelling. *Strabo* (*q*), and the Arabian authors call it *Tanis*, on account of the town of that name. At present it is called *Menzale*. Its water is fresh during the inundation, and becomes salt as the river returns into its bed. The same circumstance was remarked in the time of the Caliphs. The

(*p*) Et septem gemini turbant trepida ostia Nili.

Virgil.

Perque papyriferi septemflua flumina Nili.

Ovid.

(*q*) *Strabo*, lib. 17.

geographer

geographer of Nubia speaks of it as follows (r): "The Nile overflowing its banks at the summer solstice, the canals which discharge themselves into Lake *Tanis*, render its waters fresh. The sea in its turn flows into it, and makes them salt. In this lake are islands with buildings in them like towns, such as *Nabli*, *Touna*, *Samuqa*, and *Hassan-El-ma*. They are only to be approached in boats." It would be important to visit these islands, which no modern traveller has seen, and where manuscripts and precious monuments may possibly be found.

About 1200 boats, each of which pays forty livres annually to the Pacha's renter, are continually employed in fishing on the lake. Amongst the various sorts of fish

(r) *Oua behire Tanis aza amed el Nil fi el seif azab maouha. Oua aza gezar fi elcheté ila aouan, el bahr rhaleb, fe maleh maouha. Oua fiha meden metl elgezair tatheif elbehire, oua hie Nabli, oua Touna, oua Samnaa, oua Hassan el ma; oua tarik ila ouahada menha ella belfafen. Geographer of Nubia, section 3.*

it furnishes, there are some most excellent, such as the *queïage*, the *gemal*, the sould, the sole, and the gold-fish. The quailty of the water gives them a white flesh, and a fine delicate flavour. They are sold fresh at Damietta, and the neighbouring towns. They are carried there in such quantities, that a large sole, or gold-fish costs only four sols, (or two pence).

The *bourri*, or mullet, procures of all others the most profit to the fishermen. They gut the females, and take out the spawn, with which they make (*s*) *Boutargue*, or *Botargo*, salt them, and send them throughout Egypt. Lake *Menzalé* having several communications with the Nile and the Mediterranean, and being full of reeds, islands, herbs, and insects, both river and sea-fish flock thither in abundance, and multiply without end. Two thousand persons are annually employed in the fishery, and

(*s*) *Boutargue* is made of the roes of the mullet, salted, and dried in the sun. It is a dish well known to the French seamen of Provence.

thousands of birds constantly feed upon them without producing any sensible diminution. Nature has given Egypt so favourable a situation, that the earth and the waters are both inconceivably productive. This charming country has for this reason been at all times the nursing mother of all the neighbouring nations.

The waters of Lake *Menzalé* are covered with wild geese, ducks, teals, plungers, and ibises. I have killed several ibises in the marshes near Rosetta; they have long feet, a slender body, alternately black and white, and a long neck. They live on fish, frogs, and reptiles. This lake feeds also a number of cormorants, grey and white herons, golden-snipes, rice-hens, cranes, chevaliers, &c.

The birds which principally attract attention, are the swan with silver plumage, sailing gracefully on the surface of the waters, the flaman, with his rose and black coloured wings, and the superb pelican. This latter surpasses all the rest by the majesty of his carriage, his lofty shape, and the whiteness of his plumage,

mage, in which he may dispute the palm even with the swan. When he goes about, amidst that crowd of birds collected on the lake, he raises his head, crowned with a plume of feathers, far above them all, and seems to be their king. Nature has furnished him with a beak extremely strong, with which he carries off large fish. The Arabs have the skill to tame him, and break him in to fish for them. The only pelican of the same kind with those in Egypt, I ever saw in France, is at the king's menagerie at Versailles. Although a long captivity, and a small basin, where he has scarcely room to move himself, have robbed him of a great deal of his beauty, one still sees, from his majestic shape, and the whiteness of his plumage, that he is a superb bird.

I have pointed out to you, Sir, the principal species of the birds found on Lake *Menzalé*; but it is impossible for me to describe to you, the variety of their colours, the diversity of their cries, and the prodigious multitude there is of them, as
far

far as the sight extends, the waters are covered with them. At every instant one sees innumerable flocks of them, describing vast circuits in the air, then gradually descending, and lighting on the water; others flying from the approach of the fishermen, rise by thousands, to go in search of that solitude they are fond of. Some are swimming in flocks, attended by their numerous families; others are on the wing, bearing in their beaks the prey they have been catching.

This continual motion, this immense liquid plain, furrowed by the lightest breeze; the islands, whose summits, gilded by the sun, shew themselves at a distance; the boats sailing from one to the other; the banks shaded with trees, lined with villages, and clad in an eternal verdure; all these objects present a charming spectacle, which I have enjoyed a hundred times, and always with the greatest pleasure.

I have the honour to be, &c.

VOL. I.

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LETTER XXV.

Expedition of Saint Lewis in Egypt, extracted from Joinville and the Arabian writers, with his route delineated in a chart. A narrative of his descent near the Gifé of Damietta, his victory over the troops of the Sultan of Egypt; the taking of Damietta; the march of his army along the great branch of the Nile, to the canal of Mansoure; the attempts which they made to pass it; the dangerous passage of this canal. The victory and the defeat which followed. The death of Count d'Artois. The capture of St. Louis and his whole army; the massacre of Touran Check, sovereign of Egypt; the ransom of the French monarch, and his departure for S. Jean d'Acre, with the character of that prince, as delineated by the Infidels.

To Mr. L. M.

Damietta.

I NOW send you, Sir, Saint Lewis's expedition into Egypt, extracted from Joinville,

Joinville, and the Arabian authors, and verified by myself upon the spot.

Saint Lewis had wintered in the isle of Cyprus with the greatest part of his troops. The remainder of the army was to join him at the general rendezvous before Damietta. The day after Whitsunday, he set sail from the point of Limaço, accompanied by eighteen hundred vessels great and small. The Mediterranean had not beheld a more formidable squadron from the days of the Persians. The sea was covered with vessels to a vast extent. During the voyage, the Prince of the Morea and the Duke of Burgundy joined the royal fleet, which, after a passage of four days, anchored in the road of Damietta.

Nejm Eddin, of the family of the Aioubites, at that time governed Syria and Egypt. Frequent wars carried on for many years against the Crusaders, the Charasmiens, and the inhabitants of Damascus, had taught him the art of war. Several victories gained over their different enemies, strengthened at once his power, and established his authority over his soldiers. As politic as

he was brave, he knew how to wield the sword, without slackening the reins of government. Whilst he was occupied with the plan of a campaign, he could dictate his orders to his ministers, for the internal management of his kingdom, and answered himself all the memorials that were presented to him. Such, according to Abulfeda, was the king St. Lewis had to contend with. On the arrival of the French in the isle of Cyprus, he had quitted Syria, and not doubting that the storm which threatened the Mahometans, would fall on Damietta, he had added new fortifications to that important place. After providing it with a numerous garrison, with provisions, and warlike machines, proper to support a long siege, he was conveyed to *Achmoun Tanis*, to observe the motions of the enemy. Notwithstanding he was dangerously ill, he neglected nothing which might contribute to baffle their designs. He sent *Facr Eddin* with a considerable body of cavalry to oppose the landing of the French. This

general

general was posted near the Giza (*t*) of Damietta, between the western bank of the Nile and the sea, so as to have it easily in his power to prevent the disembarkation.

From the fleet, the Egyptian army was seen drawn out in good order, at two hundred paces from the beach. Their unfolded colours were flying in the wind; their glittering armour reflected the rays of the sun. A confused noise of drums and trumpets was heard. This warlike train had a commanding appearance, and struck terror into the troops on board the fleet. The king called together his barons, to consult them on the measure to be pursued; they advised him to wait for the remainder of his troops before he attempted a descent, in face of an enemy well intrenched. St.

(*t*) *Gizé*, as I have already said, means *angle*, *extremity*. It was the most distant suburb of Damietta, situated on the other side of the Nile. An elevation of stones and ruins still point out its site. It is opposite to the little village of *Esbé*. The bridge before Damietta began at that place. I have carefully observed these places in several journeys I have made, and I have marked them on the map.

Lewis rejected this pusillanimous counsel, representing to them that the road (*u*) of Damietta being exposed to every wind, should a storm arise, the fleet would certainly be dispersed, or driven upon the coast. He ordered every thing to be prepared, therefore, for the descent the next morning, and commanded them to attack the Egyptians, if they did not refuse battle.

On Friday, the 4th of June, 1249, the French army, getting into their boats, made towards the shore. The instant they landed the enemy's cavalry poured down upon them; but the soldiers fixed their bucklers in the sand, and presenting their spears, formed an impenetrable wall of points. This intrepid countenance checked the impetuosity of the Mahometans. They contented themselves with parading round the batallions, and throw-

(*u*) The French fleet could not enter the Nile, the entrance of which was choked up by the Egyptians. The road of Damietta being very dangerous, St. Lewis adopted the most prudent, as well as the boldest measure.

ing their javelins at them. As soon as the king beheld the royal standard of France flying on the shore, he leaped out of his boat into the sea, and marched against the enemy sword in hand, and up to his armpits in the water. The French, encouraged by his presence, fell on the Egyptians, and fought a bloody battle, in which they had all the honour. Two Emirs remained on the field of battle. This loss, and so bold a descent, frightened *Facr Eddin*. He passed at night the bridge of Damietta, and made a precipitate retreat. At sight of this, a panic seized the garrison. They shamefully abandoned the rampart of Egypt, and all the inhabitants escaped under cover of the darkness. The French entered it the next morning without resistance. In this manner was a city taken in one day, which one-and-thirty years before had sustained a siege of sixteen months.

On Sunday the French colours were displayed on the towers of Damietta. Great stores of ammunition was found there, and a vast quantity of arms. The victors having returned thanks to heaven for this

fortunate conquest, deliberated whether they should not immediately pursue their march to Grand Cairo. And this certainly was the wisest measure. The waters of the Nile, then very low, would have presented fewer obstacles; but Saint Lewis wished to delay his departure till the arrival of the Count of Poitiers, his brother, who was leading the *arriere ban* of France. It was decided therefore to wait for him at Damietta.

The capture of this important port spread a general consternation through Grand Cairo; the inhabitants thought they already saw the enemy at their gates. The Sultan's illness still added to their fears. The alarm was so great, that the most timid fled towards Upper Egypt, whilst others, more brave, animated by the love of their country, came to increase the army of *Nejm Eddin*. This unforeseen reverse of fortune did not dishearten a prince accustomed to the events of war. He struck off the heads of fifty of his principal officers, who had so basely abandoned their posts. He did not venture to inflict the punishment

punishment of death on *Facr Eddin*, for fear of exciting a rebellion amongst his troops, by whom he was much esteemed. He contented himself with reprimanding him, and sending him to Mansoura; he endeavoured to put it in a state of defence. His whole army worked for this purpose. Having pitched his camp between the canal of *Achmoun* and that town, he resolved to wait for the enemy in that advantageous post, and to stop them at the passage of the river; he even sent some squadrons of light cavalry to harass the French camp.

A valuable moment was lost in waiting for the Count of Poitiers. The Egyptians availed themselves of it to fortify themselves, and to collect all their forces. They had already recovered from their terror, and had frequent skirmishes in the neighbourhood of the French camp. The Arabs used to enter it in the night, make prisoners, and kill those whom they could not carry off. It was thus they cut off the head of the Seignior of Courcenay, after killing the centinel who was placed at the entrance of his tent. The king made them

them encircle the camp with deep ditches, and placed archers on foot around it, who mounted guard during the night.

The favourable season for marching into Upper Egypt was slipping away, and the time approaching when the Nile, swelling every day, fills the canals which intersect the plain, and renders the progress of an army very difficult in the face of the enemy, who can impede it at every step. To accelerate the arrival of the Count of Poitiers, the legate, according to the custom of the times, ordered processions for three successive Saturdays, from Damietta to the sea, which were executed with great pomp. The king and his nobles assisted at them. At length the prince fortunately arrived, and diffused joy with him throughout the camp. As soon as he was landed, Saint Lewis assembled his barons, to concert measures. They were divided in opinion. The nobles in general, and count Peter of Britany, were for immediately marching to lay siege to Alexandria, one of the keys of Egypt. They represented that that town had an excellent harbour, where the
fleet

fleet might ride in safety all the winter, and that the army employed in the conquest of the country, would by that means be well supplied with provisions, and every necessary succour; they added, that ships neither being able to enter the Nile, nor remain in the road, the French ran the risk of perishing with hunger, if unfortunately they should experience a change of fortune. These reasons were very cogent, but the Comte d'Artois was of a different opinion. He said, that when you wish to kill the serpent, you must crush his head, and advised the marching straight to the capital of Egypt. Saint Lewis rejected the counsel of his barons, to pursue that of his brother. He did not reflect on the difficulties he should have to meet with; and the departure was resolved on.

Nejm Eddin died on the 22d of November. He was carried off in the flower of his age by an abscess in his lungs. The Sultana *Chegeret Eddour*, whose understanding raised her above her sex, was not dispirited by this misfortune, and applied herself to the means of saving the state. Having
sent

sent for *Facr Eddin*, generalissimo of the troops, and the eunuch *Dgemal Eddin*, who was possessed of great authority, she entreated them to aid her in supporting the weight of the crown, and in keeping the death of the Sultan secret until the arrival of his son *Touran Chah*, who was in the Diarbekir. Couriers were dispatched to him. The Sultan's service was carried on as if he had been living, and orders were given in his name throughout Egypt. This policy prevented the troops from losing courage, and, by concealing the death of *Nejm Eddin* from the enemy, hindered them from profiting by a circumstance so favourable to their designs.

The French army (*x*) quitted the plains

(*t*) The historian Macrizi, who almost always agrees with Joinville, fixes, as he does, the departure of the French to the month of December, but he attributes it to the news of the Sultan's death. Now it is certain that the French were not apprized of it until they were encamped near Mansoura, and that the arrival of the Count of Poitiers was the real cause of that bold and dangerous march in the time of the inundation. Thus it is that historians in reporting real facts, frequently mistake the motives that produced them.

of

of Damietta at the beginning of Advent, and encamped the 7th of December at *Farescour*, where it kept its station, to shut up a canal, which, leaving the river, throws itself into Lake *Menzalé*. This was easily effected, by forming a dyke at its entrance. *Facr Eddin* sent 500 horsemen well mounted, to dispute the passage of the river with the French. They posted themselves on the opposite bank. Notwithstanding the firm countenance they shewed, the Knights Templars passed the first, and the king having forbid them to march against the enemy, they only thought of forming their ranks. This prudent conduct inspired the Arabs with courage, taking it for the effect of fear. They made a furious attack on the Templars, and overthrew one of these brave warriors, at the feet of Brother Renaut de Bichiers, their marshal. The sight of this inflamed his indignation, insomuch, that, no longer able to moderate his courage, he cried out: “*By God, let us fall upon them. I can bear it no longer.*” The whole corps move in an instant, and rush on the Egyptians,

Egyptians, who were unable to sustain the shock. Their ranks were broken. Part of the cavalry remained on the field of battle, and the rest threw themselves into the river, where they perished. Unfortunately, this very success encouraged disobedience, and was the cause of all the subsequent disgraces of the French.

The army encamped the same day at *Scherimsab*, a village not far off, without being troubled by the enemy. It continued to make very short days journeys, as it was perpetually obliged to fill up arms of the river, or large rivulets. It encamped at length at *Baramoun*, and it was not until the 19th of December that it appeared before *Manfoura*. The canal of *Achmoun* was between the town and the French army. It was necessary to pass it to attack the enemy, who was intrenched on the opposite side (*y*), and to become masters of that important place.

A fleet

(*y*) In the map annexed to the beautiful edition of Joinville, printed at the Louvre, by order of the king, the canal of *Achmoun* is placed beyond *Manfoura*.

This

A fleet of large boats accompanied the army, and abundantly supplied it. There were continual engagements by land and water. The arm of *Achmoun* is as large as the Saone, but much deeper. Its banks in general are very steep. It was impossible for the army to swim over it in presence of all the forces of Egypt. It was resolved to build a dyke there. Balistas and other machines for throwing stones were prepared; and to cover the workmen two wooden towers were built with covered galleries, at the head of the causeway. But instead of beginning at the mouth of the canal, as at *Farescour*, it was undertaken half a league lower. This want of skill rendered its execution impossible; for in proportion as they advanced, the Egyptians on their side opened deep trenches, which suddenly conveying the waters of the river against the dyke, overthrew it, and destroyed, in one moment,

This unlucky position, as contrary to the truth as it is to the understanding of the history, might induce a belief that the French came from Upper Egypt to besiege that town, otherwise they would not have met with the canal in their passage.

the

the work of many weeks. This ill success did not diminish the patience of the engineers, and they persevered in executing the plan they had proposed. Whilst they were labouring with zeal, *Facr Eddin* landed privately some troops at *Scherimsab*. They made an unforeseen attack on the camp, and occasioned some confusion. Joinville, who with the Templars, guarded it on the side of *Damietta*, armed himself immediately, marched against the enemy, and repulsed them. This event induced Saint Lewis to draw a ditch from the canal of *Achmoun* to the Nile, and this precaution secured the camp from any future surprises.

The labour at the dyke was continued to no purpose. The enemy, emboldened, came a second time to attack the French in their camp. The count of Anjou had a rough skirmish with them, wherein they were again repulsed with loss. They then fell upon the side defended by the count of Poitiers; but the vigorous resistance they met with obliged them to retire. These crosses did not discourage them. Bodies
of

of Arabian cavalry were perpetually in motion round the camp, and carried off every person who ventured to stray out of it. The impracticable dyke could not be completed. The Egyptians showered stones upon the workmen; their wildfire had still better success. They frequently poured it forth, and set fire to the towers and galleries, in spite of every effort to prevent it. Joinville, who was one night on guard at the head of the dyke, gives us a terrible description of this wildfire. "This fire," says he, "that they launched at us, was "as large as a barrel, and had a long "flaming tail. It made a noise like thunder in passing through the air, and appeared like a flying dragon. The light "it diffused was so great, that one could "see throughout the whole camp, as if "it was broad day." This dreadful firework consumed every substance it fell on, without its being possible to extinguish it.

The burning of the towers and galleries however, did not make them abandon an ill-conceived project. All the wood that could be found in the boats was taken, and

employed in forming new works. They met with the fate of the former, nor could all the valour of the French save them from this wildfire. This last failure spread despair throughout the camp, and deprived them of all hope of passing the canal of *Achmoun*. Whilst they were deliberating whether they should return to Damietta, the Constable Hymbert de Beaujeu came to inform the king that a Bedouin (z) had promised to discover a ford to him, on condition of receiving 500 besants of gold. The prince consented, and the ford being pointed out, it was determined that the duke of Burgundy should remain to guard the camp, whilst St. Lewis and his three brothers should engage the Egyptians.

On the 8th of February, 1250, the whole French cavalry, conducted by the Bedouin, collected at the ford, which was two leagues from the Nile, at break of day. They descended to the place. The

(z) *Bedouin* comes from the word *Bedaoui*, which signifies *Inhabitant of the Desert*. It is the name assumed by the wandering Arabs.

water was deep (*a*), and the horses swam towards the middle of the canal. Having got ground, they easily reached the opposite shore. Several cavaliers, amongst whom was John of Orleans, were drowned in this dangerous passage. About three hundred Arabs who came to defend it were soon dispersed. St. Lewis had given orders that the Templars should march at the head of his army, and that the Comte d'Artois should support them with the corps he commanded ; but on seeing the enemy fly, he could not moderate his ardour, and rushed upon them. The grand-master of the Templars sent to beg him to stay, saying, that it was he who was to march the first. He conjured the prince not to dishonour him by depriving him of a post entrusted to his valour. The Comte d'Artois listened to this wise remonstrance,

(*a*) Joinville and Macrizi agree in saying that the Nile was then at the highest, which is extraordinary ; for in that season its waters are very low. The Arabian history, 'tis true, furnishes us with some such instances. The inundation is sometimes retarded one month or two.

without venturing to reply. Unfortunately Fourcaut du Merle, a brave esquire, who was holding the bridle of his horse, was deaf; and not hearing what had been said to the Prince, continued to advance, crying with all his strength; *Now for them. Now for them.*

The Templars finding their representations fruitless, thought it incumbent on their honour to resume their ranks. They put spurs to their horses, and go up to the enemy full gallop. The Egyptians, terrified at this unforeseen attack, took flight in every quarter, and abandoned their camp. These brave but imprudent cavaliers, overthrowing every thing that resisted them, arrive at Mansoura, force one of the gates, and penetrate into the town. *Facr Eddin*, who was at that instant in the bath, had scarce time to put on his clothes. He leaped on horseback without saddle or bridle, and collecting some of his slaves, tried to stem the torrent. He and his companions fell covered with wounds. The attack was so brisk, and the rout of the enemy so rapid, that the

Comte

Comte d'Artois was in Mansoura with the Templars, before part of the army had passed the ford. Had all the troops been united at that moment; could the victors have received a timely succour, the defeat of the enemy had been complete. Mansoura, and perhaps all Egypt would have fallen. But there was a distance of two leagues between the van-guard and the rest of the French army. *Bibars elbondouk dari*, chief of the *Baharite* slaves (*b*), perceived this error,

(*b*) *Nejm Eddin*, of whom I have spoken, besieged Napoulous, a town in Syria. His troops forsook him. The Baharite slaves alone sustained the shock of the enemy, and gave the Prince time to save himself. This service called for, and obtained them his confidence. Called soon after to the throne of Egypt, in the room of his brother *Melec eladel Seif Eddin*, he lavished his favours on them, and raised them to the first dignities in the state. This prince quitted the castle of Salah Eddin, the usual residence of the Sultans, to inhabit that which he built in the island of *Raouda*, opposite to Old Cairo. He committed the guard of it to his favourite slaves; and as the Arabs call all great rivers, *bahar*, or *sea*, they took the name of *Baharites*, or *maritime*. Having assassinated *Touran Chah*, the last of the family of the Aïoubites, they reigned

error, and availed himself of it like a skilful general. Rallying the fugitives, and collecting round him the *elite*, or flower of the Egyptian cavalry, he threw himself between the town and the body of the French army, and cut off their communication. Whilst he was combating their divided forces, and stopping the progress of Saint Lewis, the Count of Poitiers, and the Count of Anjou, the Egyptians, animated by his example, took courage, and attacked the cavaliers, who very imprudently engaged them in the narrow streets of Mansoura. The inhabitants seconded them with great success, by showering stones on them from the roofs of the houses. Thus assailed on all sides, the French gave way: two thirds of the Templars, and near three

over Egypt and Syria for 136 years, and had 27 kings. The Baharites were of Turkish origin. Nejm Eddin purchased them of the Syrian merchants. They were dethroned in their turn by the *Mamalukes*, or Circassian slaves, in the year 784 of the hegira. These formed a new dynasty, which kept possession of Egypt until the conquest of Selim, Emperor of the Ottomans, which happened in the year 923 of the hegira.

hundred

hundred cavaliers lost their lives. The Comte d'Artois, after performing prodigies of valour, fell, covered with wounds, in the midst of a heap of dead, and of almost all the officers who accompanied him, an unhappy victim to the disobedience of the orders of his sovereign.

Joinville and several brave cavaliers had taken refuge in a ruined house, from whence they courageously defended themselves against an host of enemies. In spite of their bravery, however, they had no prospect of escaping death. The greatest part of them were dangerously wounded. In this imminent danger, Erart de Severe, who had received a stroke of a sabre on his face, and who was losing all his blood, said to them; "Chevaliers, if you will
" assure me that myself and my descendants
" shall be free from any blemish, I will
" go and demand the assistance of the
" Comte of Anjou, whom I see there in
" the plain." They all concurred in bestowing eulogiums on his resolution. He mounts his horse, passes through the enemy's squadrons, reaches the prince, who no sooner

heard his report, than he turned his horse, and flew to relieve Joinville and his troop. They owed their lives to this Seignior, full of honour, who, on the point of dying, was afraid of carrying into the tomb with him the shame of abandoning his companions, although he only quitted them for the purpose of obtaining assistance.

The main body of the army commanded by St. Lewis advanced into the plain, and sustained the shock of all the Turkish and Arabian cavalry. The prince, mounted on a beautiful horse, appeared like a hero in the midst of his squadrons. His head was covered with a gilded helmet. He bore in his hand a German sword. All his arms were splendid. The firmness he displayed in the midst of carnage animated his warriors. The French and the Egyptians were so closely engaged, that they could only make use of the club, the battle-axe, and the sabre. Whilst he was checking the *elite* of the enemy's cavalry, John de Valery advised him to fall back to the right, towards the river, that he might receive succour from the duke of Burgundy,

dy, and avoid being furrounded. His generals, whom he consulted, approved of this advice. Orders were immediately given to the officer who bore the royal standard, to turn towards the canal. This movement exposed the advanced troops. Scarcely had he fallen back a few paces before the Count of Poitiers, and the Duke of Flanders sent to inform the king that they were lost if he did not return, and give them time to rejoin him. He halted. At this very instant Hymbert de Beaujeu came to acquaint him that the Comte d'Artois, furrounded by enemies, was still defending himself in a house at Mansoura, but that his death was inevitable without immediate succour. "Go," says the king to him, "I will follow you." In an instant the Constable, Joinville, and some cavaliers detach themselves, and fly towards the town. They had scarcely got a quarter of a league, before a large body of the enemy, throwing themselves between them and Saint Lewis, prevented them from passing any further. Joinville seeing that it was impossible either to join the
corps

corps in battle, or to penetrate to Mansoura, where the Turks were masters, proposed to the Constable to take possession of a bridge over a large rivulet, to prevent the Enemy from attacking the French in the rear. Hymbert de Beaujeu accepted the offer, and six cavaliers made it a point of duty to hinder the enemy from passing it. Whilst they guarded the end of the bridge, the different corps of the Christian army separated, and, surrounded by the Mahometans, were roughly pressed towards the canal. A great number of cavaliers, thinking all was lost, threw themselves into it; but their horses, fatigued, could not reach the opposite side. In an instant the waters were covered with arms and drowned cavaliers. St. Lewis was in danger of his life. His troops had abandoned him. Six Turks, laying hold of his bridle, were leading him off a prisoner. This perilous situation did not affect his courage; on the contrary, collecting his strength, and making a skilful use of his excellent arms, he himself laid low these six enemies. This heroic action

action stopped the fugitives. They were ashamed of abandoning a king who defended himself with so much bravery. His knights returned in crowds around him, and as if this prodigy had given them fresh valour, they renewed the combat with fury, and repulsed the conquerors.

During these transactions, Joinville and the Constable kept their post, and presently Count Peter of Britany arrived from Mansoura, his face covered with blood, with a squadron, the greatest part of which, both officers and soldiers, were dangerously wounded. The Turks were in close pursuit of them. Hymbert de Beaujeu and his little troop flew to meet them, and rescued their friends. Joinville invited the count of Soissons, his cousin, to remain with him to guard the bridge, and prevent the Mahometans from attacking the French rear. This brave knight accepted the proposal, and the Constable, finding them determined to guard that important post, went in search of a reinforcement. Peter de Neville, surnamed Cayet, joined them. These three cavaliers,

liers, with rested spears, and covered with their bucklers, defended this passage against every enemy who tried to force it.

Before them were two valiant guards of the king, called William de Boon, and John de Gamaches, whom the Turks could not oblige to retreat an inch. The arms of these generous warriors were covered with darts. Peter de Neville received there a wound on the head with a club, Joinville was wounded with five spears, and his horse with fifteen. Whilst they were thus exposed to a thousand perils, the count of Soissons, who was a stranger to fear, said jocularly to Joinville, “ Seneschal, let us laugh at the shouts of that mob; by the coif of God; (that was his favourite oath) we shall still talk of this day’s work in the chambers of the ladies.” This trait proves that gallantry was at all times the companion of French bravery.

The Constable kept his word with the brave men he had left at the bridge. He brought them succour towards the evening, and

and they drove off the enemy. They went to rejoin the king, who, as well as his soldiers, had fought the whole day without taking any nourishment. Night was approaching, and the combatants on both sides retired. The Sire de Chatillon commanded the rear guard, and the French army, in possession of the Egyptian camp, and their warlike machines, passed the night there. It was divided into two camps, one of which, guarded by the duke of Burgundy, was to the north of the canal, and the other to the south. This fatal day, which cost the Comte d'Artois his life, as well as a great many nobles, would have seen the capture of Mansoura, and the total defeat of the Egyptians, had the whole French army at once given battle. The Arabian writers themselves agree in it (*c*), but the orders of St. Lewis being unfortunately miscon-

(*c*) Macrizi, who has given a good description of the expedition of St. Lewis, acknowledges that Mansoura would have been lost, and the Mahometans totally defeated, had the French attacked in a body, and not in small parties.

structed,

structed, all the troops were dispersed; and the address of *Bibans Elbondouk dari* prevented them from again forming a junction. Joinville says, that whilst he was guarding the bridge, he saw many people of fashion take to flight full gallop, without being stopped by the cries of their companions; but that Guion de Malvoisin, with a troop of cavaliers of his own blood, and the Comte Peter of Britany gained immortal glory, and returned honourably from Mansoura, where they had signalized their courage.

On the morning of that memorable day, a pigeon was sent off from Mansoura (*d*), to carry to Grand Cairo the news of the death of *Facr Eddin*, and of the flight of the Egyptians. This letter threw

(*d*) This custom, which has so long subsisted in the East, is at present abolished. It is not long since the merchants of Syria took this method of acquainting their correspondents with the arrival of ships. When a vessel arrived in the port of Alexandria, a pigeon was sent off, which carried the intelligence in five or six hours to Aleppo. The caliphs of Bagdad had by this means established a rapid correspondence from Cairo to Bagdad.

the

the inhabitants into consternation. The fugitives still added to the alarm. The gates of the city were kept open all the night to receive them. Another pigeon brought them the next day the account of the success of *Bibars*, and the Baharite slaves. Joy succeeded to despair. Mutual congratulations passed in the streets, and there were public rejoicings.

Before sun-rise the enemy was in arms, and made an irruption into the camp, to carry off their warlike implements, which remained in the hands of the French. The attack was made on the side guarded by Joinville. Hearing a cry of "to arms," he got up, but he, as well as his soldiers, were so covered with wounds, that they were unable to wear either helmet or cuirass. They marched, however, against the enemy, who, having forced the advanced guards, were on the point of becoming masters of their balistas. St. Lewis having sent a reinforcement, under the Sire de Chatillon, they drove the Egyptians without the palisadoes. At some distance from thence, eight Turks, well armed,

armed, intrenched behind a heap of stones, and well supported by a body of cavalry, kept firing on the camp, and did great execution. Joinville determined to attack them in the night, and destroy their intrenchment. John de Vasseſſey, one of his priests, had less patience with them. He put on an iron hat, covered himself with a cuirass, and hiding a large scimitar under his arm, he marched towards them. The enemy paying little attention to a single man, he insensibly approached them. As soon as he got near the Turks, he drew his sabre, fell upon them, and laying furiously about him, put the whole eight to flight. This brave action rendered him famous throughout the army.

Touran Chah had now arrived in Egypt. *Chegeret Eddour*, whose genius, fertile in resources, knew how to hold the reins of government in the most arduous times, committed every thing to his charge. The new Sultan repaired to Mansoura. He appeared at the head of his troops, and shewed them the coat of arms of the Comte d'Artois,

d'Artois, assuring them that it was the king's. "Brave Muffulmen," added he, "redouble your efforts. The enemy have lost their chief. They will be no longer able to withstand our valour. Let us make a general assault to-morrow. Let us force them in their camp, and may it be the last day of the French." The soldiers answered him with loud acclamations, and prepared to do their duty. St. Lewis was informed by his spies of the intended attack. He gave orders for each chieftain to arrange his battalions, at break of day, behind the pallisado of stakes planted in the earth, to prevent the enemy's cavalry from penetrating into the camp. His orders were carried into execution. At sun-rise the Sultan was seen, mounted on a superb horse, drawing up his troops in battle-array from the canal of *Achmoun* to the river. His cavalry were placed in front, and his infantry in the rear. He reinforced his lines in proportion to the enemy in his front. Towards noon, all his troops being ready for the attack, he displayed his colours, and found-

ed the charge. A dreadful noise was heard of trumpets and kettle-drums, and the Egyptian army rushed on to assault the French in every quarter.

The Count of Anjou who was at the head of the camp on the side of Mansoura, was the first attacked. The infantry presented themselves the first, and after launching their wild-fire, the cavalry poured in upon him, and cutting their way with their sabres, penetrated the intrenchments. The prince fought on foot in the midst of his troops, for almost all the cavalry had been dismounted by the unfortunate battle of Mansoura. The number of the enemy, the advantage they had of engaging on horseback, the dreadful fireworks they made use of, threw his battalions into disorder. In spite of all his bravery, he was in danger of being slain or made prisoner. This intelligence being brought to the king, he flew to the assistance of his brother, with the cavaliers who remained about him. He pushed so forward in the battle, that the bridle of his horse was covered with wild-fire, and
he

he himself narrowly escaped being burnt. The Egyptians could not sustain the shock of this prince, and of his generous knights; they fell back in disorder, and abandoned the ground they had gained.

Next to the Count of Anjou, were the the Crusaders, commanded by Guy d'Ibelin, and Baudouin his brother. After them came Gautier de Chatillon, at the head of his squadron. These two troops, filled with knights-errant, and with excellent cavalry, resisted every assault of the enemy, and remained unshaken in their post, without retreating a single step.

William of Sonnac, Grand Master of the Temple, having lost in the former engagements, the greatest part of his knights, had fortified that part of the camp he guarded, with a double palisado. The Egyptians set fire to it, and dashing through the flames, made a furious attack upon him. The intrepid Templars, though covered with darts and arrows, formed an impenetrable rampart with their corps. Their Grand Master, who had lost an eye at Mansoura, lost the other in this engage-

ment, and died of his wound. Joinville assures us, that behind the station he occupied, there was a large space so covered with javelins, that one could not see the ground.

Guion Malvoisin, who commanded a battalion near the Templars, defended himself with so much bravery, that the enemy could make no impression. But this valiant chieftain was almost destroyed by the wild-fire thrown at him by the enemy.

Count William of Flanders had his quarter along the river. He received the Egyptians with vigour, and after gloriously repulsing them, passed the palisado, and making a furious charge, put to flight all such as fell in his way, and killed a great number of them. Gautier de la Horgne signalized his courage in this action, by the most illustrious deeds of valour. The Count of Poitiers followed William of Flanders. He had nothing but infantry. The enemy broke through them, penetrated the camp, and seizing on the prince, carried him off a prisoner. At sight of this, the
women

women and butchers set up a shout; and arming themselves with axes, fell upon the victors, drove them out of the trenches, and retook the brother of the king.

Jocerant de Brancion, one of the most valiant knights in the French army, defended the part of the camp, which reached to the canal. All his party were foot soldiers. He alone was on horseback. The Arabs frequently succeeded in forcing them; but this brave commander, rushing on them sabre in hand, put them to rout, and rallied his forces. He must however, have fallen, with every man under his command, had not Henry de Brienne, who was in the duke of Burgundy's camp, made his men shoot their cross-bows against the enemy across the branch of the river, every time they renewed their attack. Jocerant de Brancion had been in six-and-thirty battles, and engagements, in which he had been victorious. He received in this action, which was not the least glorious of his life, a great number of wounds, of which he died.

Night separated the combatants. The king assembled his Barons the next day, to console them for their losses, and to excite their constancy. “Seigniors, said he, let
“us return thanks to heaven, and be of
“good heart; we have passed one river,
“driven the enemy from their camp, and
“withstood, without cavalry, the whole
“power of the Sultan of Egypt.” *Tou-
ran Chah* in fact, discouraged by so obsti-
nate a resistance, despaired of forcing the
French in their camp, and he determined
to starve them out. Their army enjoyed
all the provisions stored up at Damietta.
The little fleet they had on the river se-
cured their convoys, and procured them
abundance. The king of Egypt imagined
that if he could succeed in cutting off all
communication between the camp and
Damietta, he should get possession of those
by famine whom he could not conquer.
From that moment he put every manœuvre
in practice, to carry his project into execu-
tion. Having collected a great number
of boats, he made them be taken to pieces,
and

and conveyed on camels near to the canal of *Meballé* (*e*). They were concealed in a place proper for an ambuscade.

The French fleet was coming up the river in perfect security, and conveying the customary supply of provisions for the camp. When it came near the isle where the Sultan's galleys were concealed, the Egyptians came suddenly upon them, and surprised their enemies. They attacked them furiously, surrounded them, slew about a thousand soldiers, and took fifty large boats laden with provisions. From that day the Egyptians

(*e*) Abulfeda informs us that there are several towns and villages in Egypt which have the name of *Meballé*. That in question is three leagues lower than Mansoura. Here is a small canal, the opening of which is concealed by an island. This place appears well calculated for an ambuscade. In the edition of Joinville, printed at the Louvre, there is a note at the bottom of the page where Macrizi speaks of *Meballé*, and it is thought to point out *Meballé Kebiré*, the capital of one of the provinces of the Delta. This is a mistake. That town is situated six leagues above Mansoura. To enable a fleet stationed in that place to prevent the French vessels from reaching their camp, their provisions must have come from *Upper Egypt*.

became masters of the river, and the communication between the camp and Damietta was interrupted. Want soon began to make its appearance, and disease, its terrible companion, followed immediately upon it. The wounded perished for want of nourishment. The dead bodies, which filled the river and the canal, infected the air. A dreadful epidemic disorder spread throughout the army. Few of those who were attacked with it escaped death. Their flesh dried up; their livid skins were covered with black spots; their gums swelled so prodigiously, that they could no longer take any food; these fungous excrescences were obliged to be cut off. The unfortunate persons who underwent this operation, made the most lamentable cries. Such was the appearance of an army so flourishing at its first entrance into Egypt. Arabian authors agree with Joinville in giving us a frightful picture of the deplorable condition of the French, surrounded by enemies, and a prey to all the horrors of famine and disease.

On the 7th of March 1250, the vessels which remained at Damietta made a fresh attempt to supply the army with provisions. They were all taken, except one, belonging to the Count of Flanders, which defended itself so bravely, that the Egyptians were repulsed, and the vessel arrived safe at the camp. The defeat of the two fleets was confirmed, as well as the impossibility of receiving succours from Damietta, on account of the enemy, who covered the river with their galleys. This intelligence threw the French into consternation, and added to the evils with which they were already overwhelmed. Saint Lewis, consulting his Barons, resolved to pass his army to the same side with the Duke of Burgundy, by the wooden bridge thrown over between the two camps. To hinder the enemy from profiting by this movement, a wall was built at some distance from the end of the bridge, and the troops filed along the side of it. The baggage was sent off first; next followed the King and his corps. Gautier de Chatillon commanded the rear-guard. The whole Egyptian

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tian army fell upon him. The firmness with which he received them, checked their impetuosity. Fresh enemies continued to succeed each other, and a part of the army pressed between the wall and the canal, covered with wild-fire, and with darts, was on the point of destruction. It was saved by the distinguished valour of the Count of Anjou, who drove off the Egyptians. Geoffroy de Muffemburg, who fought by his side, signalized himself by the most heroic actions, and merited the palm of that day's battle.

The French, encamped behind the canal of *Achmoun*, were now secure against the sword of the enemy, but not against famine and contagion. St. Lewis himself paid a tribute to these misfortunes, with the rest of his soldiers. The camp became every day a vast churchyard, where death marked out his victims. In these dreadful circumstances, nothing but a truce could save the remains of his army. He proposed one to the Sultan. Ministers were named respectively on each side. The king

of France offered to restore Damietta (*f*), on condition that the places taken from them in Syria should be given back to the

(*f*) In the year 1218, the crusaders attacked Damietta, and took it after a siege of sixteen months. Sultan *Melek el Kamel* withdrew to the distance of two days journey from the town, and encamped at the angle formed by the branch of Achmoun with the Nile, at the spot where Mansoura stands. The crusader princes followed him, and pitched their camp on the opposite bank, in front of the Egyptians. The communication between the army and Damietta being cut off, the Europeans offered to restore that town, on condition that Jerusalem, Ascalon, and Tiberias should be ceded to them. This proposition was rejected. The Sultan made a cut from the Nile, then at its greatest height, and overflowed the enemy's camp. They were up to their middle in water, and had they not made their retreat by a causeway, the whole army must have been drowned. *Melek el Kamel* threw bridges over the canal of *Achmoun*, and passed troops over, who took possession of the dyke. The crusaders burnt their tents, and warlike implements, and attempted to take the route of Damietta, but it was impossible for them to advance. They offered to surrender that town; and peace was concluded on that condition in the year 1221. *Macrizi, history of the Arab Dynasties.*

Saint Lewis was encamped on the same spot with the crusaders; he offered the same terms, but underwent a more cruel fate than they did.

knights

knights of Jerusalem. The two parties not agreeing, the conferences were broken off. One only resource now remained for the French, which was to get back to Damietta. The night of Tuesday the 5th of April was made choice of for the flight. Saint Lewis recommended strongly to his brothers and the engineers to cut the cables which held the bridge suspended over the canal of *Achmoun*. When the earth was covered with darkness, the troops began their march towards Damietta. Such as were prevented by illness from going on foot, or bearing the motion of a horse, got into boats, and fell down the river. Joinville was of the number. Saint Lewis, though weakened by the dysentery, would neither abandon his troops, nor be amongst the first who took to flight. He posted himself, on the contrary, in the rear-guard, commanded by Gautier de Chatillon. Of all his officers, Geoffrey de Segines was the only one who stayed faithfully by him, and who never abandoned him in this post of danger.

The

The Egyptians perceiving at break of day that the army had decamped, flew in pursuit of them. Notwithstanding the precise orders of St. Lewis, the bridge was not cut down. They passed it without difficulty, and the cavalry going full speed, came up with the French at *Farescour*. The first attack fell upon the rear. Geofroy de Segines defended his king with an admirable intrepidity. He repulsed with violent blows of club and sword, all such as approached him. He conducted the king into a house in the village, where fatigue and disease made him faint away in the arms of a woman of Paris. On coming to himself, he had the consolation to hear that about five hundred knights, collected about his person, were valiantly defending him against the whole forces of the Sultan. They were desperately engaged at the entrance of the village. The French, animated by the desire of saving (g) a prince

(g) Joinville and the Arabian authors agree, that the king, by taking flight, might have saved himself at Damietta. It certainly would have been the most prudent

prince they adored, performed prodigies of valour, and were disputing the victory with the enemy. In the midst of the shock of battle, a traitor, of the name of Marcel, cried out with a loud voice: "My lords knights, surrender, the king commands you. Let not your obstinacy occasion him to perish." On these words they laid down their arms. The king, his brother, and all the army were made prisoners. Whilst these transactions were going on, Gautier de Chatillon alone defended a narrow street against whole torrents of the enemy. He was armed from head to foot, and mounted on a good horse. He grasped a tremendous sword, and when the Egyptians appeared, he flew to meet them, crying: *Chatillon, Chevalier, where are my brave fellows?* When he had overthrown those in front, he turned his bridle, and fell upon the others, who were coming to attack him in the rear. He slew a

prudent step. but that generous prince would never consent to have so many brave men exposed to the chains of the enemy; and his courage made him prefer the post of danger.

great

great number of the enemy; but covered with arrows, spent with fatigue, and loss of blood, he fell at length, and they cut off his head.

The king and all the prisoners were conducted to Mansoura. Those who were on board the vessels had no better fortune. They fell into the hands of the enemy, who drowned a part of them in the river. Joinville only escaped death by a sort of miracle. He was so weak that he could hardly stand. The Egyptians were going to cut off his head, but a generous Arab took pity on him, and taking him in his arms, cried out with all his might: *He is the cousin of the king. He is the cousin of the king.* These words saved his life, and he was conducted with several noblemen to Mansoura. Raoul de Wanon, who was in the same boat, having been hamstrung in the former engagements, could not stand upon his legs. An old Arab took compassion on him, and lifting him on his neck, carried him to the necessary every time he had occasion to go thither.

Touran

Touran Chah sent fifty dresses to the king and to the noblemen who were prisoners. They put them on, but St. Lewis refused to wear them, saying haughtily, that he was sovereign of a country as great as Egypt, and that it was unworthy of him to wear the clothes of another sovereign. The Sultan having prepared a great entertainment, invited him to it; but this prince was equally inflexible on that occasion, and did not conceal his suspicion, that he discovered through the pretended politeness of the Sultan, the desire he had of making a shew of him to his army.

Ten thousand Frenchmen were in chains. So great a number embarrassed *Touran Chah*. This cruel prince ordered three or four hundred of them out of prison every night, and *Seif Eddin*, as cruel a minister of his vengeance, cut off the heads of all those who refused to embrace Mahometism.

Peter of Britany was nominated to treat for the deliverance of St. Lewis and some other prisoners. The Egyptians demanded Damietta, and all the places in Syria. This latter article being rejected, the
Mahomet-

Mahometans broke off the conferences, and tried to obtain by fear what was refused them. They sent a number of armed men into the house where St. Lewis and his brothers were kept, who, flourishing their sabres, threatened to cut off their heads. These menaces producing no effect on a prince whose exalted mind was superior to adversity, and whom nothing was capable of driving to injustice, the negotiations were renewed. The Egyptians demanded 100,000 besants of gold (*b*), and the restitution of Damietta, for the deliverance of the king and all the prisoners. St. Lewis said, that he consented, provided the queen approved of it. The Mahometans expressing their surprise at this clause of the treaty, he added; “*The* “ *queen is my mistress, and I cannot take* “ *this step without her consent.*” Touran Chah, astonished that the king should without hesitation have granted so considerable a sum, was desirous of appearing generous, and declared, that he gave up 100,000 livres of the ransom. The

(*b*) 500,000 Parisian livres.

two parties being agreed, and oaths mutually exchanged, the Sultan gave orders for the embarkation of the princes, and the prisoners in four large vessels for Damietta.

Whilst the articles were preparing, Joinville and several noblemen, who were confined in a distant tent, saw a troop of young men enter, armed with scimitars, and an old man at their head; after the bloody executions that took place every night, they naturally imagined they were the ministers of death, and thought all was over. The old man asked them in a serious tone of voice, if they believed in one God, who had died, and arisen for them from the dead. "We believe in him," they replied: "Well then," said the old man, "do not be discouraged, for your sufferings for him do not equal his sufferings for you. If he had the power himself of rising from the dead, be confident that he will deliver you in his own good time." The old man saying these words, withdrew. These words conveyed astonishment into their minds, and inspired all their hearts with courage.

Shortly

Shortly after they had the news of the conclusion of the treaty, which restored them to their liberty.

Touran Chah had brought with him from Diarbekir, about fifty courtiers, who possessed all his confidence. On mounting the throne of Egypt, he had signalized the commencement of his reign by displacing his father's old servants, and by exalting his own favourites. The former, who had risen to the great offices of the state by real services, were stripped in a moment, and the most important employments were filled by upstarts. This flagrant injustice exasperated the minds of the great men, and of the army. The young Sultan did not confine his bad-policy to this instance. It was to the Baharite slaves he was indebted for the victory at Mansoura, and the defeat of the French. Far from rewarding them, and of attaching to himself, by his bounty, a corps formed by *Nejm Eddin*, and formidable from its reputation and its valour, he despoiled them of their employments, and gave them to understand, by his language, that it was his intention to abolish

them. Indignation was the fruit of this imprudent conduct. Hatred took deep root in their minds, and the thirst of vengeance waited only for the moment of gratification. *Touran Chah* soon gave them the opportunity. During the negotiations he retired to *Farefcour*, the theatre of his victory. He had built a wooden tower on the bank of the river, and prepared magnificent tents to encamp in, until the restitution of *Damietta*. Intoxicated with success, and the adulations of his flatterers, he gave himself up to his taste for debauchery, and abandoned himself to every species of voluptuousness. Gold runs, like water, through the hands of a debauched monarch. His expences became excessive; to supply his pleasures he had the presumption to call *Cbegetet Eddour* to account for the treasures of his father, and threatened her with vengeance if she delayed the matter. This ambitious woman saw that she was undone if she did not frustrate the design of the tyrant. She addressed herself to the chiefs of the Baharite slaves, represented to them the services she had rendered the monarchy

monarchy in times of the greatest danger, the favour she had always shewn them, and the ingratitude of *Touran Chah*. She concluded by imploring their protection against a king, who had vowed an eternal hatred against the friends of *Nejm Eddin*. Nothing more was necessary to irritate the Baharites, already too much disposed to vengeance. They promised her satisfaction, and vowed the death of the Sultan. The very same day, *Bibars Elbondouk Dari*, having gained the attendants on his person, entered the tent, where he was at table, and made a blow with a sabre at him, which would have taken off his head, had he not parried it with his hand. The prince's fingers were cut off. He fled precipitately to a tower on the banks of the Nile, and shut the gate. The assassins pursued him, and the French whom the Egyptians were conducting to Damietta, being obliged to stop at that place, were witnesses to a scene of horror. The murderers, seeing that they could not enter the tower, set fire to it. *Touran Chah* in vain cried out, that he abdicated the em-

pire; and that he only wished to return to Diarbekir; they shut their ears against his cries and lamentations. The flames having surrounded him, he threw himself from the top of the tower. A nail held him by his cloak, and he remained suspended. The barbarians rushed upon him, cut him in pieces with their sabres, and threw him into the water near Joinville's boat. All the Egyptian army beheld this horrid spectacle without taking any step to save their king, to such a degree had his imprudent conduct exasperated their minds. Thus miserably perished the last sovereign of the family of the Aioubites, established in Egypt by *Salah Eddin*.

After the massacre of *Touran Chah*, the Sultana *Chegeret Eddour* was proclaimed Queen of Egypt. She was the first female slave who had reigned in that country during the government of the Arabs. This Princess was of Turkish, others say of Armenian extraction. *Nejm Eddin*, who had purchased her, was so passionately fond of her, that he never quitted her, and took her with him when he went to war. Money

was

was coined in her name, and the Emir *Azed Eddin Aibeh*, the Turcoman, was named generalissimo of the troops (i).

The assassins entered the vessel the French prisoners were on board of, and he

(i) *Chegeret Eddour*, after reigning three months, married him, and resigned the sovereign power in his favour. He was the first sovereign of the dynasty the Baharites. After a seven years reign, the Sultana seeing that he was tired of only possessing the title of king, whilst she enjoyed the power, and that he thought of other amours, had him assassinated, though he had repudiated a wife he loved, to please her. *Nour Eddin*, son of that unhappy marriage, conceived a violent hatred against *Chegeret Eddour*. By dint of money he bribed her women, and got them to destroy her. Her body, thrown naked into a ditch, lay there three days without burial, and was at length placed in the tomb she had prepared for herself. *Nour Eddin*, the second Baharite Sultan, was assassinated at the end of two years. *Bibars* succeeded him, and reigned gloriously for seventeen years. *Echref Hagi*, the last of the Baharite slaves, who mounted the throne of Egypt, voluntarily abdicated royalty. *Barkouk*, who reigned after him, began the dynasty of the *Mamelukes*, or Circassian slaves, who governed Egypt for 121 years, under 22 kings. The last was *Tomam Bey*, hanged by Sultan Selim at one of the gates of Cairo.

who had put an end to *Touran Chah*, and whose hand was still reeking with his blood, said to St. Lewis, "What will you give me, for having dispatched your enemy?" The king made no answer. Several of these villains, sabre in hand, leaped into the galley where Joinville was, with a great many noblemen, and flourishing their scimitars, talked of cutting off their heads. These knights, terrified with the spectacle they had just beheld, expected nothing but death; and, as pious as they were brave, falling down on their knees before a brother of the Trinity, instantly confessed themselves. The crowd being very great, and the priest not able to hear them at once, Guy d'Ybelin, constable of Cyprus, confessed himself to Joinville, who said to him with an admirable naïveté; *I absolve you with all the power that God has given me.* It was thus that Bayard, the knight without fear and without reproach, when mortally wounded, confessed himself to his squire, at the foot of an oak-tree. These noblemen, however, escaped with
being

being thrown promiscuously into the hold, where suffering under illness, they passed a cruel night in expectation of a still more dreadful fate; for they were fully persuaded that they should never get out of this horrible dungeon, except to be led to execution.

Abou Ali being appointed to treat of an accommodation with the king of France, after many debates, the ancient conventions were confirmed. It was stipulated that St. Lewis should pay down before he quitted the Nile, 200,000 livres for his ransom, and that of his subjects; that he should evacuate Damietta, and that the remainder of the sum should be paid in the town of Acra. After these oaths had been mutually taken, the French noblemen were released from their dreadful captivity, and hope once more stepped in to soothe their misfortunes.

The disgrace of the king, however, and of his whole army, having reached the ears of the queen, she was overwhelmed with grief. She was then far advanced in her pregnancy, and this news was announced

nounced to her three days before her delivery. Her terrified imagination represented the enemy as already at the gates of Damietta. She thought she saw them enter the town, and spread fire and blood in every quarter. Her agitations became so violent, that she was thought to be at the point of death. An aged knight, of near fourscore years old, served as her usher, and never quitted her night and day. This unhappy princess started up in the midst of her slumber, imagining the barbarians were entering her apartment. The old chevalier, who held her hand when she was asleep, squeezed it, and said to her, "Madam, fear nothing, you are in safety." A moment after she had closed her eyes, she again awakened, making the most frightful cries. The grave usher again comforted her. To relieve herself at length from these cruel alarms, the queen made all her attendants leave the apartment, except her guardian; then throwing herself on her knees, she said to him, "Chevalier, promise me to grant the favour I
" am

“ am about to ask you :” He promised, and she continued ; “ I conjure you by “ the sacred promise you have made me, “ if the Saracens take this town, to cut off “ my head, before they can lay hold of “ me.” “ Madam, replied the Chevalier, “ be assured that I will cheerfully obey “ you. I had already thought of it, “ and was determined to take your life, “ rather than let you fall into their “ hands.” This answer calmed the queen.

The day after this affecting scene, she lay-in of a son, who was called *John Trifstan*, from the melancholy circumstances in which he was born. News was brought her the same day, that the Genoese, and the Pisans, who were in the pay of France, with the people of the country, were disposed to take to flight, and abandon Damietta. This princess sent for their leaders to her bedside, and said to them with tears in her eyes, “ Seigniors, for the love of God, do not “ leave this town. The loss of it would “ occasion that of the king and the whole “ army. Take pity on this poor infant “ you

“you see lying by my side.” The chiefs representing to her that they were dying with hunger, she immediately gave orders to purchase all the provisions in the town, and dismissed them with assurances, that from that day they should be fed at the king’s expence. Thus did this courageous princess save Damietta, the last remaining resource of the French.

The vessels in which were St. Lewis and the other prisoners being arrived near the bridge of Damietta, the King sent for the Queen and the Princesses on board. All the French quitted the town at the appointed time, and embarked in different vessels. The Egyptians entered it. These barbarians getting drunk, inhumanly murdered the sick, whom they had engaged by treaty to take care of until they were sent for from Acra. These first breaches of faith did not indicate a very honourable disposition on their part. A violent dispute had, in fact, arisen amongst them. Some were for killing the king, and all the prisoners. Others insisted on letting them go, according to the convention,

tion, adding, that by violating their oaths, the Egyptians would be stigmatized as the most infamous people in the universe. The contest grew warm, and a whole day passed in that state of indecision. Whilst these debates lasted, they made the boats go up the river with the unhappy captives a league above Damietta, and they did not conceal from them the intention of cutting off their heads. At length, *Aibeh*, the *Turcoman*, who expected to share with the Baharite slaves (*k*) the two hundred thousand livres, which were to be paid at Acra, drew his sabre, and vowed that he would never suffer them thus to violate the faith of treaties. This declaration terminated the dispute, and they agreed to set the French at liberty.

Whilst the Egyptians were meditating so abominable an outrage, St. Lewis was

(*k*) From the confession of the Arabian historians themselves, it is certain that the fear alone of losing the sum to be paid at Acra, proved the safety of the king, and all the French; and that the barbarians, who had just dipped their hands in the blood of *Touran Chah*, would not have spared one of their enemies, had they not found that such a measure would be inconsistent with their interest.

in great anger with a nobleman for saying that they had cheated the Egyptians of ten thousand livres, in paying them the promised sum, and ordered them to be restored, although they had already broken through a part of their engagement.

The conditions agreed on being reciprocally fulfilled, St. Lewis, his brothers and his wife, embarked for Acra in the year 1250, eleven months and twelve days after the capture of Damietta.

The following is the portrait given of St. Lewis, by *Gemal Eddin*, an Arabian historian. "This prince had a handsome
" face. He had understanding, courage,
" and religion. His good qualities pro-
" cured him the veneration of the Christi-
" ans, who placed in him an unbounded
" confidence: He might have escaped out
" of the hands of the Egyptians, by taking
" flight either in a boat, or on horseback;
" but this generous king never would aban-
" don his troops."

LETTER XXVI.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo, 2d of February, 1779.

I HAVE laid before you, Sir, the description of Lower Egypt, geographical and historical details on the principal towns, and the parallel of the ancient and modern manners of its inhabitants; it remains for me to give you an account of the commerce of this country, its singular government, the revolutions which have happened before my eyes, and the wonders of Upper Egypt. These objects will form a *future volume*. You exhort me to publish it as soon as possible, and engage for its success; but friendship is indulgent, and the public severe. Suffer me to wait its decision on the first part of these letters, before I venture to expose the sequel to its censure. Should this work not meet with a favourable reception, I have written

ten

ten too much, and if it be honoured with the good opinion of the public, I shall continue it with redoubled ardour.

I have the honour to be, with respect,

SIR,

Your most humble and
most obedient servant,

SAVARY.

L E T -

MEDITERRANEAN

SEA

LAKE BOURLOS

LAKE OF MENZALE

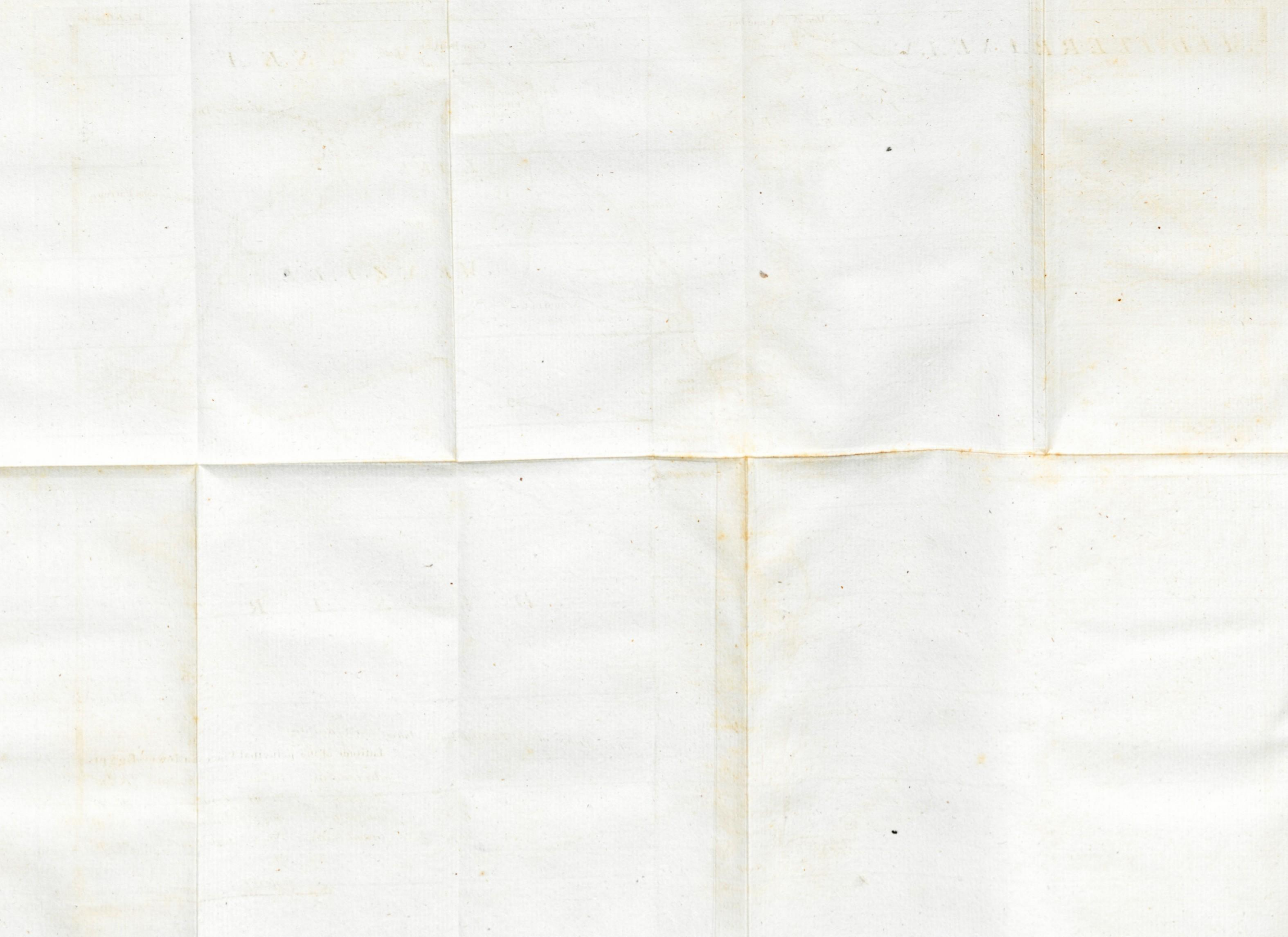


Latitude of the principal Places in lower Egypt.

| | | | |
|-------------|---------|---------------|---------|
| Alexandria | 31° 12' | bahn elbakara | 30° 13' |
| Rosetta | 31° 24' | Zephtai | 30° 42' |
| Quardan | 30° 21' | Damietta | 31° 26' |
| Grand Cairo | 30° 2' | Cape bourlos | 31° 41' |

Scale of French Leagues.





L E T T E R XXVII.

ROUTE FROM OLD CAIRO TO TAMIEH,
IN THE PROVINCE OF FAIOUM.

Departure from Fostat, in the month of November. Description of the Mosque called Athar Ennabi. Reflections on the pilgrimage made to this place. State of the plain of Egypt at this season of the year. Reflections on the pyramids compared with the tomb of Mausoleus, and the Morrai in Otabeité. Account of the plain of the Mummies, of the flint-stones of Egypt, and of Dachhour, anciently Achantus. Arrival at Tamieh in Faïoum.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

YOU assure me, Sir, that the public have given a favourable reception to the letters I addressed you, and you desire me to furnish you with the remainder. You are desirous, after having given you the description of the Lower, that I should serve

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H h

you

you as a guide in the Upper Egypt. You wish to survey with me that boasted country, whose antiquities Alexander, Julius Cæsar, Adrian, Severus, and so many other monarchs, went expressly to admire. I give way to your desire, and shall endeavour to prove myself worthy of your confidence. But recollect, that instead of these Egyptians, celebrated for their wisdom, and their knowledge, you will now only behold a nation plunged in the profoundest ignorance. Remember that in place of famous edifices you will often meet with ruins, or decayed hamlets. The contrast is so striking, that if all the great works of ancient Egypt had perished, like those of many other nations, her glory would have been buried with them. Yes, Sir, if this country, peopled at this day by Turks and Arabs, were totally despoiled of her wonders, she would be regarded as the country of Fairies, embellished by the brilliant pencil of the Greeks. But the pride of doubt is humbled before the unshaken mass of pyramids; and the curious observer, who, not content with measuring
their

their height, attends to the secret of the passages, and considers the means which art has put in practice, to prevent them from being entered, cannot help admiring this effort of human genius, nor refuse his tribute of admiration. We are now about to contemplate labours not less surprising ; and as the construction of many of them united with the grandeur of the enterprize the happiness of the people, they have an additional claim on your curiosity.

We are now in the month of November, the most favourable moment for ascending into the *Said* (*a*). The heat is moderate, and the canals being now full, afford us the opportunity of navigating into the interior parts of the country. Let us embark then on this river, which, in its numerous windings, fertilizes, for two hundred leagues, this valley, where princes and men of learning, for near three thousand years, have gone to admire the ruins

(*a*) The Arabs call all Upper Egypt by the name of the *Said*, from Old Cairo to Assouan, or Sienna.

of a people, who strove to impress upon their works the stamp of immortality.

We quit the port of Old Cairo. The north wind pushes us against the rapidity of the current. The waters have subsided from the foot of the hills. The low grounds are still overflowed. But the majestic Nile re-enters gradually his bed. Verdure and the harvests tread close upon his footsteps, and occupy the place he has abandoned. Here they are busy in sowing cucumbers, and water-melons. There the labourer prepares the soil with the plough, gently furrowing the surface with the plough-share. The oxen draw it along without difficulty, conducted by a single man. Near the mountains, where the ground is higher, the corn and the dourra already begin to shew themselves.

We pass before *Geziret-Dahab*, the golden Island, which presents us with a meadow, covered with flocks, and a small village. On the left we leave the great mosque of *Atar Ennabi*, situated on the banks of the river. This temple, much frequented by the inhabitants of Cairo, is
the

the object of a famous pilgrimage. It possesses a stone, whereon the mussulmen imagine they perceive the impresson of one of the feet of Mahomet. Hence they have named it *Atar Ennabi*, the vestiges of the prophet. The Scheik, who officiates at the place, takes great care to confirm this pious belief, and to publish the miracles which are there produced. As all his riches consist in this pretended relick, he preserves it with a scrupulous attention. It is covered with a rich veil, which he lifts up to gratify devotees, from whom he expects a trifling present. The following account of it I had from a lady of Cairo, who is married to a French merchant, settled forty years in the country (*b*).

“ I had often heard talk of *Atar En-*
 “ *nabi*, and of the miracles they published
 “ respecting it. I was curious to see this
 “ renowned stone. Our dress, exactly
 “ similar to that of the Turkish wo-
 “ men, allowing me to mix with them,

(*b*) The wife of Mr. Meynard, a merchant, whose probity and information have procured him the esteem of the French, the Copti, the Turks and the Arabs.

“ without fear of discovery, I repaired to the
“ mosque at an hour when I expected to
“ find few people there. I begged the
“ cheik to shew me the relick. Two
“ Turkish ladies of rank entering at the
“ same time, expressed the same desire.
“ He uncovered it. After burning some
“ precious essences, and repeating some
“ passages of the Coran, he said to
“ us : Behold that sacred impression ; ad-
“ mire the traces of the greatest of pro-
“ phets ! ah ! that is really the foot of
“ Mahomet ! The two women repeated with
“ enthusiasm, Yes, that is truly the foot of
“ Mahomet, the greatest of prophets ! As
“ for me, added the French lady, I do
“ assure you, that in spite of the most
“ scrupulous attention, I perceived no-
“ thing but a smooth stone, tinged with
“ perfumes, where I could discover neither
“ the traces of a foot, nor any thing like it.”

Strange effect of the prejudice of man !
which enchains his reason, and makes him
see, feel, and touch whatever his imagina-
tion may suggest to his prepossessed under-
standing. It was thus, that Mr. Tourne-
fort,

fort, assisting in one of the isles of the Archipelago, at the opening of a tomb where the people were convinced they should find a vampire, perceived nothing but a livid corpse, half eaten by worms, whilst the Greeks insisted that they beheld an entire body, of a vermilion colour, and which, according to them, diffused no disagreeable odour.

Mr. Norden, in his charming views of Egypt, has very well described the Mosque of *Atar Ennabi* and its environs; but he is deceived in placing Memphis on the spot occupied by Giza. He cannot however be reproached with this, for he himself confesses his doubts of that being the true situation of this ancient city. I think I have already ascertained this point beyond a doubt in the preceding letters, nor should I have corrected the error into which several travellers have fallen in this respect, had I not apprehended they might mislead other writers. Deceived by this, the learned Jablonski (*c*) has in vain employed all the sagacity

(*c*) Jablonski, deceived by the false position several travellers have given to Memphis, by placing it on the

sagacity of his understanding, in the research after a truth he never could discover, as he established it on a false principle.

At a small distance from *Atar Ennabi*, we discover, through tufts of date-trees a small village, where the Turks have a mosque, and the Copti a convent called *Der Ettin*, the monastery of figs, doubtless because that fruit grows there in abundance. There are two sorts of them. The first springs even out of the branches of the sycamore. It is dry and little esteemed. The other sort, the same we cultivate in France, is juicy, sugary, and of an exquisite flavour.

On the eastern bank villages appear situated on artificial eminences. The summit is occupied by huts, to which men and animals retire during the inundation. Already does the lucern, which is sown in proportion as the Nile returns into the canals, form a zone of verdure round these little islands. Tribes of wandering Arabs

spot where Giza stands, has written that the temple of Serapis was built in the isle of Raouda, where the Mekias now is. This is an error. *Tome second.*

have

have prepared their tents on the descent of the sandy hillocks, to profit by the bounties of the river. They purchase for some months the right of sending their flocks to feed in the meadows, which they quit when the pasturage is exhausted. These untameable herds, martyrs to that liberty they passionately love, prefer the horror of their deserts to all the advantages of society. The shadow of slavery puts them to flight. Constantly upon their guard against tyranny, on the slightest cause of discontent they receive, they strike their tents, load their camels with them, ravage the flat country, and, laden with spoils, penetrate into their burning sands, where no one can follow them, and which they alone have the courage to inhabit. These Bedouins, (*d*), the scourge of Egypt, which they regard as their patrimony, are the irreconcilable enemies of the Turks, who fear and abhor them (*e*).

We

(*d*) This word comes from *Bedaoui*, which signifies inhabitant of the desert.

(*e*) The hatred subsisting between the two nations has given rise to this familiar expression, *Traiter quelqu'un*

We have passed the village of *Boufir*, and are opposite to the great pyramids, which rise to the height of six hundred feet perpendicular. Whilst our boat is following the windings of the river, their summits describe portions of circles in the horizon. With what majesty these mountains, formed by the hand of man, elevate themselves in the air ! Their antiquity still renders them more awful. How often has the sun enlightened them at his rising, burnt them at his zenith, and coloured them at his setting ! For how many ages have they followed the earth in her great orbit which forms the year ! Man then has succeeded in creating durable monuments ! and these monuments are tombs ! Some authors imagining that the havock occasioned by the violent forcing of the great pyramid was the effect of time, have calculated how many ages it might still remain ; but as they set out on a false principle, they are infinitely distant from the truth. It seems to me impossible to fix the epocha when

qu'un de Turc à More ; that is to say, with the rigour used by the Turks towards the Arabs.

they

they shall cease to be. Thousands of years hence, unless some great revolution happens, the travellers of enlightened nations shall go to admire these stupendous monuments, and say, scarcely had Europe a few savages dispersed in her forests, when a learned nation erected these superb mausolea, towards the four cardinal points of heaven, as a monument of her piety and astronomical knowledge.

In the villages around them is cultivated a species of melon peculiar to Egypt. They are called *abd-bellaoui*, slave of sweetness. Their pulp is firm and brittle like that of an apple. Though less sugary than many other sorts, they are preferred, because they afford a very wholesome and agreeable nutriment during the heats. Another vegetable in high estimation is a lettuce with large leaves, smooth and erect. Whole plains are covered with them. The people consume a prodigious quantity, and oil is extracted from their seed. You, Sir, who collect in your garden, from the various quarters of the globe, the different productions of the earth, to enrich your country,

country, and who cultivate so successfully every plant, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop, you will pardon me these details.

Proceeding on, we discover to the right and left hamlets, whose inhabitants are employed in cultivating the earth, which in four months will afford them abundant crops. The burgh of *Halouan* appears on the eastern bank, surrounded by date-trees. The Mekias was established there when the Arabs conquered Egypt. Memphis stood on the opposite bank, on the spot where the village of *Menph* now stands, which still preserves the name. The testimonies of Strabo, of Pliny, and Abulfeda, who have described its ruins, leave no doubt in that respect. Large heaps of rubbish are still to be seen there; but the Arabs have transported to Cairo the columns and remarkable stones, which they have disposed, without taste and without order, in their mosques and public buildings. This city extended as far as Saccara, and was almost wholly encompassed by lakes, part of which are still
subsisting.

subsisting. It was necessary to cross them to convey the dead to the sepulchre of their fathers. The tombs, hewn out of the rock, were closed up with stones of a proportionable size, and covered with sand. These bodies, embalmed with so much care, preserved with so much respect, are torn from the monuments they repose in, and sold without decency to strangers, by the inhabitants of Saccara. This place is called *the plain of mummies*. There too we find *the well of the birds*, into which one descends by means of a rope. It leads to subterraneous galleries, filled with earthen vases, containing the sacred birds. They are rarely met with entire, because the Arabs break them, in hopes of finding idols of gold. They do not conduct travellers into the places where they have found more precious articles. They even close them up carefully, reserving to themselves some secret passages by which they descend. In a journey into Egypt made by the duke de Chaulnes, he advanced very far into these winding labyrinths, sometimes crawling, and sometimes scrambling
on

on his knees. Informed by Mr. Edward Wortley Montague, who has carefully visited Egypt, he arrived at one of these passages, which had an opening shut up from without by branches of the date-tree intervoven, and covered with sand. He remarked there some hieroglyphics *in relief*, executed in the highest perfection. But the Arabs resisted every offer he made them, to permit him to take drawings of them, or to mold them (*f*), in order to preserve their form. The duke de Chaulnes is of opinion that these hieroglyphics, sculptured with so much art, that the objects they represent may be discovered at the first sight, might possibly furnish the key of the others, whose contours are simply expressed, and form a sort of alphabet of this unintelligible language. Whether this ingenious idea be well or ill-founded, I shall propose to you in a particular letter the methods which might be attempted to explain these mysterious characters, and to read on the Egyptian mo-

(*f*) Memoir on the hieroglyphics of the well of Saccara, by the duke de Chaulnes.

numents the most ancient history of the world.

Several pyramids are distinguishable along the mountains which bound Saccara on the west, the greatest part of which appear as lofty as those of Giza: at the sight of these edifices, on which my eyes were fixed in spite of myself, permit me some further reflexions, which I cannot resist. Are these mausolea the fruit of the pride of the Pharaohs? Is it to their vanity we must attribute their construction? I know that this is the opinion of several authors; but let them retain an opinion which has no foundation in the human heart. Kings do not build palaces to inhabit them after death. A more imperious sentiment, anxiety for the future, the persuasion of what must happen after this short life, induced the Pharaohs to construct these magnificent tombs (g). Their religion taught them, that as long as their bodies could be kept free from corruption, their souls would not quit them, and that at the expiration of

(g) Herodotus, Euterpe, second book.

three thousand years they would animate them anew. This dogma made them erect these buildings, which the genius of the most able architects strove to render inaccessible. They gave them the *pyramidal form*, as being the most durable. This form was connected likewise with their worship, and formed an act of homage to the sun, whose rays it imitated (*b*). These edifices therefore are a striking proof that this ancient people believed in the immortality of the soul. Kings find themselves very well in this world. Flowers and harvests spring up for them without any trouble. All nature smiles for them, and had they the Egyptian creed,

(*b*) Pliny, book 36, says, that the obelisks were consecrated to the sun; that they represented his rays, which is indicated by their Egyptian name. In fact, these monuments, as well as the pyramids, were called in Egyptian, *Pyramué, Rays of the sun*. See Jablonski, tome 3. The Greeks gave the name of obelisks to the former, and left that of *pyramids* to the others, which comes from *Pyr*, fire, and in which they have preserved the ancient etymology. The obelisks were consecrated to the sun, because they served as dials to mark the hours.

we should see them bringing forth prodigies, by which they might hope to ensure their return on earth. The religion of Egypt passed into Greece, and Artemisia erected, to the ashes of her husband, a tomb in the pyramidal form, one of the seven wonders of the universe. This idea of an immortal soul originating with islanders, separated from every polished nation by the immensity of seas, has produced a monument which ought greatly to surprize us. The *Otabeiteans*, without the aid of any metal, have cut the hardest stones, and formed a pyramid, where the body of their queen Oberea repofes. Her relations and friends, filled with a religious remembrance, go around this *Morai* to pour forth their pious tears; and the soul of Oberea tastes some consolation on beholding their grief and tenderness (*i*).

Let us quit the sad desarts of Saccara, where we walk only upon tombs; and those lofty pyramids, which inspire only melancholy ideas, and that lake, across

(i) Cook's voyage.

which the bodies were conveyed, and which recalls to mind the fable of Charon. Let us return into our bark. With what pleasure the eyes, scorched by the burning sands, repose upon the verdure ! With what satisfaction one returns from the dwelling of death, which the sight of these places continually brings before your eyes, to enjoy the treasures of abundance ! How delicious are one's feelings on contemplating a serene sky, a majestic river, and a country which discloses new riches at every step. It is after supporting the frightful picture of sterility, that one relishes, with an inexpressible charm, the spectacle of teeming nature ; she awaits the traveller, expiring on the border of the desert he has been traversing, to pour into his heart the source of a new life.

We are now seven leagues above Old Cairo. It is here that the Nile, repulsed by the rocks projecting from the east, rushed formerly to the west, and spread itself over the sands of Libya. I have marked, by two punctuated lines, upon the

the map, the route it followed. One of the Pharaohs, according to Herodotus (*k*), barred its passage with a dyke, and forced it to resume its course between the mountains. It fell into the gulf which then covered the space now occupied by the Delta, and gave birth to that celebrated island, which is advancing with slow steps into the Mediterranean. The traces of the ancient bed, called by the Arabs, *Babr bela ma*, The sea without water, are still visible. It is strewed its whole length with the wrecks of boats that navigated on it, and are petrified. I have seen superb specimens of them brought to Grand Cairo. In going from Sacara to *Dachbour*, we meet with a long mound of earth, thrown up to preserve Memphis from the inundation of the river, should it happen to break its dyke; and against the torrents of sand hurried by the winds from the Lybian mountains.

(*g*) Herodotus, book the second. See the first letter on Egypt, where this passage is discussed.

At some distance from this elbow is the isle of *Terfaie*, where they have begun to plant cucumbers, and water-melons. The Egyptians cultivate a sort of cucumbers, called *Coufa*, which is very small, and in great estimation. The pulp of it is sweet, tender, and very delicate. They eat it as a fallad; but the usual mode of dressing it is to take out the seeds with an auger, and to fill it up with hashed meat and rice, mixed with spices. Thus dressed in its juice, it is excellent eating.

Beyond this isle we discover, within land, the burgh of *Dachbour*. The waters of the Nile are conducted thither by a canal, over which is a stone bridge of several arches. Strabo *(l)* and Ptolemy *(m)* place *Achantus* in the interior of the country, at six leagues from Memphis, and on the same side. This situation corresponds perfectly with *Dachbour*. The temple of Osiris, at this place, was admired. This edifice is entirely destroyed; but one remarks

(l) Strabo, book 17.

(m) Ptolemy, book 4.

to the westward of this village, and on the declivity of the mountain a great pyramid, which forms a continuation of those of Saccara and of Giza.

The sandy plains which stretch along the hills, are strewed with stones, vulgarly called Egyptian flints. Rounded in the shape of pebbles, their rugged surface has nothing brilliant to invite one to pick them up; but their inside is of an extremely fine grain, susceptible of a high polish: the greatest part of them are marked with the figures of plants, and one distinguishes shrubs on them, which often compose beautiful landscapes. The dark-brown strokes which mark them, traced with the greatest elegance, display themselves with grace on a light-coloured ground. These flints present a great variety of designs and different shades. There is great choice, for the sands are covered with them. I only saw one Jew at Cairo who had the art of working them, and of making boxes or knife-handles with them; he consequently sold them very dear. The

hillocks which terminate these plains are filled with oysters and petrified shells.

On leaving *Achantus*, and travelling towards the south, we pass a vast country, the lower parts of which are watered by little rivulets, which fertilize them at this season. The valleys are at present covered with corn, with dourra, and with verdure. At the end of a few months the Nile, on quitting them, will again leave only a desert. The village of Tamieh, where the canal passes, is situated at the extremity of this plain.

We are now entering, Sir, into the fertile province of Arfinoé, at present called the *Faïoum*; it was the province of wonders. It contained the labyrinth and its twelve palaces, lake Moëris, and its pyramids. I shall lay before you what the ancients said of it, and by presenting you with an exact description of the present state of the places and monuments still subsisting, and the ruins we find there, you will be yourself able to form a judgment of what they must have been.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T-

L E T T E R XXVIII.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ANTIQUITIES
IN THE PROVINCE OF ARSINOË, NOW
FAIOUM.

Comparative topography of this province. Inquiry concerning the monuments, the situation of which has been fixed by the ancients, with the present state of their ruins. Situation of the labyrinth confirmed by the testimony of Herodotus, Pliny, Diodorus Siculus, and Ptolemy; and by the ruins of Balad Caroun, and of Cafr Caroun. Description of this wonderful edifice. Reflections on the same subject. Account of the Lake Mæris. Its extent hitherto disputed, ascertained from the evidence of ancient writers. Mechanism of the canals and sluices clearly displayed. Actual circumference of this great Lake.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

I Have already said that this province contains the remains of Lake Mæris, and

the ruins of the labyrinthⁿ. Egypt possesses no monuments that have occasioned more debates amongst the learned. The extent of the one, and the situation of the other have been alternately contested. Some geographers, to satisfy all parties, have created two labyrinths (*n*). Other writers have given to Lake Mæris an immense circumference (*o*); and others in short, assigning it to the country of fables (*p*), have displayed the charms of their wit in throwing a ridicule on the credulity of historians. These contradictions have thickened the clouds of uncertainty, and the truth remains at the bottom of the well. Let us endeavour to draw it thence, by explaining such passages of the ancients, as have been sometimes badly interpreted, by following Strabo step by step, who has described with accuracy the places he visited as an enlightened man, and especially by making a faithful report of what remains of the

(*n*) Danville, *Memoirs sur l'Egypte*.

(*o*) Rollin, *Ancient history*. Bossuet, *Discours sur l'histoire universelle*.

(*p*) Voltaire.

monuments he speaks of (*q*). “ *On quitting Achantus, says this wise historian, we leave on the side of Arabia, Aphroditopolis (r), where a white ox was fed and consecrated by religion.*” The burgh of *Atfib*, according to the best geographers(*s*), occupies the ground of the city of Venus. *On the other side of the Nile, is the prefecture of Heraclea, situated in a large island.* The two canals formed from the river to the lake, the one passing near to *Tamieb*, the other taking its rise at the village of *Bouch*, form this island, and the remarkable ruins to be discovered near to *Baïamout*, seem to point out the position of Heraclea (*t*), the capital of this province. Two ruined pyramids are to be seen there with only a few layers of stone. Strabo continues: “ *Near to Heraclea runs a canal, which, dividing itself into two branches, forms a small island.* It

(*q*) Strabo, book 17.

(*r*) The city of Venus.

(*s*) See Ptolemy, l. 4. Danville, *Mem. sur l’Egypte*; and Pocock, *Journey to the East*.

(*t*) It was called the great Heraclea, to distinguish it from another city of Hercules, situated in Lower Egypt, at a small distance from Canopus.

“ *crosses the prefecture of Arsinoë, the most beautiful, and the richest in Egypt.*” Follow, Sir, this ancient geographer in the map, and you will see that there is scarcely any alteration in these places, and that he conducts us straight to *Faioum*, the capital of all this country. This town is modern; but a league to the north-east of its walls, large heaps of rubbish indicate the vestiges of Arsinoë (*u*). The Arabs gather the sand which covers these ruins, and sift it, to find seals and medals. At some distance is an obelisk on its pedestal. This is the only monument which has braved the injuries of time, and the ravages of the barbarians. It is twenty-two feet, (*French measure*) in circumference at the base, and about fifty in height. Its sides are covered with hieroglyphics, divided into columns, and effaced in many places. The corners are broken, and the beautiful piece of granite it is composed of, is injured half-way up. Strabo abandons us here, to de-

(*u*) This city was anciently called Crocodilopolis, from the sacred crocodiles which were fed there. The Greeks becoming masters of Egypt, called it Arsinoë.

scribe Lake Mœris, which is but a t small distance from Arsinoé, and the labyrinth built upon its banks. He does not precisely point out its situation; but Herodotus (x) and Ptolemy determine it with accuracy, placing it on the side of Libya, on the bank of the lake. Let us continue then our journey.

The traveller, on quitting *Faïoum*, and proceeding to the westward, crosses the great canal called *Babr Ioufeph*, Joseph's river. The village of *Nesle*, which he leaves on the left, affords him no traces of antiquity. After two hours journey towards the north-west, he enters a sandy plain, where sterility alone reigns. He soon discovers mountains of ruins which are near a league in extent. The first heap of them is called by the Arabs *balad Caroun*, the burgh of Charon; the second *castr Caroun*, the palace of Charon (y).
The

(x) Herodotus, book 2d. Ptolemy, book 4.

(y) The Arabian historians describe Charon as a very powerful man. They say that he could load several camels with the keys which opened the numerous apartments that contained his treasures. This
unanimous

The whole space between them is strewed with enormous stones. The most remarkable ruins are at the extremities. In the midst of those of *castr Caroun*, a large edifice rises up, of which there are several halls remaining, filled with trunks of columns. A portico half demolished encompasses it. One may distinguish staircases, by which they mounted to different apartments ; and others by which they descended into subterraneous passages. But what particularly attracts attention, is the view of several low, narrow, and very long cells, which seem to have had no other destination, than to contain the bodies of the sacred crocodiles, brought hither from Crocodilopolis, where they were fed

unanimous assertion gives us a glance of a truth. Perhaps in Egypt the name of Charon was a dignity bestowed on the boatmen who conveyed the bodies of the Pharaohs over Lake Mœris, to deposit them in the cells of the labyrinth, of which he was the keeper. Doubtless he who performed the same office on the lake of Memphis, with respect to the inhabitants of that city, had the same title. If this conjecture be true, we shall discover why the Greeks gave the name of Charon to the boatman of hell, and why the Arabs call these ruins the palace of Charon.

by

by the priests, and honoured by a particular worship. These ruins, placed towards Lybia, at a league's distance from *Birket Caroun*, formerly Lake Mœris, can only correspond with the Labyrinth, for the ancients (z) assigned it this position, and point out no town on that side. Since we are walking on the sands which partly cover this famous monument, let us read the description of it in Herodotus, that we may form a just idea of it.

“ (a) The twelve kings chosen by the
 “ Egyptians, constructed the labyrinth on
 “ the borders of Lake Mœris, on the side
 “ of the city of Crocodiles. This edifice
 “ appeared to me beyond what fame had
 “ said of it. If we pay attention to the
 “ construction of the walls, to the nature
 “ of the work, it will be impossible to

(z) See Strabo, l. 17. Herodotus, l. 2. Ptolemy, l. 4. All these authors agree in placing the labyrinth beyond the city of *Arfinoe*, on the Lybian side, and on the banks of Lake Mœris. This is exactly the situation where we meet with the ruins I have been describing.

(a) Herodotus, book second.

appreciate

“ appreciate the immense sums this build-
 “ ing must have cost. The temple of
 “ Ephesus is one of the wonders of the
 “ world; the pyramids in the isle of Sa-
 “ mos do not yield in grandeur to any of
 “ works of Greece: yet these monuments,
 “ whatever be their magnificence, can-
 “ not be compared with the Labyrinth (*b*).
 “ A roof of a vast extent covers its twelve
 “ palaces. The entrance to them is by
 “ twelve gates, six of which are to
 “ the north, and six to the south. A
 “ thick wall, of great length, encompasses
 “ them. The whole edifice consists of
 “ two stories, one above ground, the
 “ other subterraneous, each of which con-
 “ tains fifteen hundred apartments. I
 “ have visited the former, and relate what
 “ I have seen. As to the latter, the
 “ keepers would not allow me to descend
 “ into them, telling me, that the bodies
 “ of the kings who had built them were

(*b*) Recollect, Sir, that it is a Greek who speaks,
 and who reads his history in the presence of the most
 enlightened men of his age, at an assembly of the
 Olympic games, where he was crowned.

“ preserved

“ preserved there, and those of the sacred
“ Crocodiles ; I know nothing further,
“ therefore, than what they told me.
“ Human industry has displayed all its
“ resources, in the distribution of the up-
“ per story. The porticoes, the passages
“ which lead from the halls into the cham-
“ bers, from the chambers into the
“ closets, from the closets to the ter-
“ races, from the terraces into the other
“ apartments, form such numerous wind-
“ ings, return into each other in such va-
“ rious ways, that I was never tired of ad-
“ miring the art which has been made use
“ of in its structure. The walls, the roofs,
“ are all of stone. Here and there one
“ sees different figures sculptured with
“ an artist’s hand. The halls are sur-
“ rounded by majestic columns, chiefly of
“ white marble. A pyramid, each side of
“ which is two hundred and fifty feet wide;
“ and by which one descends into the
“ caverns, terminates the labyrinth.”

Such is the description of Herodotus.
Although that of Strabo (*c*), who visited

(*c*) Strabo, l. 17.

the same monument several ages after him, does not agree with him in every point, it confirms, however, his account. He describes, like Herodotus, the winding passages, the varied routes with which art had so contrived these labyrinths, that it was impossible, without a guide, to enter any one of these palaces, or to get out, after once entering it. He says that the principal apartments were furrounded by magnificent columns, that the walls were constructed of masses of rocks, and that from the top of the roof one perceived an immense platform, resembling a plain of stones, the sight of which astonished the imagination. It is true, Strabo pretends that the labyrinth was composed of twenty-seven palaces, wherein the prefectures of Egypt were assembled at a certain period, to treat of the most important affairs of the state and of religion; but it is probable that the twelve, which Herodotus speaks of, were afterwards divided into twenty-seven parts; or, that during the interval of several ages between these two historians, this edifice was enlarged.

Diodorus

Diodorus Siculus, Pliny, and Pomponius Mela have described the labyrinth without having seen it. They confined themselves to the copying and embellishing the recital of the two former authors; they furnish us therefore with nothing new. The founder of this edifice is unknown. Each writer (*d*) names one or more, and almost all different. This variety of opinions affords a presumption that it was not the work of one, but of several kings.

This monument, which Pliny look upon as the most astonishing production of the human genius, no longer subsists but in

(*d*) Herodotus says, that the labyrinth was built by the twelve princes who governed Egypt, when Psammeticus, one of the twelve, usurped the sovereign power.

Strabo attributes the construction of it to Pharaoh *Imandes*, and pretends that his body reposes in the pyramid which terminates the enclosure.

Pliny will have it to have been constructed by *Petefuc* or *Tithoé*; but as he quotes several contradictory authorities, these different opinions only increase the uncertainty.

Diodorus Siculus thinks that the labyrinth is the work and the tomb of Pharaoh *Mendés*.

Pomponius Mela attributes it to *Psammeticus*.

the ruins of *Balad Caroun*, and *Castr Caroun*. Some day perhaps, when Europe shall have restored to Egypt the sciences she received from her, the sands and rubbish may be removed which have buried the lower story of the labyrinth, and very precious antiquities may be discovered. Who knows whether the discoveries of the learned were not deposited in this asylum, impenetrable to the people and to strangers? If the researches into Herculaneum, a city of little note, have rescued from oblivion so many rarities, so many instructive monuments for the arts, and history, what may not be expected from fifteen hundred apartments which might have been the repository of the archives of Egypt, since all the prefectures were assembled here to treat of affairs of state and of religion? But I must not dwell on conjectures. You are impatient, doubtless, to know Lake Mœris, the remains of which are still sufficiently great to merit your attention.

Herodotus (*e*) and Strabo (*f*) mark out

(*e*) Herodotus, l. second.

(*f*) Strabo, l. 17.

its site by placing the labyrinth on its borders, and by fixing the towns which were around it, such as Achantus to the south, Aphroditopolis towards the east, and Arfinoé to the north. Diodorus Siculus (*g*) and Pliny (*h*) confirm these authorities, by placing it at twenty-four leagues from Memphis, between the province of that name and that of Arfinoé. This unanimity of sentiment gives in fact every degree of certainty we could wish for. If the lake however had totally disappeared, like Mareotis, one might still have one's doubts; but in the situation marked by these historians, we see in our days a lake, known by the name of *Birket Caroun*, more than fifty leagues in circumference. We cannot therefore, without persisting against evidence, refuse to recognize the remains of that of Mœris. Let us examine what the ancients said of it. By weighing with a scrupulous attention their testimonies, we shall perhaps be able to clear up a point

(*g*) Diodorus Siculus, l. i.

(*h*) Pliny, l. 5.

of topography enveloped in profound darkness.

“ The labyrinth, says Herodotus, such as
 “ I have been describing it, is still less sur-
 “ prizing than the Mœris. This lake is in
 “ circumference 3600 stadia, or 60 schenes,
 “ which form the dimensions of the ma-
 “ ritime base of Egypt, (seventy-five
 “ leagues (*i*)). It stretches from north to
 south,

(*i*) Herodotus has fixed the measure of the schene, in Lower Egypt, at four miles, or a league and a quarter. Thus the 60 schenes make 75 leagues. Strabo and Diodorus Siculus, who have employed other measures to estimate the same extent of country, agree however with Herodotus. The base of Egypt therefore remains determined at 75 leagues, and since it is equal to the circumference of lake Mœris, that lake was only 75 leagues round. I am compelled to enter into these particulars, because this passage has produced many errors. Writers in general paying attention to the first member of the sentence of Herodotus, in which he fixes the extent of the lake at 3600 stadia, and allowing each stadium its usual estimation of about 100 toises, have given 150 or 180 leagues circumference to lake Mœris. But whoever reflects on this passage, will see that the measure of 3600 stadia is there determined by 60 schenes, or 75 leagues, and that the author consequently has
 made

“ south (*k*), and its greatest depth is three
 “ hundred feet. Two pyramids, con-
 “ structed in an island towards the mid-
 “ dle, rise from three hundred feet be-
 “ low water, and are as high out of it,
 “ which proves that it has been dug
 “ by the hand of man. Each of them has
 “ on its summit a colossal statue, seated
 “ on a throne. Their total elevation,
 “ taken from the base, is a stadium of

made use of stadia of 50 toises. I do not know whe-
 ther any one has made this remark before me, but I
 know that from this passage ill construed, have sprung
 all the debates of the moderns. M. de Voltaire has
 combated with the weapon of pleasantry the existence
 of a lake of 180 leagues, which is greater, says he, than
 all Egypt. M. Rollin, and especially Bossuet, have
 warmly maintained it. Several writers have restricted
 its extent, and limited it to twenty leagues. M.
 Danville, desirous of conciliating all parties, in his
 map of Egypt, has created a great canal, to which
 he gives the name of Lake Mœris. But he has not
 been more fortunate than others, since the form and
 situation of this pretended Mœris are absolutely
 contrary to the most respectable authorities in his-
 tory.

(*k*) At this day its greatest dimension is from east
 to west, but formerly it might extend from Arsinoe
 as far as the canal, for the discharge of the waters.

“ fix hundred feet (1). Lake Mœris
 “ occupies a soil very dry, and destitute
 “ of springs. It derives its waters from
 “ the Nile, which runs there during fix
 “ months. The rest of the year it restores
 “ them to the river. During the for-
 “ mer period, the fishery produces a ta-
 “ lent of silver daily, to the royal trea-
 “ sury, and twenty minas only, during
 “ the latter. According to the natives
 “ of the country, a canal is pierced (m)
 “ across the mountain, the extended chain
 “ of which commands Memphis. This
 “ is an outlet by which the superfluous
 “ waters are poured into the sands of
 “ Lybia, on the western side. I en-
 “ quired what had become of the earth
 “ taken from the lake ; they assured
 “ me that it had been conveyed to the

(1) In these two passages Herodotus employs the measure of stadia; but as he had at first reduced them to 50 toises, and afterwards restores them to their full estimation, he takes care to apprise us that they are stadia of 600 feet.

(m) I have marked on the map, at the beginning of this volume, the situation of this canal.

“ river,

“ river, and carried by the current to the
“ sea.”

Let us join the report of Strabo to that of Herodotus; they throw mutual light upon each other (*n*). “ The province of Ar-
“ sinoe contains the wonderful lake of
“ Moëris. It resembles the sea in its extent,
“ its colour, and its shores. As deep as it
“ is vast, it receives at the beginning of the
“ inundation, the waters which would
“ otherwise cover the harvests and the
“ habitations of men: they are conducted
“ thither by a great canal. When the Nile
“ subsides, they return by two other canals
“ (those of *Tamieb*, and of *Bouch*,) which,
“ as well as the former, serve for water-
“ ing the fields: all this is naturally
“ performed. At the head of the canals,
“ sluices are formed, which are opened at
“ pleasure, whether to introduce, or to
“ let off the waters (*o*).”

K k 4

If

(*n*) Strabo, l. 17.

(*o*) Diodorus Siculus pretends that it cost fifty talents, that is to say, 150,000 livres, to open these sluices. It is not easy to discover what has made him adopt this fable. It is certain, however, that Herodotus

and

If this passage does not fix the extent of the lake, it proves at least that it was very considerable, and that it could not be determined by the eye. Diodorus Siculus refers to the opinion of Herodotus, who gives Lake Mœris three thousand six hundred stadia, that is to say, seventy-five leagues circumference. Pliny estimates it at two hundred and fifty thousand paces, which make about eighty leagues. Thus then, you see antiquity agreed on a point which has given rise to so many discussions among the moderns, without any of them being able to establish his system on a solid basis, and unite every opinion. At present this lake is only about fifty leagues round; but this diminution by no means proves that Herodotus and Pliny were de-

and Strabo, who have been on the spot, who have examined them with attention, do not speak of it. Pliny, and Pomponius Mela, who report what the ancients have written on the subject of lake Mœris, and who would not have omitted so extraordinary a fact, make no mention of it. So much improbability, joined to the silence of historians, demonstrates the falsity of this assertion.

ceived

ceived in their calculations. Considering the revolutions, which have molested Egypt for a series of two thousand years, it might have undergone still greater changes.

Fix your eyes, Sir, on the map of this country, you will see that the chain of mountains which follows the course of the Nile, at a very little distance on the left, from the cataracts, as far as *Faioum*, stretches off suddenly on the side of Lybia, then returning towards the east, forms in its contours an immense basin. Although lower than the bed of the river, this hollow was once covered with a barren sand, because the waters, stopped by the downs and the rocks, could not penetrate there. One of the Pharaohs, called Mœris, knowing perfectly the situation of the country, conceived one of the most noble designs ever projected by the human mind, and had the glory of carrying it into execution. He determined to change this desert into an useful lake. After some thousands of men collected together, had cleared out, and dug the soil in several places, he drew a canal of forty leagues in length, and three hundred feet wide,

wide, for the purpose of conducting thither a part of the waters of the Nile. This great canal, which still subsists entire at this day, is known under the name of *Bahr Joseph*, Joseph's river.

It opens near *Tarout Eccherif*, and ends at *Berkit Caroun*. This work must have cost immense sums; for in several places it is cut out of the rock. It was not enough to have disengaged Egypt from the excess of the inundation, which in those remote ages remained too long on the lands, at that time lower than they are in our days, and occasioned its sterility; it was necessary also, to render these waters useful to agriculture. This great prince succeeded in this, by drawing two other canals from the lake to the river. At their opening were formed two sluices, which were kept shut during the increase of the Nile; then the waters conveyed by the canal of Joseph, were heaped up in the vast enclosure of Lake Moëris, encompassed with dykes and mountains. During the six months that the Nile was on the decline, these sluices were opened, and a surface of water of about
eighty

eighty leagues in circumference, and thirty feet (*p*) higher than the ordinary level of the river, formed a second inundation to be directed at pleasure. One part returned to the Nile, and served for the navigation. The other part branched out into innumerable rivulets, watered the fields, and diffused fertility even to the very sandy hills. This work, the greatest and the most useful ever executed on earth, united every advantage. It supplied the deficiency of water in years of a moderate overflow, by retaining those precious waters, which otherwise would have flowed uselessly to the sea. Its benefits were still more strongly marked in the time of a great inundation. It received that hurtful superfluity of them, which would have pre-

(*p*) The canal of Joseph having its source in the Thebais, conveyed to lake Mœris the waters of the Nile from the commencement of the increase. As they were continually confined, on one side by the mountains, on the other by dykes and sluices, placed on the canals of *Bouch* and of *Tamieh*, they rose to the height of the inundation, that is to say, about thirty feet above the usual level of the river.

vented

vented the sowing of the earth. Lest this artificial sea should break down the barriers that were opposed to it, and cause frightful devastation in the country, a canal was cut through the mountains, by which the superfluous waters were poured into the sands of Lybia. Behold, Sir, one of the most glorious labours of which the history of nations has ever made mention. It is not astonishing that antiquity should have ranked it before the pyramids and the labyrinth. It combined the happiness of the people with the grandeur of the enterprize. Accordingly, the Egyptians, though they abhorred the Pharaohs, who forced them to excavate mountains, to build themselves superb tombs, blessed the memory of Mœris; and his name is handed down to posterity.

At present this lake has lost almost all its advantages. From the period of near twelve hundred years that Egypt has fallen into the hands of barbarous nations, they have either destroyed, or suffered to perish, the chief part of these monuments. The Mareotis is dried up, the Canal of Alexandria

dria is no longer navigable, and the Mœris is only fifty leagues in circumference. If the canal of Joseph were cleared out, where the mud is collected to a vast height; if the ancient dykes were re-established, and the sluices of the canals of *Tamieb* and of *Bouch*, Lake Mœris would still serve the same purposes. It would prevent the devastations of the too great swellings of the river, and supply the deficiency of those which are inadequate. We should see it, as heretofore, extending itself from Neslé and Arfinoé to the Lybian mountains, and offering to the view of the astonished traveller, a sea formed by the hand of man.

The depth of three hundred feet, ascribed to it by historians, must be exaggerated, but much less so than may be imagined. The bottom which it occupies, is a basin formed by the mountains. It is very low, since the Nile runs into it even by the canal of *Tamieb* (*q*). In short, however the
mud

(*q*) The contrary happened formerly. As Lake Mœris received a greater quantity of waters by the canal

mud may have gradually collected in a series of ages, it is still of a great depth. If all these reasons cannot prevail upon us to adopt the sentiments of the ancients, they will at least compel us to suspend our judgment, and to examine the places and the times, before we dismiss their narratives to the region of chimeras.

The pyramids described by Herodotus, no longer exist. It appears even, that they existed not in the time of Augustus, as Strabo does not speak of them. In our days, we may remark to the north of *Birket Caroun*, a promontory, which doubtless was formerly an island. It is terminated by a rock covered with ruins. This was perhaps the foundation of these Mausolea, which bore on their summits two colossal statues seated upon thrones, and which, commanding the whole extent of the waters, must have formed a coup d'œil unparalleled in nature. I do not give you

nal of Joseph, which was deeper, and preserved them by means of sluices, it restored them afterwards to the Nile when it was low, by the canals of *Tamieh*, and of *Bouch*.

these

these conjectures for realities ; but you will agree with me, Sir, that it was not more difficult to construct pyramids on an island in the middle of Lake Mœris, than to erect those which are near to Giza. I stop here, and fear I have entered into details already too tedious, but absolutely necessary, when one wishes to search out the truth from amongst so many contradictions, and is desirous of shewing it to those, who, like you, Sir, passionately admire it.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T.

LETTER XXIX.

ACCOUNT OF THE CULTIVATION, AND
THE INHABITANTS OF FAIOUM.

Remarks on the productions of this province, its manufactures, arts, and inhabitants. Description of the fields shaded with groves of orange-trees, and with rose-bushes of great height, the flower of which, by distillation, yields an excellent rose-water. Great fishery of the lake and canals. The numerous birds which cover the waters. Account of the chief town, and its government.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

THE preceding letter, Sir, offers to your mind discussions only, and nothing but ruins to your view. This every man must expect, who wishes to tear the veil from those monuments, which time has hid for three thousand years. To make up for it, I am going to present you with
the

the present state of culture in the *Faïoum*. I hope this subject will furnish us with more agreeable pictures. The approach of winter forms here the gayest season of the year. The breath of the winds, in general sweet, and perfumed as in the finest days of spring in France, has something still more flattering, more balsamic, and odoriferous; the waters flow in full streams in the canals, and the earth is clothing herself with vegetables, herbs, and harvests. The images of beauteous nature surround us on every side. This province is one of the richest and most fertile in Egypt. See what Strabo said of it eighteen centuries before us (*r*):

“ The province of Arsinoé surpasses all
 “ the rest, by its beauty, its riches,
 “ and the variety of its productions. It
 “ alone produces olives, whose fruit is
 “ excellent, and from which the Egyp-
 “ tians might make fine oil, were they
 “ not so negligent. One sees none
 “ of these trees in the rest of Egypt,

(*r*) Strabo, l. 17.

“ except such as are cultivated in the
 “ gardens of Alexandria; but their fruit
 “ does not serve to make oil (s). This
 “ prefecture abounds in wine, corn, ve-
 “ getables, and feeds of every kind.”
 If this historian were to return into the
Faïoum, he would find a great alteration;
 he would there see the labyrinth destroyed,
 cottages in the place of palaces, hamlets
 built of mud, where flourishing cities
 once stood, the canals nearly choked up,
 and the sea of Mœris reduced to two
 thirds of its extent; but he would still
 discover the productions he has described,
 and the same abundance wherever the wa-
 ters can be conveyed. The Copti still
 cultivate there the olive and the vine,
 planted by their fathers. They gather
 an excellent grape, of which they make

(s) Since the canal of Alexandria is become dry
 for nine months of the year, these gardens have
 disappeared with the trees, and olive plants col-
 lected there. I have seen some in the orchards
 near Rosetta. They grow very large, and the olives
 they produce are longer, and more fleshy than those
 of the Isle of Crete, and of Provence. I am per-
 suaded they would yield very good oil.

a white

a white wine of a very agreeable flavour (*t*). The whole country is at present covered with corn, with barley, with dourra, or Indian millet, which follow each other in an uninterrupted succession during seven or eight months. The superb flax, the sugar-cane, all sorts of vegetables spring up there almost without culture. The cucumber, and near twenty sorts of melons, of a melting, sugary, and very wholesome quality, line the banks of the rivulets. Groves of fruit trees, amongst which one discovers the date-tree, the fig-tree, the banana, the cassia, and the prickly nabc, which produces a small pear, of a sharpish flavour, are here and there dispersed over the plain. Amidst this diversity of trees and plants, the traveller near the villages meets with groves

(*t*) In the time of the Ptolemies, and under the empire of the Romans, the environs of Alexandria and the Sebennitic province, produced very famous wine. The Mahometans have destroyed these excellent vine plants. The only ones they spared are in the province of the *Faïoum*. In general, the grape that grows in the sandy soil of Egypt, is of an exquisite flavour.

of rose-trees. In the other province this beautiful shrub serves only as an ornament for the gardens. Here it is collected in clumps, and the rose-water distilled from its odoriferous flower, forms a valuable branch of commerce. *Faïoum* furnishes all Egypt with it. There is a vast consumption of it. In ceremonial visits (*u*), it is sprinkled with profusion on the faces and hands of the assistants. At the bath, the women wash their bodies with it, nor can their toilet be completed without rose-water. These clusters of rose-trees, sometimes surrounded by orange-trees in blossom, produce a charming effect to the eye, and still more delicious to the smell. The air around them is perfumed with the odour; and in this warm climate, under so serene a sky, one has a more lively sense of the voluptuousness of breathing the perfumes of the rose, mixed with the sweet emanations of the orange-flower.

(*u*) The rose-water of the *Faïoum* has a very high odour, which it preserves a long time. The best is sold at four livres a bottle.

To the treasures of a fertile soil, the *Faïoum* joins the advantages of the fishery. The canals and the great lake are full of fish; a prodigious quantity of them is taken, and consumed on the spot, and carried to the neighbouring markets. Fish is not dearer here than at Damietta. For a *medin* (*), a man may procure food enough for a whole day.

When winter is covering the northern countries with snow and hoar frost, innumerable flocks of birds come to winter on Lake Mœris, and the canals of *Faïoum*. The inhabitants take a vast quantity of geese with yellow plumage, and of an exquisite flavour; wild ducks, whose flesh is fat and delicate; teals, swans, of whose skin they make furs, and pelicans, remarkable for their large flat beak. The latter, the kings of aquatic birds, navigate in numerous families on the surface of Lake Mœris, and the whiteness of their plumage forms an agreeable contrast to

(*) A piece of plated copper, which is worth five liards of our money.

the deep azure of the waters. The modern Egyptians have preserved the remains of their ancient veneration for the ibis, the crane, and the stork. They never spread their nets for them, and these birds, trusting to the clemency of men, are almost tame.

What joy would it afford my heart to be able to paint to you a free people in the midst of this land of plenty. But, alas! the anarchy of a monstrous government, the enemy of order, and of laws, extinguishes genius, and, like a pestilential wind, depopulates the cities, and destroys the country and its inhabitants. The same men who, under a serene sky, and on a teeming soil, would have gentle and amiable manners, and would enjoy the treasures of prodigal nature, and the benefits of the arts, become barbarous, superstitious, and miserable under the yoke of twenty four insatiable tyrants, who enrich themselves with their substance. Agriculture languishes, and every year the sands of Lybia rob it of a portion of its domain. The beautiful provinces of Heraclea

raclea and Arfinoé are at this day reduced to the third of their extent, if we consider only the arable lands. By re-establishing the dykes and the canals, they would recover their ancient limits, and the flourishing state they once enjoyed. For the climate, the soil, the waters are the same. The men only, and the laws have changed.

The cities of the Crocodile, of Hercules, and Ptolemaïs, which served them as a port, are replaced by that of the *Faïoum*, which in the time of Abulfeda was still of some consequence. He speaks thus of it (*y*). “*Faïoum*, the capital
“ of the province of that name, possesses
“ public baths, markets, and colleges,
“ which are under the discipline of the
“ (*z*) *Chafeites* and the *Melchites*. The canal of Joseph divides it into two parts. It
“ is surrounded by gardens.” At present *Faïoum* is only half a league round; it is situated on the eastern bank of the canal. The remainder is destroyed. The colleges subsist no longer. The houses, built

(*y*) Abulfeda, Description of Egypt.

(*z*) Two Mahometan sects.

with brick, hardened in the sun, offer the dreary aspect of a heap of cottages. Their inhabitants are poor, and without energy; all the arts are reduced to some manufactures of mats, some clumsy carpets, and the distillation of rose-water. This town is governed by a Cachef, in the name of one of the Beys of Grand Cairo. Several Arabian Scheiks who possess lands in the neighbourhood, compose his council: they repair to the Divan two or three times a week, according to the invitations of the governor. Their chief is held in great estimation. Harmony cannot long reign amongst the members of administration. The wars continually breaking out at Grand Cairo, affect the tranquillity of the provinces. The victorious party deprives the possessors of their governments and their lands. The Arabs, who have been pillaged, join with the Bedouins, who are always ready to favour the malecontents, from the hope of plunder. They descend in torrents from the mountains, and spread desolation over
the

the plains. The undisciplined troops sent against them, produce no less havock. The countryman is pillaged alike by his enemy, and his defender. If the Arabs are repulsed, they retire into the deserts laden with booty. There, their hatred against the Turks ferments with the fire of their sun, and when they feel themselves sufficiently in force, they return to commit new ravages. Such is the fate of Egypt. Such are the evils attendant on despotism.

Permit me, Sir, to finish this letter by an anecdote reported by Strabo, and which proves to what a degree the attention paid to the most ferocious animals may triumph over their ferocity. “ The prefecture of Arsinoé, says he, reveres the crocodile, and looks upon it as sacred. The priests preserve one of them in a particular lake, and call it *soucos* (a).

(a) This word is taken from the Greek. It appears that the Egyptian name for the crocodile was, *Ghemfab*, which Herodotus gives it, or perhaps *Themfab*, as the Arabs call it.

“ They

“ They nourish it with bread, flesh, and
“ wine, which they give it in the pre-
“ sence of strangers, attracted by this
“ spectacle. Our host, one of the res-
“ pectable personages who shewed us the
“ sacred things, conducted us after dinner
“ to the lake, carrying with him some
“ little cakes, some roast meat, and a vase
“ filled with wine. The crocodile was
“ reposing himself on the bank. The
“ priests approached him, one of them
“ opened his mouth, another put the cakes,
“ and the flesh and wine into it. After
“ this repast the monster descended quietly
“ into the water, and swam to the other
“ side.”

The Egyptians honoured the crocodile, because he was consecrated to Typhon, an evil genius, whose fury they dreaded. They thought to calm his indignation, and avert the calamities with which he afflicted them, by honouring an animal which was his symbolical image. The eagerness with which the inhabitants of Celebes seek after this monster at this day ;

day; the name of *Sudara* (*b*), or *brother*, which they bestow upon it; the food they carry it, must also be founded on the ancient worship of their country.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(*b*) Cook's Voyage. Sir Joseph Banks relates some curious facts respecting the veneration of the inhabitants of Celebes for the crocodile.

L E T T E R X X X .

TRAVELS IN THE DESART, ADJOIN-
ING TO THE RED SEA.

Description of the Country, the mountains, and the sands which it is necessary to pass over in going to the monastery of St. Anthony. Observations on the plants which grow in those desarts, on the animals which inhabit it, and on the quarries of marble and flint stones. Manner of living of the religious belonging to the monastery of St. Anthony and St. Paul. Description of the extensive prospect from the top of mount Colsum. Reflections on the great events which have happened in that quarter.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

LET us continue our route, Sir. On returning towards the Nile, by the canal of *Bouch*, we leave behind us Maïdoun,

doum, where we remark the most southerly pyramid of Egypt, several islands with hamlets, and the ruins of *Aphroditopolis*, which was situated on the eastern bank where *Atfih* now stands.

The canal we quit, formerly poured its waters into the river for six months of the year. At present it conveys them the whole year into lake Mœris, which does not receive a sufficient quantity by Joseph's canal, half choked up as it is, to be able to restore any to the Nile.

Bouch affords nothing remarkable. The houses are built of brick, and the roofs rise up in the form of pigeon-houses. The Egyptians dwell on the ground floor, and the pigeons on the first. This practice is general throughout the rest of the Thebais. These houses make some figure at a distance, but on entering them, one discovers nothing but signs of misery in the midst of an abundantly rich country.

For several leagues, the chain of mountains which bounds the river on the east, approaches it very near, leaving only a small extent of country, fit for agriculture.

ture. This strip of land, which extends along the foot of barren rocks, is interspersed with villages, surrounded by coppices, by harvests, by vegetables, and fruit trees. It is Nature decorated with her treasures at the entrance of the desert.

Ascending, we fall in with *Benisouef*, to the westward of the Nile. This town is half a league in circumference. The mosques, the lofty minarets one discovers through the tops of the trees, present an agreeable coup-d'œil; but the other buildings are only cottages of brick or earth, built without elegance, and without taste. All the industry of the inhabitants is confined to a manufacture of coarse carpets; their whole commerce to the sale of the produce of their soil. *Benisouef* is the residence of a Bey, who, as well as the other governors of Egypt, levies with an armed force his arbitrary tributes. During several months of the year, he encamps with his soldiers near the villages under his jurisdiction. After exhausting the subsistence of the countrymen, and wresting from them, by dint of fear or violence,

violence, the fruit of their labours, he sits down near another burgh to exact similar contributions. It is impossible for me to paint to you all the vexations exercised by these tyrants. The troops under their command are entirely composed of banditti, whose crimes have driven them from their country. Pity, and all the sentiments of nature are extinguished in their hearts. To give you an idea of this, I shall only lay before you a single anecdote, which the Count d'Entragues, who has just left this country was a witness to. His boat had stopped near a village of the Delta. One of these extortioners entered the hut of a poor woman who had several children : he pressed her to pay the tax imposed by the Bey. She represented her misery, and told him, that she possessed only one mat, and a few earthen jars. He made a close search, and having found a bag of rice, was preparing to carry it off. She conjured him to desist, assuring him that this was her whole subsistence. "Will you then", says she, "make me die of hunger, and this infant I am
"suckling,

“ suckling, and all my family ?” The barbarian, unmoved at these tender words, and the shower of tears he forced from her, takes up the bag of rice. On this the wretched mother in despair, tears the boy she was suckling from her bosom, and dashed him on the earth. “ There, monster, his blood be on your head.” After this frightful action she instantly dried up her tears, and stood motionless as a statue. The savage soldier went off with his prey, without discovering the least emotion ! Such is the unhappy lot of the people of Egypt.

Over against *Benisouef* stands the village of *Baiad*, partly inhabited by Copti. It is from hence that one goes to the monasteries of St. Antony and St. Paul, situated on mount Colzoum. As these savage spots merit the attention of naturalists, I shall give you a hasty sketch of them. It will afford you some knowledge of the deserts that extend from the Nile to the Red Sea.

Two leagues to the north of *Baiad*, we enter into a narrow valley, formed by *Ge-
bel*

bel Gebei, the hill of the cistern, and *Hajar Moussoum*, the marked stone. This gulley leads to a sandy plain, called *Elbakara*, the cow. Mount *Kaleil*, or the hill of the well-beloved, terminates it to the east. It is seven or eight leagues wide, and much more from north to south. Its whole extent presents nothing to the eye but a barren sand. One finds only in the chinks of the rocks, and by the sides of the winter torrents, a little verdure, some acacias, which produce the gum-arabic, fenna, scorpion-wood, the crooked root of which is famous as an antidote against the bite of that insect, and some other plants: Ostriches, camels, gazels, and tygers, which make continual war on them, inhabit the caverns in the rocks, and bound across these sands, where they find with difficulty a few patches of grass. One finds here flints of various colours, red, grey, black, and blue, and all of a very fine grain; their surface, which is exposed to the air, is waved and rugged: that next the sand is polished and brilliant. Undoubtedly the attentive naturalist would

find in the chinks of the rocks, and the bed of the torrents, precious stones, and especially emeralds, formerly very common in Egypt. At the bottom of Mount *Kaleil* there are springs of brackish water, which is drank in times of necessity. The wild beasts, men themselves, have no other to quench their thirst with. They are surrounded by a few date-trees. Above we see the grottoes of hermits, whom the fervour of devotion had led, in the first ages of Christianity, into this dreadful solitude.

After climbing up Mount *Kaleil*, we descend into the plain of *Elaraba*, or of waggons, which is not less sterile, nor less ardent than the former. Its surface is covered with arid sands; it is surrounded by burnt rocks; a few winter torrents traverse it; the sun destroys there every vegetable substance; but whilst it deprives plants and trees of life, it matures in the sides of the mountains the rarest stones. Towards the north of this plain we discover three quarries of red, white, and black marble. Blocks half hewn out of the rock,

rock, others dispersed around it, announce the labours of man.

It was here that the Pharaohs made them hew those hard and polished stones, of which they formed the covering, and the passages of their superb mausolea. They were conveyed on waggons to the Nile, from whence they were transported on rafts to the foot of the pyramids (*c*). To the south of these quarries is another of beautiful granite, which has been greatly worked. A reservoir of water, dug a little way off, served the purposes of the workmen; further on are grottoes of hermits, who could not in the whole world have chosen a more savage dwelling, nor

(*c*) Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, and Pliny tell us, that the marbles which served for the lining of the pyramids, and the construction of the passages, were brought from the mountains of Arabia. But as all the eastern part of Egypt between the Red Sea and the Nile was called Arabia, there is reason to believe that these beautiful stones came from the quarries I have been speaking of. The plain was called *el Araba*, the waggons, from the quantity of carriages employed in transporting these enormous masses.

where they might be more remote from the intercourse of mankind.

After passing a part of Mount Colzoum, we arrive at the monastery of St. Anthony: it has no gate; one enters by a window, into which the monks lift the traveller by means of a pulley. These precautions are necessary to secure them from the plunder of the Arabs. A lofty and thick wall, a quarter of a league in circumference, forms the enclosure of it. A large garden, where various sorts of fruit-trees are cultivated, occupies a part of it. In the other are to be seen the cells of the monks, and a small church, where divine service is celebrated. A canal, which receives the waters from the mountains, conveys them into the monastery. Though a little brackish, they supply the wants of life, and the culture of fruits and vegetables. The religious Copti who inhabit it devote themselves to a most austere penance. They observe a rigid abstinence, and drink wine only on the four great festivals of the year. A sort of paste, seasoned with the oil of sesame, salt-fish, honey, and the produce

produce of their garden, constitute their food. Schism has corrupted the purity of their doctrine, and their obstinate attachment to the errors of Monothelism is excessive. They imagine, however, they possess an absolute empire over demons, serpents, and wild beasts. Their superior, when Father Sicard went to visit them, was labouring at the philosopher's stone. Amidst a total renunciation of all the comforts of social life, he was occupied in the research for gold !

These monks preserve a great veneration for the grotto of St. Anthony ; it is an obscure habitation, dug out of the mountain, where that father of the monastic life lived as in a tomb, surrounded by shadows and desarts. A rock of a league diameter, lofty and steep, separates this convent from that of St. Paul. The impossibility of getting over it obliges one to make a circuit round the mountain, and it is two day's work to get at it. This monastery, built on the eastern side of mount Colzoum, is also inhabited by Copti, as miserable, as pious, and as ignorant as the former.

Seated on the summit of Colzoum, the Red Sea is at one's feet; one discovers at a distance that extremity, towards which the chief of the Israelites is said to have passed with all his people, between the suspended waves; and to the south-east the famous hills of Oreb and of Sinai, where he received the tables of the law.

The sight of these places leads to serious meditations. One contemplates around one's self the countries whence have originated the great religions which alternately have reigned upon the earth. That of the Egyptians subsists no longer. The Jewish religion is not extinct, in spite of the disgraces of that reprobated people. The Christian and the Mahometan subsist from one end of the universe to the other. How fertile in wonders have been the countries, the mountains, the sea, I am contemplating from this elevation! the history of nations is filled with them, and the barbarous inhabitants of these countries still preserve their memory.

Let us descend from mount Colzoum, and approach the Red Sea. Its shores are covered

covered with innumerable shells, whose beauty, shape, and colours alternately attract our eyes. It is difficult to choose out of such a variety. Marine plants cover the rocks; the waters are filled with corals, some white, and others red as scarlet. Join to these curious objects the variegated marbles of the mountains, the precious mines they contain, the plants which grow along the torrents, the rare flints with which the sands are strewed, and you will admit, that all these riches well deserve the attention of a naturalist. But in truth, the knowledge of them must be purchased by so much fatigue and peril, one must be so long exposed to the plunder of the Arabs, and to the burning heats of the sun, that we ought not to be surprised, if no learned man has yet dared to survey these deserts. Let us quit them, Sir, and return to the Nile, whose banks are delicious, after such a voyage.

I have the honour to be, &c.

LETTER XXXI.

ROUTE FROM BAIAD TO ACHMOUNAIN.

Description of the towns and villages on both banks of the river. Delineation of their various aspects. Account of their government. Situation of the two branches which form the great canal of Bahr Iouseph. Description of the sacrifice made to the Sun, engraved on a rock near Babain. Reflections on this subject. Remarks on the principality of Melaoui, dependent on Mecca, and on the magnificent portico of Achmounain, with the adventure of Father Sicard.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

THE North wind that blows, Sir,
invites us to pursue our voyage.
One of the advantages of the situation of
Egypt, is the enjoying this salutary wind
more

more than nine months of the year. Beside tempering the excessive heats, dissipating the noxious vapours, and carrying into Abyssinia the clouds whose dissolution into rain occasions the annual inundation of the Nile, it serves also to enable the boats to ascend against the rapidity of the current. Let us take the advantage of this favourable gale, and sail towards the Upper Thebais. Seated on the deck of our bark, borne on the waters, which are on a level with the banks, we have a full command of the adjacent country, and a new spectacle is every moment opening to our view. Already the minarets of *Benisouef* lose themselves in the horizon. Other villages appear in sight. Here *Berangieb* lies concealed under the shade of date-trees. On the other bank *Abou Ennour* appears at the foot of the mountains. Further off stands *Bébé*, where the Copti preserve the relics of Saint George, embellished by the richness of the surrounding harvests, for it presents nothing but cottages with a small mosque. To the eastward is the commence-

mencement of *Gebal Etteir* (*d*) the hill of birds. It derives its name from the multitude of kites, hawks, eagles, Pharaoh's fowls, and cormorants, which rests there, to be in readiness to fall upon their prey. The woods which border the foot of the rocks are inhabited by turtle-doves, and other small birds. Flocks of ibises, cranes, swans and flocks, line the banks of the river, and cover the Nile during the winter. Flights of pigeons darken the air. They are more numerous in Egypt than in any other country on the earth. Every hamlet, and every town forms a vast pigeon-house. Their excrement is carefully collected, to dung the melon plants.

The burgh of *Fechné*, called *Fencki*, in the time of the Greeks, stands on the western bank. The large island opposite, raises its verdant head above the waters. Various vegetables, cucumbers, and excellent melons, partly cover it. *Abou Girgé*,

(*d*) The birds of prey are very numerous, and various in Egypt, because they are never killed, and they find plenty of food; small birds are more scarce.

where

where the Copti have a convent, is not far from it. *Scheround* runs along the foot of the hill of birds. This side is inhabited by independent Arabs, who pillage every boat they can surprise, and when troops are sent against them, they penetrate into the deserts, whose sources they alone are acquainted with, and where the Turks dare not follow them. When the storm is over, they return in force to resume their possessions. The traveller should always be on his guard, march with arms, stand sentry, fire musket-shot from time to time during the night, and suffer no boat to come near his, otherwise he runs a great risk of being robbed and murdered.

The eye naturally turns away from the eastern bank, lined with barren rocks, to repose itself on the teeming fields which appear to the westward. The earth is cultivated on that side to the very borders of the river. The isle of *Sobra* contains a hamlet in a most beautiful position. It is placed amongst the trees, in the middle of harvests, of verdure, and of water. What charming

charming habitations might a polished people form in the islands of the Nile! The curious might there collect the trees of every warm climate. He might plant there whole woods of oranges, myrtles, pomegranates, and rose-trees. The Arabian jessamine, the odoriferous shrubs, the magnolia of America, would grow wonderfully well there. The perfumed pineapple, the banana, the orange, the most delicious fruits, would amply repay him for his labour. Surrounded by the arts, and by that nature which he would have embellished, his happy days would glide away under the shade of enchanted thickets. These, Sir, are only wishes thrown into the uncertainty of the future; but grant me, at least, the consolation of thinking, that they will one day be realized.

We arrive at the port of *Minieh*, a pretty considerable town. It is handsome, populous, and commercial. It is the residence of a Cachef. A custom-house is established here, and the boats which descend from the Saïd, are obliged to stop, and to pay a duty according to the merchandise

chandize they carry. We find here columns overturned, and the remains of ancient edifices. It is not improbable that they are the ruins of (*e*) *Cynopolis*, placed by Strabo and Ptolemy above *Fenebi*. The inhabitants of this city held the dog in great veneration. The priests nourished them with sacred meat, in honour of Anubis, the companion and guardian of Osiris (*f*). Strabo lays down *Oxyrinchus* at some distance from Cynopolis, in the interior of the country. Scattered marbles, and heaps of rubbish, lying round *Bebnese*, on Joseph's canal, determine the position of that ancient city (*g*), where the fish called oxyrinchus by the Greeks was looked upon as sacred.

This long plain, which extends between the Nile and *Bahr Iousephe*, is of the

(*e*) The city of Dogs.

(*f*) Strabo, l. 17.

(*g*) Mr. Pocock lays down *Oxyrinchus* in the spot occupied by *Girge*. This position does not appear to me exact, since Strabo positively says that *Oxyrinchus* was not on the banks of the Nile, but within the country.

greatest beauty. The corn, the barley, the flax, the beans, sown in fields surrounded by rivulets, grow there in abundance. The dourra, and the sugar-cane, rise there to a great height. All the plants are vigorous and full of sap; all the trees are loaded with fruit. The picture of abundance continually recreates the sight; but it is disfigured by the appearance of the peasant covered with rags, and those earthen huts where he shuts himself up a prey to misery, after bedewing with the sweat of his brow, the rich harvest he has been gathering, but not for him. It is true then that wholesome laws do more for the happiness of nations, than all the treasures of nature.

The village of Gerabié is opposite to *Minieh*. Higher up is the burgh of *Saoudi*. It is here that the grottoes of the Thebais commence, so famous for the austerity of the anchorites, who retired thither in the first ages of the church. They extend the space of twenty leagues, even over against *Manfelout*. They are quarries
dug

dug by the Egyptians, and the hieroglyphics one sees on them confirm their antiquity.

A forest of date-trees begins above *Savoudi*, and descends to the bank of the river. The isle of *Sabra* is at no great distance from it. Villages continually succeed each other. Their contiguity, the variety of their aspects, the number of their inhabitants, render the landscapes entirely lively, and highly diversified. Near to *Rodda* one distinguishes the entrance of one of the branches of *Bahr Jouseph*: the other is higher up at the village of *Tdarout Echcherif*. Mr. Norden has only laid down the former, and Father Sicard only the latter; they still subsist.

Descending the canal of *Rodda*, whose banks are charming, we enter into the great bed of *Bahr Jouseph*, on the side of which stands the village of *Aboufir*. A league to the southward, we cross the ruins of an ancient town, from the remains of which the burgh of *Babain* has enriched itself. At some distance beyond it our attention is fixed by a curious monument.

It

It is a rock smoothed with the point of the chisel, in the depth of which a grotto of fifty feet diameter, and six deep, is hewn. The bottom represents a sacrifice offered to the sun. This luminary is there sculptured in *demi-relievo*. On the right two priests, decorated with pointed caps, lift up their arms towards him, and touch with their fingers the extremity of his rays. Behind them, two children with their heads dressed in the same manner, hold in their hands full cups, destined for the libations. Three piles, supported by seven vases with their handles, and placed below the sun, bear on their summits slaughtered lambs. On the left we discover two young girls, attached only to the stone by the feet and back. The Arabs have knocked off their heads, and disfigured them with their lances. Various hieroglyphics compose, undoubtedly, the history of this sacrifice, which I imagine was an offering to Jupiter Ammon, a symbolical divinity, by which the ancient Egyptians denoted the sun entering the sign of the ram. This animal was consecrated to him, and the

com-

commencement of the astronomical year, and the renewal of the light, was celebrated by this circumstance. This monument, hewn out of a hard stone, must pass to the latest posterity.

Near to *Babain* is *Touna (b)*. Between this village and that of *Aboufir* we trace the ruins of an ancient aqueduct of brick, which conveyed the waters to the foot of the mountains. Keeping along the banks of *Bahr Ioufeph*, we arrive at *Tarout Eccherif*, where this great canal has its principal entrance. *Melaoui* is three leagues distant from it to the north. It is a handsome town, situated in a fertile plain. There is a considerable market here. Every article is to be met with in abundance, and at a very low price. *Malaoui* and several villages which surround it, compose a small principality, which was formerly given to Mecca. The *Emir Haji*, or the Prince of the caravan, had the privilege of sending

(b) This is the city called by Strabo the Upper *Tanis*, and near to which he lays down the course of the great canal. Here are the ruins of a temple of the sun.

thither a *Sandar* (i) to govern it. The latter sends to Grand Cairo considerable tributes in grain, which he draws from the inhabitants, and the *Emir Haji* conveys them to the Cherif of Mecca.

The village of *Achmounain*, four miles to the north of *Melaoui*, is remarkable for the ruins it contains. Amongst the heaps of rubbish it is surrounded with, one admires a superb portico, that has suffered nothing from time. It is one hundred feet long, twenty-five wide, and is supported by twelve columns, which have only a plain fascia by way of capital. Each column is composed of three blocks of granite, forming in all sixty feet in height, by twenty-five in circumference. The block which rests upon the base is simply rounded, and loaded with hieroglyphics, which commence with a pyramid. The two others are fluted. The columns are ten feet distant from each other, except the two middle ones, which,

(i) *Sandar* signifies governor and general of the army; the person invested with this character unites the civil and military power.

serving for the entrance, leave between them an interval of fifteen feet. Ten enormous stones cover the whole extent of the portico. Over them is a double row. The two middle ones, which rise in the form of a pediment, surpass the others in height and thickness. One is struck with astonishment at the sight of these masses of rocks that the art of man has been able to elevate to the height of sixty feet. The frieze which goes round it, is covered with hieroglyphics very well carved. We see the figures of birds, of insects, of men seated, to whom others seem to make offerings, and different sorts of animals. This is probably the history of the time, the place, and the deity in whose honour this monument was raised. The portico was painted red and blue. These colours are effaced in many places; but the lower part of the architrave which surrounds the colonnade, has preserved a gold colour astonishingly lively. It is the same with the ceiling, where the stars of gold shine upon an azure sky with a dazzling brilliancy.

liancy. This monument, constructed before the conquest of the Persians, has neither the elegance, nor the purity of the Grecian architecture; but its solidity, which it seems impossible to destroy, its awful simplicity, and its majesty, command admiration. What ideas must we entertain of the temple, or the palace, of which this announced the entry? I will confess to you, Sir, that one cannot but be greatly surprised at finding amidst Arabian and Turkish huts, edifices which seem to have been the works of genii. Their antiquity still adds to their estimation. Escaped from the ravages of destructive conquerors, stamped with the impression of ages, they impose a sort of veneration on the contemplating traveller. The modern Egyptians behold with indifference these beautiful remains of antiquity, and suffer them to subsist, only because it would be too expensive to destroy them. Superstition and ignorance lead them to imagine, that they contain treasures; accordingly, they do not permit travellers to take a faithful drawing of them.

them. One exposes one's life in making the attempt. I shall relate to you what happened to Father Sicard whilst he was admiring the beauty of the portico of *Achmounain*. "Light not your censer," says the Arab his conductor gravely to him, "for fear we should be surprized in the fact, and that we suffer for it."—"What do you mean? I have neither censer, nor fire, nor incense."—"You laugh at me; a stranger like you would not come here merely from curiosity.—And what then?"—"I know that by your skill you are acquainted with the place where the great chest full of gold is hid, which our fathers left us. If your censer was seen, it would soon be imagined that you came here to open our chest by your magic words, and carry off our treasure."

Such, Sir, is the general opinion of the modern Egyptians, with respect to the Europeans. They look upon us all as magicians, and imagine that by taking only the dimensions of their antiquities, we have

the power of carrying off their treasures. Accordingly, they never see you write, or take drawings, without anxiety, and they prevent it as much as possible.

I have the honour to be, &c.

L E T T E R XXXII.

DESCRIPTION OF THE COUNTRY FROM
ACHMOUNAIN TO ACHMIM.

Description of Enfiné, heretofore Antinoé, built by Adrian, in honour of his favourite Antinous. Extent of that city. Columns and gates remaining there of a beautiful architecture. These monuments not comparable with the portico of Achmounain. Details on the principal towns situated on the banks of the Nile, with the comparative geography of their ancient and modern position. Description of Achmim, formerly Chemmis or Panopolis. Remarks on the remains of the ancient temple still subsisting in the time of Abulfeda, and on the serpent Harridi, with which the Mahometan priests deceive the people.

To Mr. L. M.

Grand Cairo.

LET us quit the portico of *Achmounain*, and cross the Nile, to visit the remains

of *Antinoë*. Abulfeda gives us the following account of it (*k*): “ *Enfiné*, (the name given it by the Arabs), contains remarkable ruins of ancient monuments. It is situated towards the middle of the Saïd, to the east of the Nile, and is dependent on the province of *Achmounain*, which is on the other side. It is an ancient city,” adds the geographer of Nubia, “surrounded by a well-cultivated country, abounding in fruits and harvests. It is vulgarly called the city of the Magi (*l*), because it is from thence that Pharaoh made them come to his court.”

I shall add some particulars to what are mentioned by those geographers, in order to make you better acquainted with the pre-

(*k*) Abulfeda, description of Egypt.

(*l*) Antinoë was built near the ruins of Abydus, where the Egyptians revered the oracle of the God Besa. This oracle, one of the most ancient of Egypt, was still famous in the time of the Emperor Constantius. Ammianus Marcellinus, book 19. says, that all the neighbouring people went to consult him, and assembled at a certain period to celebrate festivals in his honour. This is the reason why the Arabs call Antinoë, situated near Abydus, the city of the Magi.

sent

sent state of these places. Adrian, whose shameful vices tarnished the splendor of the most brilliant qualities, having lost his favourite Antinous in a journey in Egypt, wished to erect a lasting monument to his memory. He founded a city of his name; he marked out the plan upon an even soil, and built it with a royal magnificence. It was half a league in circumference; two principal streets, of forty-five feet wide, which intersected each other at right angles, traversed its whole extent. The others were narrower, but equally straight. The two largest terminated by four gates, some of which still subsist; the handsomest has three vaulted entries; that of the middle is forty feet high, by twenty-two in width, and twenty thick; the other two are smaller. Each of the façades of this edifice is ornamented with four pilastres in *bas relief*, the Corinthian capitals of which, with the leaf of the acanthus, have a considerable projection. This beautiful gate was surrounded by eight Corinthian columns, of the same height with itself. One only has escaped the ravages of time, and of men; the

the rest are either mutilated or destroyed; but the pedestals remain entire. Besides this edifice, one discovers in different quarters of the town, heaps of rubbish, which announce temples or palaces destroyed. If we may judge from the distances of the pedestals along the streets, they were bordered by a colonnade, which formed a portico on each side, and allowed the inhabitants to walk sheltered from the sun. This architecture must have formed a charming coup-d'œil. Besides these embellishments, one of the squares was ornamented with four large pillars of the Corinthian order, three of which have perished; their bases alone remain. The fourth is in perfect preservation; it is about fifty feet high. The shaft is composed of several stones. On the first is carved an ornament of oak leaves. One reads on the pedestal a Greek inscription, half effaced (*m*), which

(*m*) This inscription begins with these words: *To the prosperity of the Emperor Caesar, Marcus Aurelius Severus, Alexander, pious, happy. . . . Aurelius being præfect of the new Greeks of Antinoë, &c.* We read it on two of the pedestals; it is almost obliterated on the

which dedicates it to the emperor Alexander Severus. The senate of Alexandria, loaded with his bounty, had already erected to him the famous column I have so much talked of to you; it elevated these other four in his honour, after his triumphs over the Persians; for the foliage of oak which crowns the base of that which subsists, was the sign of victory amongst the Romans. Such, Sir, are the best preserved monuments to be remarked amongst the ruins of *Antinoé*. Did not the inscriptions, and the testimonies of historians make known the founder of this city, the arches of the gates (*n*), the capitals of the pillars, the deficiency of hieroglyphics would inform us, that it is not the work of the Egyptians. We admire in them that taste, that elegance, the Romans learnt from the Greeks; but we do not behold

two others. See Father Sicard, *Lettres Edifiantes*; who gives this inscription in Greek.

(*n*) In none of the monuments remaining to us of ancient Egypt, do we see an arch or column of any of the Grecian orders, but stones of an astonishing size, covered with hieroglyphics.

that

that majesty, that solidity, that marvellous grandeur which the people of Egypt knew how to stamp on their monuments, and which other nations have never been able to attain. The remains of Antinoé, in spite of their magnificence, are very trifling in comparison with the portico of *Achmounain*, though it be fifteen hundred years older.

Near to this city are the ruins of the ancient *Abydus*, where men resorted to consult the oracle of the God Bésa. A convent of dervises, called *Cheik Abaide*, stands on its site. Towards the end of the fourth century, Antinoé was peopled by Christians. Palladius assures us, that there were twelve convents of virgins there, and several others inhabited by Monks. It is perhaps to this prodigious increase of celibacy within so small a town, that its ruin may be attributed.

There are still several Coptic monasteries in the environs, the monks of which pass their time in misery and ignorance. The fertile plains, which, according to the Nubian geographer, surrounded *Enfiné*, have
disappeared

disappeared with their inhabitants, and given place to sands and deserts.

Let us re-imbark, Sir, and ascend the great river. Behold in that mountain to the east, that range of grottoes, heretofore inhabited by pious anchorites. The history of the church has celebrated their abstinence. Fruit, bread, and water, composed their nourishment. This austere and contemplative life is less surprising in a warm climate, where temperance in eating and drinking is a matter of necessity, and contemplation an enjoyment. From their cells they discovered the Nile, the groves, the harvests, and that crowd of boats which navigate on it day and night. But what is astonishing, is, that they should have had the resolution to remain idle their whole lives in the midst of that perpetual movement, the spectacle of which they had continually before their eyes. These grottoes extend as far as *Manfelout*. This little town, situated to the west, in the middle of a fertile country, is governed by a Cachef. The Turks have different mosques there. Opposite to it appears a Coptic convent,

vent, into which one mounts by a pulley; a precaution the monks are obliged to make use of, against the rapacious Arabs.

The burgh of *Salaem* shews itself at a distance by its lofty pigeon-houses of a square form. A little higher we coast along an island of some length, and enter a creek of the Nile which leads to *Siout* (o). This is a large town, well built, and very populous. A lake is dug there, from which they water the grounds. The gardens abound with vegetables and fruit trees. Its situation on an artificial eminence, apprizes us that it is built on the site of an ancient town. Accordingly we discover the vestiges of *Lycopolis*, where the wolf was regarded as a sacred animal.

Aboutig is on the same side, at half a league from the river. It is a very gay

(o) Pocock thinks that *Siout* is the same with *Anteopolis*. He is mistaken: *Anteopolis* is laid down by Ptolemy higher up, and on the other bank.

Strabo, lib. 17, places *Lycopolis* above the canal which throws itself into lake *Tanis*. This is a fault of the copyist; we should read, lake *Mæris*.

little

little town. It stands on the site of *Abotis*, mentioned by Stephen of Byzantium. The Turks still cultivate here, as in the time of Abulfeda (*q*), the poppy, from which they make opium. The rich take it with voluptuousness, to procure themselves agreeable visions. The common people content themselves with taking fasting, little balls of the leaf of hemp chopped, which produce the same effects. *Aboutig* is governed by an Emir. The yoke of these Arabian princes is not so heavy as that of the Beys. Under their empire the people enjoy more tranquillity, and are less exposed to the ravages of the undisciplined troops of Cairo; nay, one often finds in these old men that impartial justice, that humanity, that affecting tenderness, with which the ancient patriarchs ruled their families.

The burgh of *Settesé*, above *Aboutig*, represents the small city of Apollo. It is situated inland, and is partly inhabited by Copti. During the travels of Father Si-

(*q*) Abulfeda, description of Egypt.

card, a very singular accusation was formed against him (*r*). Two Christians of the country came to the governor, and told him that this stranger was preparing to nail up the banks of the Nile with magic nails, and to divert the inundation by his enchantments. This declaration greatly embarrassed the Arab prince. He would have apprehended the learned missionary, had not a Janissary, who travelled with him, become responsible for his person, and maintained, that the Copti were calumniators. This anecdote is sufficient to give you an idea of the ignorance and superstition of the modern Egyptians.

Amongst the numerous villages which border on the Nile, we remark *Thémé*, governed by a Cachef, and opposite to a large island, the aspect of which is delightful. On the other side, *Silin*, anciently *Selinon*, hides itself at the foot of the mountains. *Kau Elkebire* presents nothing but a miserable burgh built on the ruins of *Anteopolis*. This city contained the magnificent tem-

(*r*) Lettres edifiantes.

ple, which the Egyptians, according to Diodorus Siculus, built in honour of Antæus, who was overcome by Hercules. No part of it is remaining but the portico, supported by huge columns, and covered with large stones. One of them may be distinguished, thirty feet long by five wide. The ceiling, painted with gold and azure, has preserved the liveliness of its colours. The Turks have converted it into a stable, where they collect their herds. Accordingly, this magnificent portico is full of filth. Such is the value they annex to the most beautiful works of antiquity.

On the eastern bank we meet with a chain of villages, *Coum elarab*, *Mechta*, and *Chabtoura*, over against *Zein Eddin*. A branch of the Nile incloses the burgh of *Tatha*, governed by a Cachef. Nothing can be more agreeable than the adjacent plains, fresher than their verdure, nor richer than their harvests. They owe these advantages to the waters of the river which surround them. The city of Venus, on whose ruins *Tatha* is built, could not have been better placed. Above *Tatha*

we coast along the isle of *Chandouil*, and at length discover on the edge of the horizon, the lofty minarets of *Achmim*.

“ Achmim,” says Abulfeda, “ is a large town of Upper Egypt, situated on the eastern bank of the Nile. One admires there a temple, which is comparable to the most celebrated monuments of antiquity. It is constructed with stones of a surprising size, on which are sculptured innumerable figures. Doulnoun (*s*) was a native of Achmim.” Though this town be fallen from its ancient splendor, it is still one of the most beautiful of Upper Egypt. An Arab prince commands there. The police is well attended to. The streets are wide and clean, and commerce and agriculture flourish. It has a manufactory of cotton, stuffs, and pottery, which are conveyed over all Egypt. It is the same that

(*s*) This Doulnoun has written a treatise called *Elmejarebat*, the Experiments, a copy of which is certainly amongst the manuscripts in the king's library.

Hero-

Herodotus (*t*) calls *Chemmis*, and Strabo *Panopolis* (*u*). It has lost its ancient edifices, and much of its extent, since the ruins of the temple, described by Abulfeda, are without its limits, to the north. Nothing remains of it but some stones, so large that the Turks have not been able to move them. They are covered with hieroglyphics, and one of them of an extraordinary sculpture. There are traced on it four concentric circles, in a square. The innermost of these contains a sun. The two succeeding ones, divided into twelve parts, contain, one, twelve birds, the other, twelve animals almost effaced, which appear to be the signs of the zodiac. The fourth has no divisions, and presents twelve human figures (*x*). The four seasons occupy

(*t*) Herodotus says, that Perseus was a native of this city, and that his descendents have established festivals there in his honour.

(*u*) The city of Pan. This god was worshipped here.

(*x*) I imagine these figures represent the twelve gods, the twelve months of the year, the twelve signs of the zodiac. The Egyptians, says Herodotus, are

occupy the angles of the square, on the side of which may be distinguished a globe with wings. It is probable that this stone belonged to a temple dedicated to the sun, that the whole of these hieroglyphics marks his passage into the signs of the zodiac, and his course, whose revolution forms the year. This stone is a proof that the Egyptians possessed astronomical knowledge from the most remote antiquity. The columns of this temple have been partly broken to make lime, and millstones. Some of them have been transported into one of the mosques of *Achmim*, where they are placed without taste; others are heaped up in the squares of this town.

I cannot leave *Achmim*, Sir, without telling you of a serpent which is the wonder of the country. Upwards of a century ago, a religious Turk called *Scheilk Haridi* died here. He passed for a saint among the Mahometans. They raised a monument to him, covered with a cupola, at the foot of the mountain. The people the first who divided the year into twelve months, and employed the names of the twelve gods. *Book second.*
flocked

flocked from all parts to offer up their prayers to him. One of their priests, adroitly profiting by their credulity, persuaded them that God had made the soul of *Scheilk Haridi* pass into the body of a serpent. Many of these are found in the Thebais, which are harmless. He had taught one to obey his voice. He appeared with his serpent, dazzled the vulgar by his surprising tricks, and pretended to cure all disorders. Some lucky instances of success due to nature alone, and sometimes to the imagination of the patients, gave him great celebrity. He soon confined his serpent *Haridi* to the tomb, producing him only to oblige princes, and persons capable of giving him a handsome recompense. The successors of this priest, brought up in the same principles, found no difficulty in giving sanction to so advantageous an error. They added to the general persuasion of his virtue, that of his immortality. They had the boldness even to make a public proof of it. The serpent was cut in pieces in presence of the Emir, and placed for two hours under a vase. At the instant of lifting up the
vase,

vase, the priests, no doubt, had the address to substitute one exactly resembling it. A miracle was proclaimed, and the immortal Haridi acquired a fresh degree of consideration. This knavery procures them great advantages. The people flock from all quarters to pray at this tomb; and if the serpent crawls out from under the stone, and approaches the suppliant, it is a sign that his malady will be cured. You may imagine, that he does not appear till an offering has been made proportioned to the quality and riches of the different persons. In extraordinary cases, where the sick person cannot be cured without the presence of the serpent, a *pure virgin* must come to solicit him. To avoid inconveniencies on this head, they take care to choose a *very young girl indeed*. She is decked out in her best clothes, and crowned with flowers. She puts herself in a praying attitude, and as the priests are inclined, the serpent comes out, makes circles round the young suppliant, and goes and reposes on her. The virgin, accompanied by a vast multitude, carries him in triumph, amidst of the general

ral acclamation. No human reasoning would persuade these ignorant and credulous Egyptians that they are the dupes of a few impostors. They believe in the serpent Haridi, as firmly as in the prophet. The Christians of the country have no more doubts of his virtue, than the Turks; but they maintain that this serpent is the dæmon Asmodeus, who slew the seven husbands of Tobit's wife, brought by the angel Raphael to this place, after metamorphosing him, and that God makes use of him to deceive the infidels. The serpent has played a very astonishing part in the history of mankind. He seduced Eve. By the order of Moses, he devoured those of the Egyptians. He made Alexander of Abonotica pass for a god. He cures at this day the inhabitants of Achmim.

This serpent is of the kind described by Herodotus, and which were held sacred in ancient Egypt. They were called *Agatho daimon*, Good Genius, and they were the emblem of *Cneph*, a symbolical Deity, who denoted the Divine Goodness.

I have the honour to be, &c.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

and exclamation. No human reasoning would perhaps have ignored and despised Egyptian superstitions that they were the dupes of a few impostors. They believe in the serpent Harp, as firmly as in their prophet. The Christians of the country have no more doubts of his virtue than the Turks; but they maintain that this serpent is the demon Al-mo-dens, who slew the seven husbands of Tobit's wife, brought by the angel Raphael to this place, after metamorphosing him, and that God makes use of him to deceive the infidels. The serpent has played a very alarming part in the history of mankind. He refused to obey the order of Moses, he deceived those of the Egyptians. He made Alexander, of Aboukir pass for a god. He causes this by the influence of his venom. This serpent is of the kind described by Herodotus, and which were held sacred in ancient Egypt. They were called *Uroboros*, Good-Guards, and they were the emblem of Egypt, a Paganish Being who denoted the Divine Goodness. I have the honour to be, &c.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.











