

**Travels through Syria and Egypt, in the years 1783, 1784, and 1785 ... / By M.C.-F. Volney. Translated from the French.**

**Contributors**

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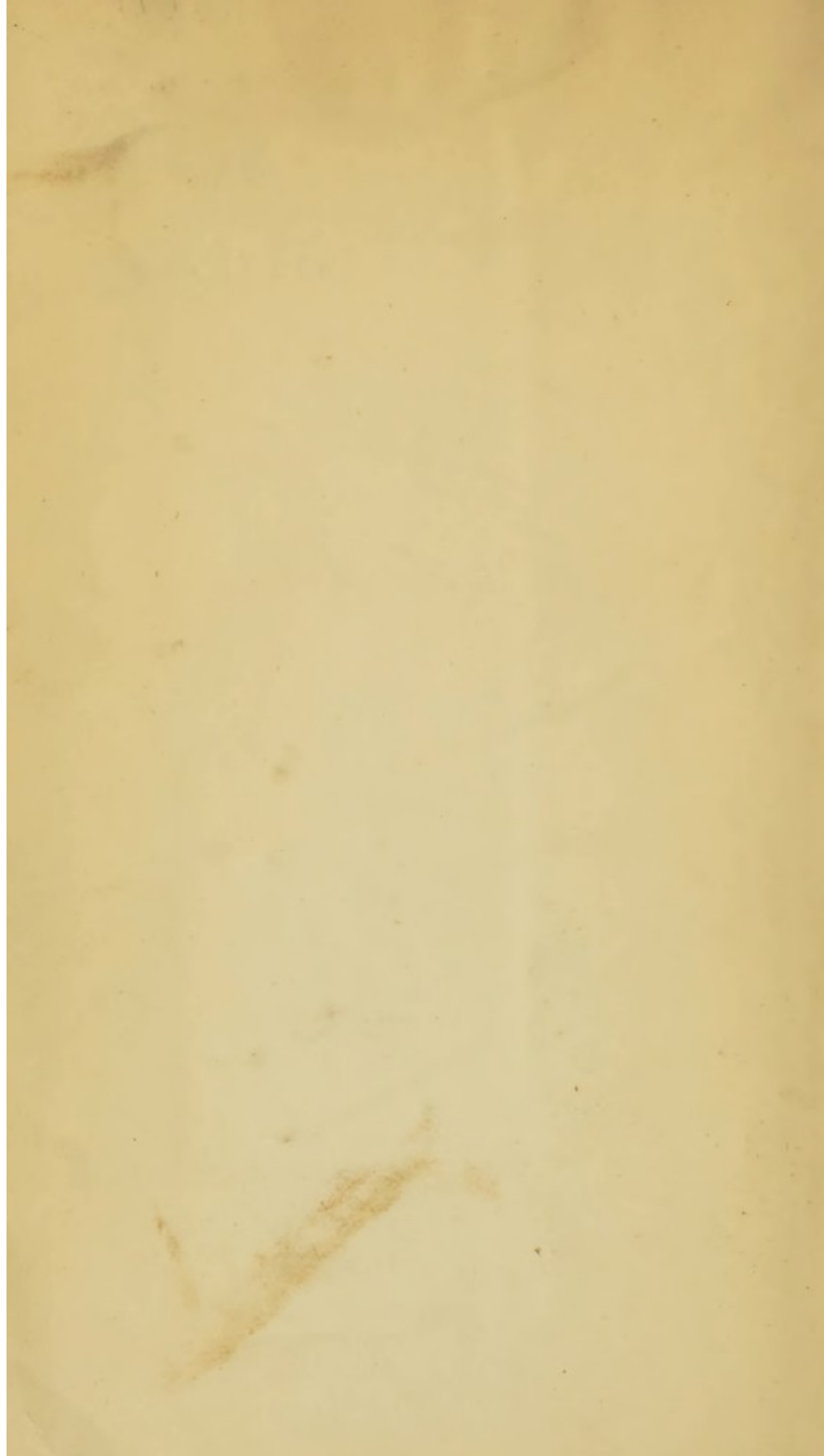
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T R A V E L S  
T H R O U G H  
S Y R I A A N D E G Y P T,

IN THE YEARS 1783, 1784, AND 1785.

C O N T A I N I N G

The present Natural and Political State of those  
Countries, their Productions, Arts, Manufac-  
tures, and Commerce; with Observations on  
the Manners, Customs, and Government of the  
TURKS and ARABS.

ILLUSTRATED WITH COPPER PLATES.

B Y M. C—F. V O L N E Y.

T R A N S L A T E D F R O M T H E F R E N C H.

I N T W O V O L U M E S.

V O L. I.

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L O N D O N:

P R I N T E D F O R G. G. J. A N D J. R O B I N S O N,  
P A T E R - N O S T E R - R O W.

M D C C L X X X V I I.





P R E F A C E.

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OCTOBER, 1786.

FIVE years ago, being still young, a small inheritance, which fell to me, put me in possession of a sum of money. The difficulty was, how to employ it. Some of my friends advised me to enjoy the capital, others to purchase an annuity; but, on reflection, I thought the sum too inconsiderable to make any sensible addition to my income, and too great to be dissipated in frivolous expences. Some fortunate circumstances had habituated me to study; I had acquired a taste, and even a passion for knowledge, and this accession to my fortune appeared to me a fresh means of gratifying my inclination,

VOL. I. A tion,

tion, and opening a new way to improvement. I had read, and frequently heard repeated, that of all the methods of adorning the mind, and forming the judgment, travelling is the most efficacious; I determined, therefore, on a plan of travelling, but to what part of the world I should direct my course remained still to be chosen: I wished the scene of my observations to be new, or at least brilliant. My own country, and the neighbouring nations, seemed to me either too well known, or too easy of access: the rising States of America, and the savages, were not without their temptations; but other considerations determined me in favour of Asia. Syria, especially, and Egypt, both with a view to what they once have been, and what they now are, appeared to me a field equally adapted to those political and moral observations with which I wished to occupy my mind. “Those are the countries,” said I, “in which the greater part of the opinions that govern us at this day have had their origin. In them, those religious ideas took their rise, which have operated so powerfully on our private  
“ and



“ and public manners, on our laws, and  
“ our social state. It will be interesting,  
“ therefore, to be acquainted with the  
“ countries where they originated, the cus-  
“ toms and manners which gave them birth,  
“ and the spirit and character of the nations  
“ from whom they have been received as  
“ sacred: to examine to what degree this  
“ spirit, these manners, and these customs,  
“ are altered or retained; to ascertain the  
“ influence of climate, the effects of the  
“ government, and the causes of the va-  
“ rious habits and prejudices of these coun-  
“ tries; in a word, to judge from their pre-  
“ sent state, what was their situation in for-  
“ mer times.”

On the other hand, considering the political circumstances of the Turkish empire, for the last twenty years, and reflecting on their possible consequences, it appeared to me equally curious and useful to acquire correct notions of its internal government, in order to form a just estimate of its real power and resources. With these views I set out for Egypt, about the end of 1782. After continuing seven months at Cairo,

finding too many obstacles to a proper examination of the interior parts of the country, and too little assistance in learning Arabic, I determined to proceed into Syria. The more tranquil state of that province corresponded better with my intentions. Eight months residence among the Druses, in an Arabian convent, rendered the Arabic familiar to me, and enabled me to travel through all Syria during a whole year. On my return to France, after an absence of near three years, imagining my researches might prove of some utility, I resolved to publish a few observations on the present state of Syria and Egypt; and I was confirmed in this resolution by the difficulty attending travelling in those countries, which have, therefore, but seldom been visited, and are but imperfectly known. Travellers, in general, have directed their researches more to examine their antiquities, than their present situation; and almost all, hastily passing through them, have been deficient in the two principal means of acquiring knowledge, time, and the language of the country. Without possessing the language, it is impossible



# P R E F A C E.

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fible to appreciate either the genius or the character of a nation. Interpreters can never supply the defect of a direct communication. And without continuing a sufficient time, no traveller can form a sound judgment, for the novelty of every thing around us naturally confounds and astonishes. The first tumult must subside, and the objects which present themselves be repeatedly examined, before we can be certain the ideas we have formed are just. To see well is an art which requires more practice than is commonly imagined.

On my return to France, I found that a late traveller \* had anticipated me, with respect to *Egypt*, by a first volume of *Letters* on that country. He has since published two others; but, as the field is extensive and fertile, there still remain some novelties to glean; and on subjects already treated, the world may possibly not be averse to hear two witnesses.

Syria, though not less interesting than Egypt, is undoubtedly a more novel subject. What has been already written on it by some

\* M. Savary.

travellers, is now grown obsolete, and, at best, very imperfect. I had at first determined to relate only what I myself had seen; but, desirous, for the satisfaction of my readers, to complete my description of that province, I was unwilling to deprive myself of the observations of others, when, from what I had seen myself, I could not doubt their veracity.

In my relation, I have endeavoured to maintain the spirit with which I conducted my researches into facts; that is, an impartial love of truth. I have restrained myself from indulging any fallies of the imagination, though I am no stranger to the power of such illusion over the generality of readers; but I am of opinion that travels belong to the department of history, and not that of romance. I have not therefore described countries as more beautiful than they appeared to me; I have not represented their inhabitants more virtuous, nor more wicked than I found them, and I have perhaps been enabled to see them such as they really are, since I have never received from them either benefits or injuries.

As



As to the form of this work, I have not followed the method usual in books of travels, though, perhaps, the most simple. I have rejected, as too prolix, both the order and the details of an itinerary, as well as all personal adventures; I have only exhibited general views, as better calculated to combine facts and ideas, and from a desire of saving the time of the reader, amid the prodigious succession of new publications. To render more clear my geographical observations on Egypt and Syria, I have annexed maps of those two countries. That of Egypt, for the Delta, and the desert of Sinai, is laid down from the astronomical observations of M. Niebuhr, who travelled for the King of Denmark, in 1761: they are the latest, and most accurate, yet published. The same traveller has afforded me great assistance in the map of Syria, which I have completed from that of Danville, and my own observations. To conclude, I have no doubt but the lovers of the ancient arts will thank me for accompanying with a drawing the description I have given of the two most beautiful



beautiful remains of antiquity in Asia, the Ruins of Palmyra, and those of the Temple of the Sun at Balbec ; and I have reason to believe that the admirers of the modern arts will see with pleasure the execution of the two engraved plates of those monuments.

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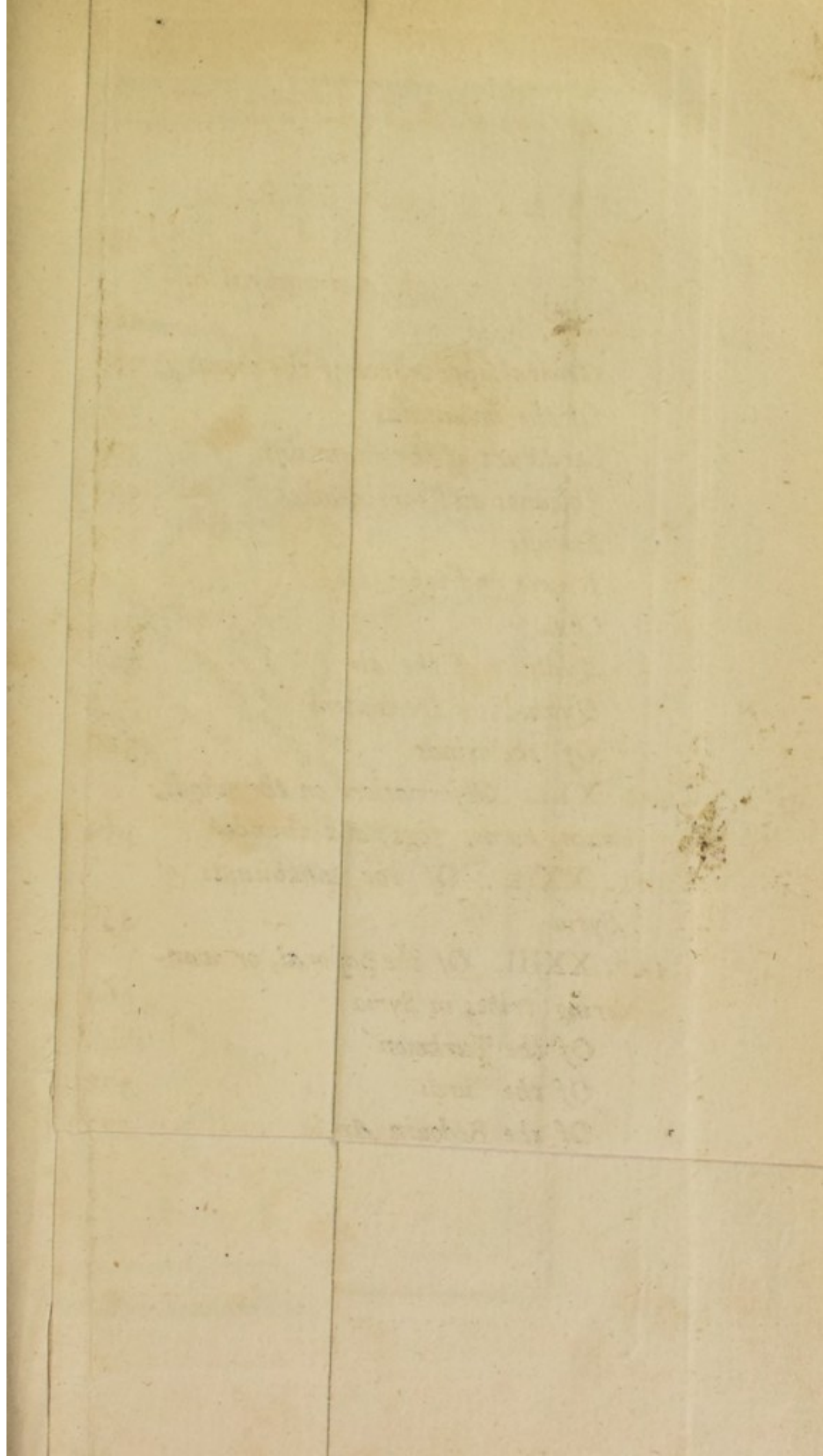
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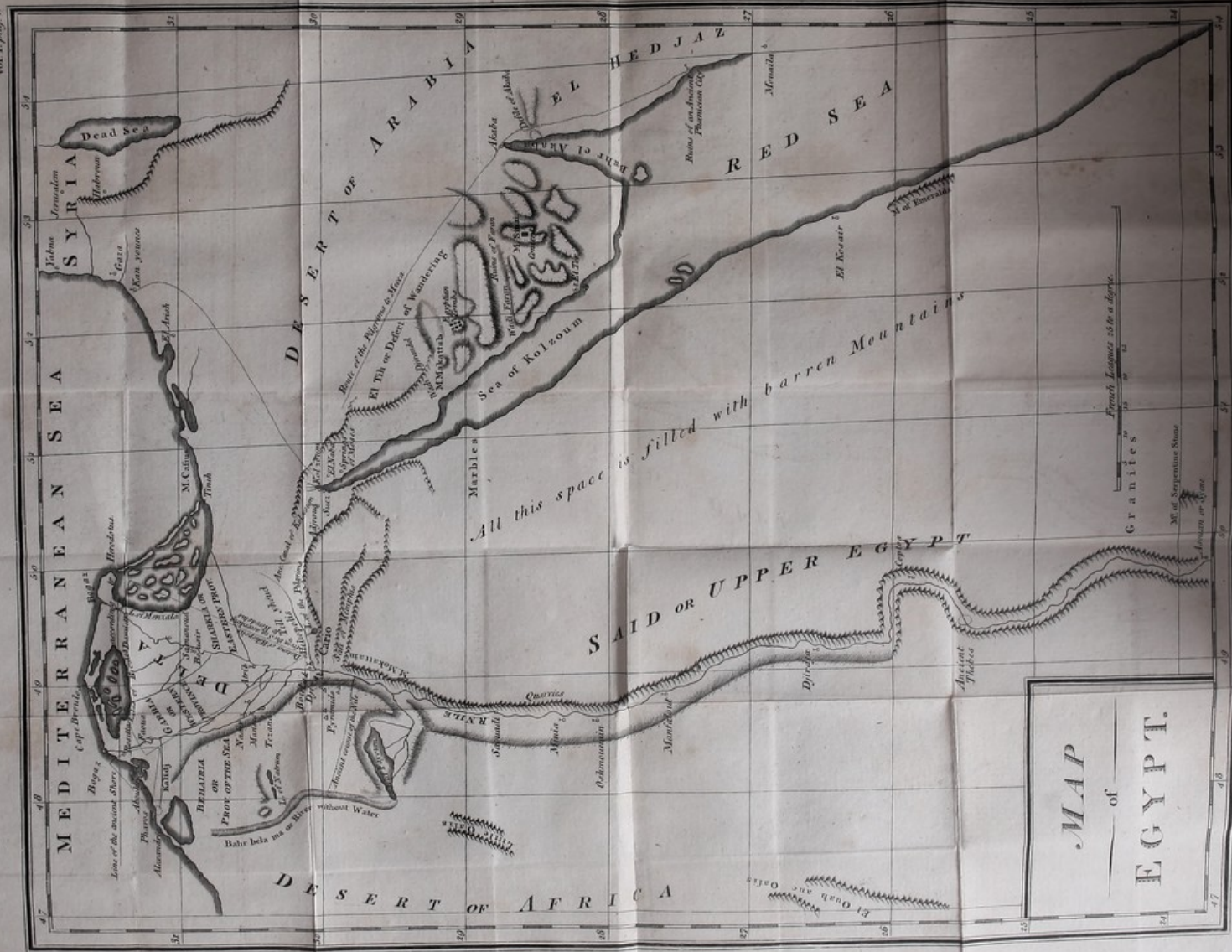
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TRAVELS  
IN  
EGYPT AND SYRIA.

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STATE OF EGYPT.

CHAP. I.

*Of Egypt, in general, and the City of  
Alexandria.*

IT is in vain that we attempt to prepare ourselves, by the perusal of books, for a more intimate acquaintance with the customs and manners of nations; the effect of narratives upon the mind, will always be very different from that of objects upon the senses. The images the former present, have neither correctness in the design, nor liveliness in the colouring; they are always indistinct, and leave but a fugitive impression, very easily effaced. This we more particularly experience, when we are strangers to the objects to be laid before us; for the imagination, in that case, finding no terms of comparison ready



formed, is compelled to collect and compose new ideas; and, in this operation, ill directed, and hastily executed, it is difficult not to confound the traits, and disfigure the forms. Ought we then to be astonished, if, on beholding the models themselves, we are unable to discover any resemblance between the originals and the copies, and if every impression bears the character of novelty?

Such is the situation of a stranger who arrives, by sea, in Turkey. In vain has he read histories and travels; in vain has he, from their descriptions, endeavoured to represent to himself the aspect of the countries, the appearance of the cities, the dresses, and manners of the inhabitants: he is new to all these objects, and dazzled with their variety: every idea he has formed to himself vanishes, and he remains absorbed in surprize and astonishment.

No place is more proper to produce this effect, and prove the truth of this remark, than Alexandria in Egypt. The name of this city, which recalls to memory the genius of one of the most wonderful of men; the name of the country, which reminds us of so many great events; the picturesque appearance of  
the



the place itself; the spreading palm-trees; the terraced houses, which seem to have no roof; the lofty slender minarets, every thing announces to the traveller that he is in another world; a variety of novel objects present themselves to every sense; he hears a language whose barbarous sounds, and sharp and guttural accents, offend his ear; he sees dresses of the most unusual and whimsical kind, and figures of the strangest appearance. Instead of our naked faces, our heads swelled out with hair, our triangular head-dresses, and our short, and close habits, he views, with astonishment, tanned visages, with beards and mustachios, bundles of stuff rolled up in folds on their bald heads; long garments, which, reaching from the neck to the heels, serve rather to veil than clothe the body, pipes of six feet long, with which every one is provided, hideous camels, which carry water in leathern pouches, and saddled and bridled asses, which lightly trip along with their riders, in slippers; he observes their markets ill supplied with dates, and round flat little loaves; a filthy drove of half starved dogs roaming through the streets, and a kind of wandering phantoms, which, under a single piece of drapery,



discover nothing human, but two eyes, which shew that they are women. Amid this croud of unusual objects, his mind is incapable of reflexion; nor is it until he has reached his place of residence, so desirous on landing after a long voyage, that, becoming more calm, he reflects on the narrow, ill paved streets, the low houses, which, though not calculated to admit much light, are still more obscured by lattice work, the meagre and swarthy inhabitants, who walk bare-footed, without other clothing than a blue shirt fastened with a leathern girdle, or a red handkerchief, while the universal air of misery, so manifest in all he meets, and the mystery which reigns around their houses, point out to him the rapacity of oppression, and the distrust attendant upon slavery. But his whole attention is soon attracted by those vast ruins which appear on the land side of the city. In our countries, ruins are an object of curiosity: Scarcely can we discover, in unfrequented places, some ancient castle, whose decay announces rather the desertion of its master, than the wretchedness of the neighbourhood. In Alexandria, on the contrary, we no sooner leave the New Town, than we are astonished



at the sight of an immense extent of ground overspread with ruins. In a walk of two hours, you follow a double line of walls and towers, which form the circumference of the ancient Alexandria. The earth is covered with the remains of lofty buildings destroyed; whole fronts crumbled down, roofs fallen in, battlements decayed, and the stones corroded and disfigured by saltpetre. The traveller passes over a vast plain, furrowed with trenches, pierced with wells, divided by walls in ruins, covered over with ancient columns, and modern tombs, amid palm-trees, and nopals (*a*), and where no living creature is to be met with, but owls, bats, and jackalls. The inhabitants, accustomed to this scene, behold it without emotion; but the stranger, in whom the recollection of ancient ages is revived by the novelty of the objects around him, feels a sensation, which not unfrequently dissolves him in tears, inspiring reflexions which fill his heart with sadness, while his soul is elevated by their sublimity.

I shall not here repeat the descriptions, given by all travellers, of the remarkable an-

(*a*) Vulgarly called *raquette*, the cochineal tree.



tiquities of Alexandria. The reader will find in Norden, Pocock, Niebuhr, and in the Letters lately published by Mr. Savary, every necessary detail on the baths of Cleopatra, the two obelisks that bear her name, the catacombs, the reservoirs, and the Pillar, improperly called Pompey's (*b*) Pillar. These names are majestic; but the originals by no means correspond with the figures we have seen of them. The pillar alone, from the boldness of its elevation, its prodigious circumference, and the solitude with which it is surrounded, impresses a genuine sentiment of respect and admiration.

In its modern state, Alexandria is the emporium of a considerable commerce. It is the harbour for all the commodities exported from Egypt by the Mediterranean, except the rice of Damietta. The Europeans have establishments there, where factors dispose of our

(*b*) It ought for the future to be called the Pillar of Severus, since Mr. Savary has proved that it belongs to that Emperor. Travellers differ with respect to the dimensions of this column; but the calculation the most generally admitted at Alexandria, makes the height of the shaft, with the capital, 96 feet, and the circumference 28 feet, 3 inches.

merchan-



merchandize by barter. Vessels are constantly to be met with there from Marseilles, Leghorn, Venice, Ragusa, and the dominions of the Grand Seignor; but it is dangerous to winter there. The new port, the only harbour for the Europeans, is clogged up with sand, insomuch that in stormy weather ships are liable to bilge; and the bottom being also rocky, the cables soon chafe and part, so that, one vessel driving against a second, and that against a third, they are perhaps all lost. Of this there was a fatal instance sixteen or eighteen years ago, when two-and-forty vessels were dashed to pieces on the mole in a gale of wind from the north-west, and numbers have been since lost there at different times. The old port, the entrance to which is covered by a neck of land called the Cape of Figs (*c*), is not subject to this inconvenience; but the Turks admit no ships into it but those of Mussulmen. It will perhaps be asked, in Europe, why do they not repair the New Port? The answer is, that in Turkey, they destroy every thing and repair nothing. The old harbour will be destroyed, likewise,

(*c*) *Ras el-tin*, pronounced *teen*.



as the ballast of vessels has been continually thrown into it for the last two hundred years. The spirit of the Turkish government is to ruin the labours of past ages, and destroy the hopes of future times, because the barbarity of ignorant despotism never considers to-morrow.

In time of war, Alexandria is of no importance; no fortification is to be seen; even the Pharos, with its lofty towers, cannot be defended. It has not four cannon fit for service, nor a gunner who knows how to point them. The five hundred Janisaries, who should form the garrison, reduced to half that number, know nothing but how to smoke a pipe. It is fortunate for the Turks that the Franks find their interest in preserving this city. A single Russian or Maltese frigate would suffice to lay it in ashes; but the conquest would be of no value. A foreign power could not maintain itself there, as the country is without water. This must be brought from the Nile by the Kalidj, or canal of twelve leagues, which conveys it thither every year at the time of the inundation. It fills the vaults or reservoirs dug under the ancient city, and this provision must serve till the next year. It is  
evident



evident, therefore, that were a foreign power to take possession, the canal would be shut, and all supplies of water cut off.

It is this canal alone which connects Alexandria with Egypt; for, from its situation without the Delta, and the nature of the soil, it really belongs to the deserts of Africa; its environs are sandy, flat and sterile, without trees and without houses, where we meet with nothing but the plant (*d*) which yields the Kali, and a row of palm trees, which follows the course of the *Kalidj* or canal.

We do not really enter Egypt until we arrive at Rosetta, called by the natives *Rashid*: there the sands peculiar to Africa end, and a black, fat, and loamy soil, the distinguishing characteristic of Egypt, begins: there, also, for the first time, we behold the waters of the celebrated Nile, which, rolling between two steep banks, considerably resembles the Seine between Auteuil and Passy. The woods of palm-trees, on each side, the orchards, watered by its streams, the lemon, the orange, the banana, the peach, and other trees, by their perpetual verdure, render Rosetta astonishingly delightful,

(*d*) Glass-wort, called by the Arabs *el-kali*, from whence the name of the salt *al-kali*.

and



and its beauties appear still more charming by its contrast with Alexandria, and the sea we have just left; and from hence to Cairo, every object tends to increase the effect.

As we ascend the river we begin to acquire some general idea of the soil, the climate, and productions of this celebrated country. Nothing more resembles its appearance than the marshes of the lower Loire, or the plains of Flanders; instead however of the numerous trees and country houses of the latter, we must imagine some thin woods of palms and sycamores, and a few villages of mud-walled cottages, built on artificial mounds. All this part of Egypt is so level, and so low, that we are not three leagues from the coast when we first discover the palm-trees, and the sands on which they grow; from thence as we proceed up the river, the declivity is so gentle, that the water does not flow faster than a league an hour. As for the prospect of the country, it offers little variety; nothing is to be seen but palm-trees, single, or in clumps, which become more rare in proportion as you advance: wretched villages composed of mud-walled huts, and a boundless plain, which at different seasons is an  
ocean



ocean of fresh water, a miry morass, a verdant field, or a dusty desert; and on every side an extensive and foggy horizon, where the eye is wearied and disgusted; at length, towards the junction of the two branches of the river, the mountains of Grand Cairo are discovered in the east, and to the south-west, three detached masses appear, which, from their triangular form, are known to be the Pyramids. We now enter a valley which turns to the southward, between two chains of parallel eminences. That to the east, which extends to the Red Sea, merits the name of a mountain from its precipitate elevation, and that of a desert from its naked and savage aspect (*e*); but the western is nothing but a ridge of rock, covered with sand, which has been very properly termed a natural mound, or causeway. To describe Egypt in two words, let the reader imagine, on one side, a narrow sea and rocks; on the other, immense plains of sand, and, in the middle, a river flowing through a valley of one hundred and fifty leagues in length, and from three to seven wide, which, at the distance of thirty leagues from the sea,

(*e*) Called in Arabic *mokattam*, or *hewn mountain*.

separates



separates into two arms, the branches of which wander over a soil free from obstacles, and almost without declivity.

The prevailing taste for natural history, now, to the honour of the present age, become so general, demands doubtless some details on the nature of the soil, and the minerals of this extensive country. But, unfortunately, the manner of travelling here is ill adapted to promote such researches. It is not the same in Turkey as in Europe: with us, travels are agreeable excursions; there, they are difficult and dangerous undertakings, especially for Europeans, whom the superstitious natives believe to be forcerers, come to discover by magic, treasures which the Genii have concealed under the ruins. This ridiculous, but deep rooted opinion, added to perpetual wars and disturbances, deprives the traveller of security, and prevents every discovery. No one dares even walk alone in the fields; nor can he procure any body to accompany him. We are confined therefore to the banks of the river, and a route frequented by every one, which can afford no new information. It is only by comparing what we have seen ourselves with the obser-

vations



vations made by others that some general ideas can be acquired.

After having made this comparifon, we fhall find reafon to conclude that the bafis of all Egypt, from *Afouan*, (the ancient Syene) to the Mediterranean, is a continued bed of calcareous ftone, of a whitifh hue, and fomewhat foft, containing fhells analogous to thofe found in the two neighbouring feas (*f*). This quality is discoverable in the Pyramids, and in the Lybian rock on which they are founded. This ftone is likewise to be found in the Cifters, in the Catacombs of Alexandria, and in the projecting fhelves upon the coaft. We may alfo obferve it in the Eastern mountain, in the latitude of Cairo, and the materials with which that city is built. It is this calcareous ftone, in fhort, which forms the immense quarries that extend from Saouadi to Manfalout, for the fpace of upwards of twenty-five leagues, according to the testimony of Father Sicard. That miffionary informs us, alfo, that marble is found in the

(*f*) Thefe fhells confift principally of echini, volutes, bivalves, and a fpecies in the form of lentils. See Shaw's Travels.



valley of *Carts(g)*, at the foot of the mountains bordering on the Red Sea, and in the mountains to the north-east of *Afouan*. Between that place and the Cataract are the principal quarries of red granite; but there must be others lower down, for, on the opposite shore of the Red Sea, the mountains of Oreb, of Sinai, and their dependencies (*b*), at two days journey towards the north, are formed of it. Not far from Afouan, to the north-west, is a quarry of serpentine stone, employed in its native state by the inhabitants to make vessels which will stand the fire. And in the same parallel, on the Red Sea, was formerly a mine of emeralds, all traces of which are now lost. Copper is the only metal of this country mentioned by the ancients. The road to Suez is the part of it where the greatest quantity of what are called Egyptian flints or pebbles, is found, though the bottom be of a calcareous stone, hard and sonorous; there likewise those stones are found, which, from their form, have been taken for petrified

(g) See Savary's Letters, Vol. I. page 437.

(b) The former is grey, spotted with black, and sometimes red.

wood. In fact, they do resemble logs cut slanting at the ends, and full of small holes, and might easily be taken for petrefactions; but chance throwing in my way a considerable quantity of these, in the road of the Arabs called Tahouga (*i*), I carefully examined them, and am convinced they are real minerals (*k*).

The two lakes of Natron, described by Father Sicard, are more interesting objects; they are situated in the desert of Shayat, or St. Macarius, to the west of the Delta. Their bed is a sort of natural trench, three or four leagues long, by a quarter wide, the bottom of which is solid and stony. It is dry for nine months in the year, but, in winter, there oozes from the earth a water of a reddish violet colour, which fills the lake to the height of five or six feet; the return of the great heats causing this to evaporate, there remains a bed of salt two feet thick, and very hard, which is broken with

(*i*) Each tribe has its particular road, to avoid disputes.

(*k*) Besides, there do not exist ten trees in this desert, and it seems incapable of producing any.

bars



bars of iron. Thirty thousand quintals are procured from them every year. This phenomenon, which indicates a soil impregnated with salt, is common throughout all Egypt. In every part of it, on digging, a brackish water is found, containing natron, marine salt, and a little nitre. Even when the gardens are overflowed, for the sake of watering them, the surface of the ground, after the evaporation and absorption of the water, appears glazed over with salt; and this soil, like that of the whole continent of Africa and Arabia, seems either to be composed of salt, or to produce it.

In the midst of these minerals of various qualities, in the midst of that fine and reddish coloured sand peculiar to Africa, the earth of the valley through which the Nile flows, discovers properties which prove it of a distinct class. Its blackish colour, its clayey, cementing quality, demonstrate its foreign origin; and, in fact, it is brought by the river from the heart of Abyssinia; as if Nature had determined artfully to form an habitable island in a country to which she had denied every thing. Without this fat  
and

and light mud, Egypt never could have produced any thing; that alone seems to contain the seeds of vegetation and fecundity: and these again are owing to the river, by which it is deposited.

The whole physical and political existence of Egypt depends upon the Nile; that alone provides for the greatest necessity of animal life, the want of water, so frequently, and so distressfully, experienced in warm climates. The Nile alone, without the aid of rain, every where supplies vegetation with moisture, the earth, during the three months inundation, imbibing a sufficient quantity of water for the rest of the year. Were it not for this overflowing, only a very small part of the country could be cultivated, and even that would require prodigious labour; it is with reason, therefore, it has been called the source of plenty. of happiness, and of life itself. Had Abdurrahman, the Pontifex, been able to execute his project of turning the Nile into the Red Sea, the Nile would have been a source of plenty, of happiness, and of life itself.



## C H A P. II.

*Of the Nile, and the enlargement of the  
Delta.*

THE whole physical and political existence of Egypt depends upon the Nile; that alone provides for the greatest necessity of animal life, the want of water, so frequently, and so distressfully, experienced in warm climates. The Nile alone, without the aid of rain, every where supplies vegetation with moisture, the earth, during the three months inundation, imbibing a sufficient quantity of water for the rest of the year. Were it not for this overflowing, only a very small part of the country could be cultivated, and even that would require prodigious labour; it is with reason, therefore, it has been stiled the source of plenty, of happiness, and of life itself. Had Albuquerque, the Portuguese, been able to execute his project, of turning its course from Ethiopia into the  
Red

Red Sea (*l*), this country, now so rich, would have become a savage desert, surrounded by solitudes. If we reflect on the use man makes of his powers, we shall see little reason to regret that Nature has granted him no more?

It is with reason, therefore, that the Egyptians have always professed, and still retain, a religious veneration for the Nile (*m*); but an European must be pardoned, if, on hearing them boast its beauty, he smiles at their ignorance. Never will these troubled and muddy waters have for him the charm of transparent fountains and limpid streams; never, except from some extraordinary excitement, will a swarthy Egyptian woman, dripping from these yellow and muddy waters, remind him of the bathing Naiads. For six months of the year the water of the river is so thick that it must have time to settle be-

(*l*) See Savary's Letters. T.

(*m*) They called it *holy, blessed, sacred*; and, on the appearance of the new waters, that is, on the opening of the canals, mothers are seen plunging their children into the current, from a belief that these waters have a purifying and divine virtue, such as the antients attributed to every river.



fore it can be drunk (*n*): and, during the three months which precede the inundation, reduced to an inconsiderable depth, it grows heated, becomes green, foetid, and full of worms, and it is necessary to have recourse to that which has been before drawn, and preserved in cisterns. At all times, people of delicacy take care to perfume it, and cool it by evaporation (*o*).

Travellers and Historians have written so much on the Nile, and its phænomena, that

(*n*) Bitter almonds are made use of, for this purpose, with which the vessel is rubbed, and the water then becomes really light and good. But nothing but thirst, or prejudice, could induce any person to give it the preference to that of our fountains and large rivers, such as the Seine, and the Loire.

(*o*) Earthen vessels, unglazed, are kept carefully in every apartment, from whence the water continually transpires; this transpiration produces the more coolness in proportion as it is more considerable; for this reason, these vessels are often suspended in passages where there are currents of air, and under the shade of trees. In several parts of Syria they drink the water which has transpired; in Egypt they drink that which remains; besides, in no country is so much water used. The first thing an Egyptian does, on entering his house, is to lay hold of the *kolla*, (the pitcher of water) and take a hearty draught of it; and, thanks to their perpetual perspiration, they feel no inconvenience from the practice.

I was



I was at first inclined to think the subject exhausted; but, as ideas vary respecting the most invariable facts; frequently, while there remains nothing new to say, there is still something to correct. Such appears to me to be the case, with some opinions of M. Savary, in the Letters he has lately published. The positions he endeavours to establish concerning the enlargement, and rise of the Delta, are so different from the conclusions I have deduced from the facts, and authorities he quotes that I think it my duty to submit our contradictory opinions to the tribunal of the public. This discussion seems to me the more necessary, as a residence of two years, upon the spot, gives a weight to the testimony of M. Savary, which would soon become authority: let us state the questions, and treat, in the first place, of the extension, or enlargement of the Delta.

A Greek historian, to whom we are indebted for almost all our knowledge of ancient Egypt, and whose authority every day's observation confirms, wrote thus, two-and-twenty centuries ago: "That part of Egypt  
" frequented by the Greeks, (the Delta) is an  
" acquired land, the gift of the river, as is all



“ the marshy country, along its banks, for  
 “ three days sail up the Nile (*p*).”

The reasons he alledges in support of this assertion prove, that it was not founded on prejudice. “ In fact,” adds he, “ the soil of  
 “ Egypt, which is a black and fat mud, is  
 “ absolutely different, both from that of  
 “ Africa, which is a red sand, and that of  
 “ Arabia, which is clayey and stoney.—This  
 “ mud is brought from Ethiopia, by the  
 “ Nile.—And the shells found in the desert  
 “ sufficiently prove that the sea formerly  
 “ extended farther into the country.”

In admitting this encroachment of the river, so conformable to probability, Herodotus has not determined its proportions. These M. Savary has imagined himself able to supply; let us examine his reasoning.

“ While it encreased in height, Egypt (*q*),  
 says he, “ augmented in length likewise;  
 “ to prove which, among several facts which  
 “ history has preserved, I shall select only  
 “ one. During the reign of Psammeticus,

(*p*) Herodot. lib. II. p. 105. edit. Weßling.

(*q*) See Letters on Egypt, Vol. I. p. 17. of the English Translation, Second Edit.



“ the Milesians, with thirty ships, landed at  
 “ the mouth of the Bolbitine branch, at  
 “ present the branch of Rosetta, where they  
 “ fortified themselves, and built a city,  
 “ which they called Metelis, (Strabo, lib. 17.)  
 “ now named Faoûia, but which, in the  
 “ Coptic vocabularies, is still called Messil.  
 “ This city, which was formerly a sea-port,  
 “ stands, at present, nine leagues from the  
 “ shore; which space the Delta has length-  
 “ ened, from the age of Psammeticus to the  
 “ present.”

Nothing so accurate at first sight as this reasoning ; but, on recurring to the original, M. Savary's authority, we find, that the principal fact is wanting; the following is a literal translation of the text of Strabo (*r*).

“ Beyond the Bolbitine mouth, is a low,  
 “ sandy cape, called the horn of the Lamb,  
 “ which stretches pretty far (into the sea);  
 “ beyond that, the watch tower of Perseus,  
 “ and the wall of the Milesians; for the  
 “ Milesians, in the reign of Cyaxares, King  
 “ of the Medes, cotemporary with Psamme-  
 “ ticus, King of Egypt, arriving at the Bol-

(*r*) Strabonis Geograph. Interp. Casaubon. Edit. 1707,  
 Lib. 17, p. 1153.



“ bitine mouth, with thirty vessels, landed  
 “ there, and erected the work which bears  
 “ their name. Some time after, having ad-  
 “ vanced into the Saitic Nome, and van-  
 “ quished Inârus, in a naval battle, they  
 “ founded the city of Naucratis, a little above  
 “ Schedia. Beyond the wall of the Mile-  
 “ fians, as we approach the Sebennytic  
 “ mouth, are lakes, one of which is named  
 “ the Butic.”

Such is the passage of Strabo, relative to  
 the Milesians; no mention is made of Metelis,  
 of which not even the name is to be found  
 in his whole work. Danville (*s*) has copied  
 it from Ptolemy, who does not ascribe it to  
 the Milesians: and unless M. Savary can  
 prove the identity of Metelis, and the Mile-  
 fian wall, by researches made upon the spot,  
 his conclusions ought not to be admitted.

He is of opinion, too, that Homer affords  
 him a similar testimony in those passages  
 wherein he speaks of the distance of the isle  
 of Pharos from Egypt (*t*); the reader shall

(*s*) See the excellent Memoir of Danville, on Egypt,  
 in 4to, 1765, p. 77.

(*t*) See Savary's Letters, p. 17.



judge, whether this is better founded. I quote the translation of Madame Dacier<sup>(u)</sup>, which though less brilliant, is more literal than any other, and our business is with the literal. Menelaus is made to speak thus:

“ In the Egyptian sea, opposite the Nile,  
 “ there is a certain island, called Pharos; distant from one of the mouths of that river  
 “ about as far as a vessel can sail in one day  
 “ before the wind.”—and, soon after, Proteus says to Menelaus: “ Inflexible Destiny does  
 “ not permit you to revisit your dear country—until you shall have returned again  
 “ into the river Egyptus, and offered unblemished hecatombs to the immortals.”

“ He said,” resumes Menelaus, “ and my  
 “ heart was seized with grief and sadness,  
 “ because this God commanded me to return  
 “ into the river Egyptus, the way to which  
 “ is difficult and dangerous.”

From these passages, and especially from the former, M. Savary would infer that the Pharos, which, at present joins the main land, was at that time very remote from it; but when Homer speaks of the distance of this

(u) Odyss. lib. 4.



island, he does not mean its distance from the shore opposite, as that traveller has translated him, but from the land of Egypt, and the river Nile. In the second place, by a day's sail, we must not understand the indefinite space, which the vessels, or, more properly speaking, the boats, of the ancients could pass through in a day; the Greeks used this expression to denote a certain fixed distance of five hundred and forty stadia. Herodotus(*x*), who clearly ascertains this fact, gives us an example of it, when he says that the Nile has encroached upon the sea the whole extent of country for three days sail up the river; and the sixteen hundred and twenty stadia, arising from this computation, agree with the more accurate measure of fifteen hundred stadia, which he gives us, in another place, as the distance of Heliopolis from the sea. Now, taking, with Danville, the five hundred and forty stadia for twenty seven thousand toises, or near half a degree(*y*), we shall find this measure is the distance of the Pharos from the Nile; it extends exactly to two-thirds of a league above Rosetta, a situation where we

(*x*) Herod. lib. 11. p. 106 and 107.

(*y*) This only 1,300 toises too much.



have reason to place the city which gave name to the Bolbitine mouth; and it is remarkable that it was this which the Greeks frequented, and where the Milesians landed, a century and a half after Homer. It is, therefore, far from being proved, that the increase of the Delta, or of the Continent, was so rapid as has been imagined; and, if we were disposed to maintain it, we should still have to explain how this shore, which has not gained half a league from the days of Alexander, should have gained eleven in the far shorter period from the time of Menelaus to that conqueror (z).

A more satisfactory estimate of this encroachment might have been deduced from the dimensions of Egypt, given by Herodotus: the following are his words. "The

(z) It may be objected Homer is not exact, when he says the Pharos was opposite the Nile; but, in his excuse, it may be urged, that when he calls Egypt the extremity of the world, he cannot mean to speak with precision. In the second place, the Canopic branch ran formerly by the lakes, opening itself a passage near Aboukir; and if, as the view of the country leads me to think, it passed even to the west of Aboukir, which must have been an island, Homer, might say, with reason, that the Pharos was opposite the Nile.

" breadth



“ breadth of Egypt, along the sea coast, from  
 “ the Gulph of Plinthine, to the Lake Ser-  
 “ bonis, near Mount Casius, is three thou-  
 “ sand six hundred stadia; and its length,  
 “ from the sea to Heliopolis, fifteen hundred  
 “ stadia.”

Let us confine ourselves to this last measure, which alone concerns the present dispute. Danville has proved, with that sagacity which was peculiar to him, that the stadium of Herodotus is equivalent to between fifty and fifty-one French toises; and taking it at the latter estimation, the fifteen hundred stadia are equal to seventy-six thousand toises, which, after the rate of fifty-seven thousand to a degree, gives one degree and near twenty minutes and a half. Now, from the astronomical observations of Mr. Niebuhr, who travelled for the King of Denmark, in 1761 (*a*), the difference of latitude between Heliopolis, (now called Matarea) and the sea, being one degree twenty-nine minutes, at Damietta, and one degree twenty-four at Rosetta, there is a difference, on one side, of

(*a*) See *Travels in Arabia*, by C. Niebuhr, in 4to. tom. 1. which must be distinguished from the *Description of Arabia*, by the same; 2 vol. in 4to.



three minutes and a half, or a league and a half encroachment; and eight minutes and a half, or three leagues and a half, on the other; that is to say, the ancient shore answers to eleven thousand eight hundred toises below Rosetta, which corresponds very nearly to the sense in which I understand the passage in Homer, while on the branch of Damietta it falls nine hundred and fifty toises below that city. It is true, that in measuring immediately on the map, the line of the shore will be found about three leagues higher on the side of Rosetta, and falls on Damietta itself, which is occasioned by the angle produced by the difference of longitude. But, in that case, Bolbitinum, mentioned by Herodotus, is not within its prescribed limits; and, it is no longer true, that Busiris (Aboufir) was situated, as Herodotus has told us (*b*), in the middle of the Delta. It must not be denied that the relations of the ancients, and the knowledge we have of the country, are not sufficiently precise exactly to determine the successive encroachments.

(*b*) Lib. ii. p. 123.



In order to reason accurately, researches similar to those of the Comte de Choiseul, on the Meander (*c*), would be necessary; the ground should be dug into, but such labours require means and opportunities which few travellers possess; and a greater difficulty than all is, that the sandy soil, which forms the lower Delta, undergoes great changes every day. These are not entirely owing to the Nile and the sea; the wind itself is a very powerful agent, which sometimes choaks up the canals, and drives back the river, as it has done at the Canopic branch. At others, it amasses the sand, and buries the ruins, so that their very remembrance is lost. Mr. Niebuhr relates a remarkable instance of this. While he was at Rosetta, in 1762, he discovered by chance, under the sandy hillocks to the southward of that city, several ancient ruins, and, among others, twenty fine marble columns of Grecian workmanship, without being able to learn any tradition even of the name of the place (*d*). This appears to me to have been the case with the

(*c*) See Voyage Pittoresque de la Grèce, tom 2.

(*d*) This situation agrees very well with that of Bolbitinum.



whole of the adjacent desert. This tract, formerly intersected by large canals, and filled with towns, presents nothing but hillocks of a yellowish sand, very fine, which the wind heaps up at the foot of every obstacle, and which frequently buries the palm-trees; wherefore, notwithstanding the labours of Danville, we cannot be certain he is right in the situations he has assigned to several ancient places.

M. Savary has been much more exact in what he has cited concerning one of the changes the Nile has undergone (*e*), by which it appears, that river formerly flowed entirely through Lybia, to the south of Memphis. But the relation of Herodotus himself, on whose authority this depends, is not without difficulties. When that historian, therefore, asserts, after the priests of Heliopolis, that Menes, the first king of Egypt, dammed up the elbow, formed by the river, two leagues and a quarter (one hundred stadia) above Memphis (*f*), and dug a new channel, to the eastward of that city, does it not follow that Memphis was at that time situated in

(*e*) Letter i. p. 12.

(*f*) Herodot. ii. lib. 2.



a barren desert, far distant from any water? And how improbable is such an hypothesis! Can we literally believe in these immense works of Menes, who is supposed to have founded a city which is mentioned as existing before his time; who is imagined to have dug canals and lakes, thrown bridges over rivers, and erected palaces, towers and temples; and all this in the earliest age of the nation, and the infancy of all the arts? Is not this Menes himself an historical chimæra, and are not all the relations of the priests, concerning this remote antiquity, wholly mythological? I am inclined to think, therefore, that the turning the course of the Nile, by Menes, was no more than a diversion of some smaller branch, to increase the inundation of the Delta; and this conjecture seems the more probable, since, notwithstanding the testimony of Herodotus, this part of the valley, seen from the Pyramids, presents nothing which could have been an obstruction to the course of the river. Besides, I cannot but think that M. Savary presumes too much, when he makes the great channel, called *bahr bela ma*, or river without water, terminate at the mound before-



before-mentioned, above Memphis, and supposes it to have been the ancient bed of the Nile. Every traveller, cited by Danville, places that termination at the Lake of Fayoum, of which it appears a more natural continuation (*a*). To have proved this position, he should have visited the places themselves, and I never heard, at Cairo, that M. Savary advanced farther to the southward, than the Pyramids of Djiza. The formation of the Delta, which he deduces from this alteration, is equally repugnant to probability; for, in this sudden change, why should we imagine, the “enormous weight of the “waters, discharging themselves into this “gulph (*b*), would repel those of the sea?” The meeting of two masses of fluid produces nothing but a mixture, from which a common level soon results; if we imagine the water increased, we can only expect that more land will be covered. It is true,

(*a*) In fact, we shall be more inclined, from an inspection of the map, to believe that this was the ancient course of the river: as for the petrefactions of masts and whole vessels, mentioned by Father Sicard, these, to gain credit, ought to be attested by more enlightened travellers than that missionary.

(*b*) Letters on Egypt, vol. I. page 13.

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M. Savary adds, "the sand and mud carried along by the Nile, were accumulated, and the Delta, very inconsiderable at first, rose from the sea, by encroaching on its limits." But, how does an island rise out of the sea? Running waters level much more than they heap up. This leads us to the question of the elevation.

CHAP.

## C H A P. III.

*Of the Rise of the Delta.*

HERODOTUS, on whose authority this hypothesis is founded, has not very satisfactorily explained the fact, but he has a passage of which M. Savary has availed himself to draw certain positive conclusions; the following is his reasoning:

“ In the time of Mœris, who lived five  
 “ hundred years before the Trojan war (*a*),  
 “ eight cubits were sufficient to overflow the  
 “ whole Delta (*Herodot. lib. 2.*); fifteen  
 “ were necessary in the age of Herodotus;  
 “ under the Roman empire, sixteen; under  
 “ the Arabs, seventeen: eighteen cubits is  
 “ the standard of abundance at this day; and  
 “ the Nile sometimes rises to two-and-twenty.  
 “ Thus, in the space of 3284 years, we  
 “ see the Delta has risen fourteen cubits.”

True, if we admit the facts as they are stated; but, on a careful examination, we

(*a*) Letter I. p. 13.



shall find circumstances which invalidate both the premises and conclusion. Let us first cite the text of Herodotus :

“ The Egyptian priests,” says that author (*b*), “ report that in the reign of King Mæris, the Nile inundated the Delta, if it only rose to eight cubits. At present it does not overflow it unless it attain sixteen, or at least fifteen. Now, from the death of Mæris to this time, nine hundred years have not yet elapsed.”

Let us calculate from these materials.

From Mæris to Herodotus	-	900 years,
From Herodotus to the year 1777,		
two thousand two hundred and		
thirty-seven, or if he will	-	2,240
		<hr/>
Total,	-	3,140

Why this difference of one hundred and forty-four years excess in the calculation of M. Savary ? Why does he use other numbers than those of his author ? But let us pass over the chronology.

In the time of Herodotus, sixteen cubits were necessary, or at least fifteen, to overflow

(*b*) Lib. 2. p. 109.



the Delta. The same number was sufficient in the time of the Romans : fifteen and sixteen are invariably the measure.

“ Before the time of Petronius,” says Strabo (c), “ plenty was not known in the Delta unless the Nile rose to fourteen cubits. “ But this Governor, obtaining by art what “ nature denied, under his prefecture, plenty “ has been known at twelve.” The Arabs tell us the same. A book in Arabic still exists, which contains a table of all the risings of the Nile, from the first year of the Hegira (A.D. 622), down to the year 875, (A. D. 1470) ; and this work ascertains that, in the latest times, as often as the Nile has fourteen cubits depth in its channel, there is a harvest sufficient for the year ; that, if it reaches sixteen, there is sufficient for two years ; but when it falls short of fourteen, or exceeds eighteen, there is famine ; which corresponds exactly with the account of Herodotus. The book I quote is Arabic, but its contents are in every one’s hands, who chooses to consult the word *Nile* in the *Bibliothèque Orientale* of D’Herbelot, or the *Extraits* from *Kalkasendas*, in *Doctor Shaw’s Travels*.

(c) Lib. 17.

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Nor



Nor is the measure of these cubits uncertain. Fréret, Danville, and M. Bailli have proved that the Egyptian cubit, being invariably twenty-four digits, is equal to twenty and a half French inches (*d*); and the present cubit, called *Draa masri*, is precisely divided into twenty-four digits, and amounts to twenty and a half of our inches. But the columns with which the rise of the Nile is measured, have undergone an alteration which we must not omit to notice.

“ In the earlier ages, and while the Arabs governed Egypt,” says *Kalkasendas*, “ they perceived that when the Nile did not attain the standard necessary for plenty, every one was anxious to lay in sufficient provision for the year, which occasioned great inconveniencies. Complaints of this were made to the Calif Omar, who gave orders to Amrou to enquire into the matter; and he reported as follows:—Having made the researches you commanded, we have found that when the Nile rises to fourteen

(*d*) I have measured several of them with a *pied de Roi*, standard foot of copper; but I found they all varied from one to three lines. The *Draa stambouli* is of twenty-eight digits, or twenty-four inches, wanting one line.

“ cubits,



“ cubits, it produces a sufficient harvest for  
 “ the year; when it attains sixteen cubits,  
 “ we have plenty; but that at twelve and  
 “ eighteen dearth ensues. We also find that  
 “ the custom of making known the height  
 “ of the waters by proclamation, is produc-  
 “ tive of many irregularities, and is very  
 “ disadvantageous to commerce.”

Omar, to remedy this abuse, was possibly inclined to abolish these proclamations; but that not being practicable, he devised an expedient, suggested by Aboutaleb, to produce the same effect. Until then the measuring column, called the *Nilometer (e)*, had been divided into cubits of twenty-four digits each; Omar ordered this to be destroyed, and substituting another in its place, which he erected in the island of Raouda, he commanded that the twelve lower cubits should consist of twenty-eight digits, instead of twenty-four, while the upper remained of the usual number; hence, when the rise of the Nile appeared, by the column, to be twelve cubits, it was really fourteen; for these twelve cubits being each four digits too long, there

(e) In Arabic, *mekias*, or *measure*.



was an excess of forty-eight digits, or two cubits. Therefore, when fourteen cubits, the measure of a sufficient harvest, were proclaimed, the inundation was really at the height for plenty, and the multitude, always easily deceived by words, never suspected the imposition. But this alteration could not escape the Arabian historians, who tell us the columns of the Said, or Upper Egypt, continued to be divided by twenty-four digits; that the height of eighteen cubits (old style), was always injurious; and that nineteen was very rare, and almost a prodigy (*f*).

Nothing therefore is less certain than the progressive changes here alledged, and which are rendered improbable by a known fact, which is, that in the long period of eighteen centuries, the rise of the Nile never varied. How does it happen then that it is so different at present? How can it so soon have altered

(*f*) Doctor Pocock, who has several good observations on the Nile, has entirely mistaken the meaning of the text of Kalkasendas; from an obscure passage he has been led to conclude, that the Nilometer, in the time of Omar, was only twelve cubits, and this error has led him into a number of false conjectures. *Pocock's Travels*, vol. I. 2. 9.



from fifteen to twenty-two cubits, since the year one thousand four hundred and seventy-three? This problem is, in my opinion, easy of solution; not from physical changes, but from other circumstances. It is not the Nile but the column and measures which have varied. The mystery in which the Mekias is enveloped by the Turks, has prevented the greater part of travellers from discovering the truth; but Pococke, who obtained a sight of it in 1739, relates that the scale of cubits was inaccurate and unequal. He even observes it appeared to him to be new, a circumstance which may lead us to imagine the Turks, in imitation of Omar, have made some recent alteration. In short, there is a fact which removes every doubt, for M. Niebuhr (g), whom the world will not easily suspect of falsehood or mistake, having measured, in 1762, the marks of the inundation, on a wall at Djiza (Giza), found that, on the first of June, the Nile had fallen twenty-four French feet. But twenty-four-feet, reduced to cubits, at the rate of twenty inches and a half each, give precisely fourteen cubits one inch. It is true there

(g) *Voyage en Arabie*, tom I. p. 102.



still remains eighteen days decrease; but by estimating that at half a cubit, agreeable to what has been observed by Pococke (*b*), we have only fourteen cubits and a half, which corresponds exactly with the antient calculation.

There is another assertion of M. Savary's to which, likewise, I cannot subscribe without restriction.—“ Since I have been in *Egypt*,” says he, Letter I. p. 15, “ I have twice  
“ made the tour of the Delta; I have even  
“ crossed it by the canal of Menouf. The  
“ river, though full to the brim, in the great  
“ branches of Rosetta and Damietta, and  
“ those which run through the interior parts  
“ of the country; only overflowed the  
“ land where it lay low, or where banks had  
“ been raised to stop its waters, and throw  
“ them over the rice fields.” Hence he concludes, “ that the present position of the  
“ Delta is the best possible for agriculture;  
“ since, ceasing to be overflowed, this island  
“ has a yearly gain of the three months dur-

(*b*) The 17th of May, eleven pikes (or cubits) of the column were above the water, and the 3d of June eleven and a half: in seventeen days therefore there was a difference of half a cubit. *Pocock's Travels*, vol. I. p. 256.

“ ing



ing which the Thebais is inundated." It must be confessed that nothing can be more extraordinary than this gain. If the Delta has gained by being no longer overflowed, why was the inundation at all times so anxiously desired? "This is supplied by the banks." But the Delta must not be compared to the marshes of the Seine. The water is only on a level with the land towards the sea; every where else it is below the level, and the shore rises as you ascend the river. In short, if I may give my testimony, I must declare that, when I went from Cairo to Rosetta, by the canal of Menouf, I observed, on the 26th, 27th, and 28th of September, 1783, that, notwithstanding the waters had decreased upwards of a fortnight, the country was still partly under water, and still discovered, in the places left dry, the traces of the inundation. What M. Savary observed can therefore only be attributed to an indifferent inundation; nor ought we to imagine, either that the rising has changed the state of the Delta (*i*), or that the Egyptians can have no water but

(*i*) The bed of the river itself has risen, like the rest of the country.

what



what is procured by artificial means, as expensive as insufficient (*k*).

It now remains for us to explain the difficulty of the eight cubits in the time of Mœris; and I cannot help thinking this arises from causes of the same nature. It appears that, subsequent to this Prince, an alteration took place in the measures of the country, and one cubit was made into two. This conjecture is the more probable since, in the time of Mœris, Egypt was not united into one kingdom; there were at least three between Asouan and the sea. Sesostris, who was posterior to Mœris, conquered and united them. But, after this Prince, they were again divided; and this division subsisted till the reign of Psammeticus. Such a change in the measures of Egypt accords perfectly with the character of Sesostris, who effected a general revolution in the government, established new laws, and a new administration, raised mounds

(*k*) In the lower Delta, the country is watered by the means of single wheels, because the water is on a level with the land; but in the upper Delta, it is necessary to apply chain-buckets to the wheels, or raise the water by moveable pumps. There is a great number on the road from Rosetta to Cairo, and it is sufficiently evident this laborious method produces no great effect.

and



and causeways, on which to build villages and towns, and dug so great a number of canals, according to Herodotus (*l*), that the Egyptians laid aside using waggons, which they had till then employed.

It will be proper likewise to observe that the degrees of inundation are not the same through all Egypt. On the contrary, a gradual diminution obtains as the river approaches the sea. At Asouan (Syene), the overflow is more considerable, by one sixth, than at Grand Cairo; and, when the depth of water, at this latter city, is twenty-seven feet, it is scarcely four at Rosetta and Damietta. The reason of this is, that besides the quantity of water absorbed by the grounds, as it flows, the river, confined in one single bed, and within a narrow valley, rises higher in the upper country; whereas, when it has passed Cairo, being no longer obstructed by the mountains, and separating into a thousand

(*l*) Herodotus, lib. 2. This circumstance has greatly embarrassed our modern chronologists, who place Sesostris before Moses, in whose time waggons still subsisted in Egypt; but it is not the fault of Herodotus if his system of chronology, the best of all antiquity, has not been understood.

branches,



branches, it necessarily loses in depth what it acquires in surface.

The reader will conclude, doubtless, from what I have said, that writers have flattered themselves too much in supposing they could fix the precise limits of the enlargement and rise of the Delta. But, though I would reject all illusory circumstances, I am far from denying the fact to be well founded; it is too plain from reason, and an examination of the country. The rise of the ground appears to me demonstrated by an observation on which little stress has been laid. In going from Rosetta to Cairo, when the waters are low, as in the month of March, we may remark, as we go up the river, that the shore rises gradually above the water; so that, if it overflowed two feet at Rosetta, it overflows from three to four at Faoua, and upwards of twelve at Cairo (*m*). Now, by reasoning from this fact, we may deduce the proof of an increase by sediment; for the layer of mud being in proportion to the thickness of the sheets of

(*m*) It would be curious to ascertain in what proportion it continues up to Asouan. Some Copts whom I have interrogated on the subject, assured me that it was much higher through all the Said than at Cairo.

water



water by which it is deposited, must be more or less considerable as these are of a greater or less depth; and we have seen that the like gradation is observable from Asouan to the sea.

On the other hand, the increase of the Delta manifests itself in a striking manner, by the form of Egypt, along the Mediterranean. When we consider its figure on the map, we perceive, that the country, which is in the line of the river, and evidently formed of foreign materials, has assumed a semi-circular shape, and that the shores of Arabia and Africa, on each side, have a direction towards the bottom of the Delta, which manifestly discovers this country was formerly agulph, that, in time, has been filled up.

This accumulation is common to all rivers, and is to be accounted for in the same manner in all: the rain water, and the snow, descending from the mountains into the vallies, hurry incessantly along with them the earth they wash away in their descent. The heavier parts, such as pebbles and sands, soon stop, unless forced along by a rapid current. But when the waters meet only with a fine and  
light



light earth, they carry away large quantities with the greatest facility. The Nile meeting with such a kind of earth, in Abyffinia, and the interior parts of Africa, its waters are loaded, and its bed filled with it; nay, it is frequently so embarrassed with this sediment, as to be straightened in its course. But, when the inundation restores to it its natural energy, it drives the mud that has accumulated towards the sea, at the same time that it brings down more for the ensuing season; and this, arrived at its mouth, heaps up, and forms shoals, where the declivity does not allow sufficient action to the current, and where the sea produces an equilibrium of resistance. The stagnation, which follows, occasions the grosser particles, which till then had floated, to sink, and this takes place more particularly in those places where there is least motion, as toward the shores, till the sides become gradually enriched by the spoils of the upper country, and of the Delta itself; for, if the Nile takes from Abyffinia, to give to the Thebais, it likewise takes from the Thebais to give to the Delta, and from the Delta to carry to the sea. Wherever its waters have a current, it despoils the same territory



territory it enriches. As we ascend toward Cairo, when the river is low, we may observe on each side the banks worn steep, and crumbling in large flakes. The Nile, which undermines them, depriving their light earth of support, it falls into the bed of the river, for when the water is high, the earth imbibes it; and when the sun and drought return, cracks and moulders away in great flakes, which are hurried along by the Nile. Thus are several canals choaked up, and others enlarged, while the bed of the river continually rises. This is the case with the most frequented of these at present, I mean that which runs from Nadir to the branch of Damietta. This canal, at first dug by the hand of man, is in several places become as wide as the Seine. It supplies even the mother branch, which runs from Batn-el-Bakara to Nadir, and which is filling up so fast, that if it be not speedily cleansed, it will soon become firm ground: the reason of this is, that the river tends perpetually to the right line, in which it has the greatest force; wherefore it has preferred the Bolbitine, which was at first but an artificial canal, to the Canopic branch (*n*).

(*n*) Herodot. lib. ii:



From this mechanism of the river, it further results that the principal encroachment must be formed in the line of the most considerable mouths, and of the strongest current; and the aspect of the country is conformable with this theory. If we cast our eye on the map, we shall perceive that the projection of the lands is chiefly in the direction of the branches of Rosetta and Damietta. The lateral and intermediate country continues to be lakes and morasses unseparated, between the Continent and the sea, because the small canals, which terminate there, have been able to produce only an imperfect accumulation; for this mud and sediment cause a very slow rise: nor would this indeed ever suffice to elevate them above the water, without the addition of a more powerful agent, which is the sea, that perpetually raises the level of the low banks above its own waters. For the waves, beating on the shore, repel the sand and mud which they meet; their dashing afterwards accumulates that slender bank, and gives it an elevation which it never would have attained in still waters. The truth of this is manifest to every person who walks on the edge of the sea, on a low and changing shore; but the sea must have no  
current



current on the beach : for if it loses in those parts where it is in eddy, it gains in those where it is in motion. When the shoals are at length formed on the level of the water, human industry soon endeavours their improvement. But instead of saying it raises their level above the water, we ought to say, it sinks the level of the water, since the canals which are excavated collect, in narrow channels, those waters which were spread over a great extent of ground (*o*).

There remain unquestionably many observations to make, or to reconsider, in this country ; but, as I have already said, they are attended with great difficulties, to overcome which, much time, expence, and address are necessary ; and in many respects, the necessary obstacles are even more insuperable than the fundamental. Baron de Tott experienced the truth of this very lately, with respect to the Nilometer. In vain did he endeavour to seduce the guardians ; in vain did he give

(*o*) The great number of canals may be the cause of variation in the degrees of the inundation ; for if there be many, and those deep ones, the water will run off quicker, and rise less ; if there be few, and those shallow, the contrary will happen.



and promise sequins to the cryers, in order to obtain the true heights of the Nile; their contradictory reports proved either their deceit, or their universal ignorance. It will be observed, perhaps, that measuring columns might be erected in private houses; but such experiments, simple in theory, are impossible in practice: they would expose to too serious dangers. Even the curiosity natural to the Franks, every day renders the Turks more jealous. They are persuaded we have formed designs on their country; and the invasions of the Russians, added to popular prejudice, strengthens their suspicions. It is generally believed, at this moment, throughout their empire, that the predicted hour is arrived, when the power and religion of the Mussulmen are about to be destroyed, and that the *Yellow King* is coming to establish a new empire, &c. &c. But it is time to resume our subject.

I pass slightly over the season (*p*) of the inundation, which is so well known; its

(*p*) It is fixed precisely to the 19th of June, but it would be difficult to determine the first instant of it so exactly as the Copts wish to do.

insen-

*It appears they were right*



insensible increase, so unlike the sudden swelling of our rivers; its diversities, according to which it is sometimes feeble, sometimes strong, and sometimes even entirely fails; a very rare case, but of which two or three instances have happened. All these particulars are too well known to be repeated; it is known likewise that the causes of this phenomenon, which were an enigma to the ancients (*q*), are no longer so to the Europeans. Since travellers have informed them that Abyffinia and the adjacent part of Africa, are deluged with rain in May, June, and July, they have, with reason, concluded, that it must be these rains, which, by the situation of the country, abounding with a thousand rivers, collect together in the same valley, direct their course to distant shores, and present the stupendous sight of a mass of water, which employs three months in draining off. We leave to Grecian naturalists their action of the northerly or Etesian winds, which, by a pretended pressure, stayed the course of the river; it is astonishing

(*q*) Democritus, however, had conjectured the true cause. See Diodorus Siculus, lib. II.



that even they should ever have admitted this explication, for the wind, acting only on the surface of the water, can never prevent the inferior mass from obeying the laws of gravity. In vain have some moderns alledged the example of the Mediterranean, which, from the continuance of easterly winds, leaves dry the coast of Syria, a foot, or a foot and a half, to gain as much on those of Spain and Provence, on which westerly winds have a contrary effect; there is no comparison to be made between a sea without declivity, and a river; between the vast surface of the Mediterranean, and that of the Nile; between twenty-six feet and eighteen inches.

## C H A P. IV.

*Of the Winds and their Phænomena.*

THE northerly winds, which blow at stated periods every year, answer a more certain and effectual purpose; that of carrying into Abyssinia a prodigious quantity of clouds. From the month of April to July we see these incessantly ascending towards the south, and might be sometimes tempted to expect rain from them; but this parched country requests in vain from them a benefaction which is to return upon it under a different form. Never does it rain in the Delta in summer, and but rarely, and in small quantities, during the whole course of the year. The year 1761, observed by M. Niebuhr, was an extraordinary case, which is still frequently mentioned. The accidents occasioned by the rains in Lower Egypt, in which a number of villages, built with earth, crumbled to pieces, afford a sufficient proof that this abundance of water is there looked upon as very rare. It must be observed, likewise, that it rains



still less as you ascend towards the Said. Thus, rain is more frequent at Alexandria and Rosetta than at Cairo, and at Cairo than at Miniah, and is almost a prodigy at Djirdja. As for us, the inhabitants of humid countries, we cannot conceive how it is possible for a country to subsist without rain (*a*); but in Egypt, besides the quantity of water which the earth imbibes at the inundation, the dews which fall in the summer might suffice for vegetation. The Melons, called Pastekes, afford a remarkable proof of this; for though they have frequently nothing under them but a dry dust, yet their leaves are always fresh. These dews, as well as the rains, are more copious towards the sea, and less considerable in proportion to their distance from it; but differ from them by being more abundant in summer than in winter. At Alexandria, after sunset, in the month of April, the clothes exposed to the air,

(*a*) When rain falls in Egypt and in Palestine, there is a general joy among the people: they assemble together in the streets, they sing, are all in motion, and shout, *ya allah! ya mobarek!* that is to say, O God! O Blessed! &c.

and



and the terraces are soaked with them, as if it had rained. Like the rains, again, these dews are more or less heavy, according to the prevailing wind. The southerly and the south-easterly produce none ; the north wind a great deal, and the westerly still more. These varieties are easily explained, by observing that the two former proceed from the deserts of Africa and Arabia, which afford not a drop of water ; that the northerly and westerly winds, on the contrary, convey over Egypt the vapours from the Mediterranean, which the first crosses, and the other traverses lengthways. I find, even, on comparing my observations on this subject in Provence, in Syria, and in Egypt, with those of M. Niebuhr in Arabia and at Bombay, that this relative position of the seas and continents is the cause of the various qualities of one and the same wind, which produces rain in one country, while it is invariably dry in another ; a remark which deranges not a little the systems of both ancient and modern astrologers respecting the influence of the planets. †

Another phænomenon, no less remarkable, is the periodical return of each wind, and its appropriation, so to speak, to certain seasons



sons of the year. Egypt and Syria present, in this respect, a regularity worthy of attention.

In Egypt, when the sun approaches the tropic of Cancer, the winds, which before blew from the east, change to the north, and become constant in that point. In June they always blow from the north and north-west; this, therefore, is the proper season for going up the Levant, and a vessel may expect to anchor in Cyprus, or at Alexandria, the fourteenth, nay, sometimes the eleventh day, after her departure from Marseilles. The winds continue northerly in July, but vary sometimes toward the west, and sometimes toward the east. About the end of July, during all the month of August, and half of September, they remain constantly in the north, and are moderate; brisker in the day, however, and weaker at night. At this period an universal calm reigns on the Mediterranean, so that ships would be seventy or eighty days in returning to France.

Towards the end of September, when the sun repasses the line, the winds return to the east; and, though not fixed, blow more regularly from that than any other point, except the north. Vessels avail themselves  
of



of this season, which lasts all October and part of November, to return to Europe; and the run to Marseilles is from thirty to five-and-thirty days. As the sun approaches the other tropic, the winds become more variable and more tempestuous; they most usually blow from the north, the north-west, and west, in which points they continue during the months of December, January, and February, which is the winter season in Egypt, as well as with us. The vapours of the Mediterranean, condensed by the coldness of the atmosphere, descend in mists and rains. Towards the end of February and in March, when the sun returns towards the equator, the winds are more frequently southerly than at any other season. During this last month, and that of April, the south-easterly, south, and south-westerly winds prevail; and at times the west, north, and east; the latter of which becomes the most prevalent about the end of April; and during May it divides with the north the empire of the sea, and renders the passage to France still more expeditious than at the other equinox.



*Of the hot Wind, or Kamfin.*

The southerly winds, of which I have been speaking, are known in Egypt by the general name of *winds of fifty (days) (a)*; not that they last fifty days without intermission, but because they prevail more frequently in the fifty days preceding and following the equinox. Travellers have mentioned them under the denomination of *poisonous winds (b)*; or, more correctly, *hot winds of the desert*. Such, in fact, is their quality; and their heat is sometimes so excessive, that it is difficult to form any idea of its violence without having experienced it; but it may be compared to the heat of a large oven at the moment of drawing out the bread. When these winds begin to blow, the atmosphere

(a) In Arabic, *kamfin*; but the *k* represents the Spanish *jota*, or the German *ch*.

(b) The Arabs of the desert call them *femoum*, or poison; and the Turks *shamyela*, or wind of Syria, from which is formed the *Samiel* wind. Baron de Tott translates this word the *wind of Damascus*, which is the capital of Syria. See also Note (c) to Chapter I. of our author's account of Syria, where *el Sham* is said to be the Arabic name of the city of Damascus. T.

assumes



assumes an alarming aspect. The sky, at other times so clear, in this climate, becomes dark and heavy; the sun loses his splendour, and appears of a violet colour. The air is not cloudy, but grey and thick, and is, in fact, filled with an extremely subtle dust, which penetrates every where. This wind, always light and rapid, is not at first remarkably hot, but it increases in heat in proportion as it continues. All animated bodies soon discover it, by the change it produces in them. The lungs, which a too rarefied air no longer expands, are contracted, and become painful. Respiration is short and difficult, the skin parched and dry, and the body consumed by an internal heat. In vain is recourse had to large draughts of water; nothing can restore perspiration. In vain is coolness sought for; all bodies in which it is usual to find it, deceive the hand that touches them. Marble, iron, water, notwithstanding the sun no longer appears, are hot. The streets are deserted, and the dead silence of night reigns every where. The inhabitants of towns and villages shut themselves up in their houses, and those of the desert in their tents, or in wells dug in the earth, where they



they wait the termination of this destructive heat. It usually lasts three days, but if it exceeds that time it becomes insupportable. Woe to the traveller whom this wind surprises remote from shelter; he must suffer all its horrible effects, which sometimes are mortal. The danger is most imminent when it blows in squalls, for then the rapidity of the wind encreases the heat to such a degree, as to cause sudden death. This death is a real suffocation; the lungs being empty, are convulsed, the circulation disordered, and the whole mass of blood driven by the heart towards the head and breast; whence that hæmorrhage at the nose and mouth which happens after death. This wind is especially destructive to persons of a plethoric habit, and those in whom fatigue has destroyed the tone of the muscles and the vessels. The corpse remains a long time warm, swells, turns blue, and is easily separated; all which are signs of that putrid fermentation which takes place in animal bodies when the humours become stagnant. These accidents are to be avoided, by stopping the nose and mouth with handkerchiefs; an efficacious method likewise is that practised by the camels, which bury their  
noses



noſes in the ſand, and keep them there till the ſquall is over.

Another quality of this wind is its extreme aridity; which is ſuch, that water ſprinkled on the floor evaporates in a few minutes; by this extreme dryneſs, it withers and ſtrips all the plants, and, by exhaling too ſuddenly the emanations from animal bodies, criſps the ſkin, cloſes the pores, and cauſes that feveriſh heat which is the invariable effect of ſuppreſſed perſpiration.

Theſe hot winds are not peculiar to Egypt; they blow likewiſe in Syria; more frequently, however, near the ſea, and in the deſert, than on the mountains. M. Niebuhr met with them in Arabia, at Bombay, and in the Diarbekir: they are alſo known in Perſia, in the reſt of Africa, and even in Spain; every where their effects are ſimilar, but their direction varies according to the ſituation of the country. In Egypt, the moſt violent proceed from the ſouth-ſouth-weſt; at Mecca, from the eaſt; at Surat, from the north; at Baſſora, from the north-weſt; from the weſt at Bagdad; and in Syria from the ſouth-eaſt. Theſe varieties, which ſeem embarraſſing at firſt ſight, on reflection, furniſh



nish the means of solving the enigma. We find, on examination, that these winds always proceed from desert continents ; and, in fact, it is natural that the air which covers the immense plains of Lybia and Arabia, meeting there neither with rivulets, nor lakes, nor forests, but scorched by the rays of a burning sun, and the reflection of the sand, should acquire a prodigious degree of heat and aridity ; and if any cause intervenes to set it in motion, it cannot but carry with it the destructive qualities it has imbibed ; it is so true that these qualities are owing to the action of the sun upon the sands that these same winds produce not the same effects at every season. In Egypt, for example, I am assured, that the southerly winds in December and January are as cold as those from the north ; and the reason of this is, that the sun, having reached the southern tropic, no longer burns up the northern parts of Africa, and that Abyssinia, which is extremely mountainous, is covered with snow. The sun must approach the equator to produce these phænomena. From a similar reason, the south wind has much less effect in Cyprus, where it arrives cooled by the vapours of the Mediterranean.

That



That from the north possesses its characteristic qualities in this island, where the inhabitants complain that its heat is insupportable in summer, while it is freezing cold in winter; which evidently arises from the state of Asia Minor, which in summer is burnt up, and in winter covered with ice. In fact, this subject offers a multitude of problems, calculated to excite the curiosity of the naturalist.—Would it not, for instance, be interesting to know,

1st, Whence proceeds this connection of the seasons, and the progress of the sun, with the various winds, and the points from whence they blow?

2dly, Why, throughout the Mediterranean, does the wind most frequently blow from the north, insomuch, that we may say it continues in that point nine months out of twelve?

3dly, Why do the easterly winds return so regularly after the equinoxes; and why are the winds, in general, higher at this period?

4thly, Why are the dews more abundant in summer than in winter; and why, since the clouds are caused by the evaporation of the sea, and that evaporation is more copious



summer than in winter, why, notwithstanding, are there more clouds in winter than in summer?

5thly, In short, why is rain so rare in Egypt, and why do the clouds rather collect in Abyssinia?

But it is time to complete our observations on the physical state of this country.

## C H A P. V.

*Of the Climate and Air.*

THE climate of Egypt is, with reason, esteemed extremely hot, since in July and August, Reaumur's thermometer stands, in the most temperate apartments, at 24 and 25 degrees above the freezing point. In the Said, it rises still higher, though I can assert nothing precise in that respect. The height of the sun, which, in summer, nearly approaches the zenith, is doubtless a primary cause of this heat; but when we consider that, in other countries, under the same latitude, the heat is less, we may conclude there exists a secondary cause, equally powerful with the former, and this, perhaps, is the country being so little elevated above the level of the sea. On this account, two seasons only should be distinguished in Egypt; the spring and summer, that is to say, the cool season, and the hot. The latter continues from March to November; and even from the end of February, the sun is not supportable, for an European, at nine o'clock in the morning. During the



whole of this season the air is inflamed, the sky sparkling, and the heat oppressive to all unaccustomed to it. The body sweats profusely, even under the lightest dress, and in a state of the most profound repose. And this perspiration becomes so necessary, that, the slightest suppression of it is a serious malady; insomuch, that, the ordinary salute "How do you do?" ought in Egypt to be: "How do you sweat?" The departure of the sun tempers, in some degree, these heats. The vapours from the earth soaked by the Nile, and those brought by the west, and north-west winds, absorbing the fire dispersed throughout the atmosphere, produce an agreeable freshness, and even piercing cold, if we may credit the natives, and some European merchants; but the Egyptians, almost naked, and accustomed to perspire, shiver at the least coolness. The thermometer, which, at the lowest, in the month of February, stands at the eighth or ninth degree of Reaumur's scale, above the freezing point, enables us to determine with certainty, and we may pronounce, that snow, and hail, are phænomena which no Egyptian has seen in fifty years. As for our merchants, their sensibility is owing to their impro-



improper use of furs, which is carried so far, that, in winter, they have frequently two or three coverings of foxes-skin, and, even in summer, retain the ermine or *petit gris*; in excuse for this, they plead the chilliness they experience in the shade, as an indispensable reason; and in fact, the northerly and westerly currents of air, which almost continually prevail, cause a pretty considerable coolness out of the sun; but the secret and real reason is, that the pelisse is to be considered as the lace of Turkey, the favourite object of luxury; it is the sign of opulence, and the etiquette of dignity; for the investiture of important offices is always accompanied with the present of a pelisse, as if they were to say of him to whom they give it, he is now arrived at so great eminence, he need concern himself with nothing, but perspire at his ease.

It might naturally be imagined that Egypt, from these heats, and its wet and marshy condition for three months, must be an unhealthy country; this was my first idea on my arrival there; and, when I beheld, at Cairo, the houses of our merchants ranged along the Kalidj, where the water stagnates till the month of April, I made no doubt that



the exhalations thence arising, must cause many maladies; but experience proves the fallacy of this theory; the vapours of the stagnant waters, so fatal in Cyprus, and Alexandria, have not the same effect in Egypt. This appears to me to be owing to the natural dryness of the air, to the proximity of Africa, and Arabia, which incessantly draw off the humidity, and the perpetual currents of wind, which meet with no obstacle. This aridity is such, that flesh meat exposed, even in summer, to the north wind, does not putrefy, but dries up, and becomes hard as wood. In the deserts, dead carcases are found dried in this manner, which are so light, that a man may easily lift with one hand the entire body of a camel. (*a*)

The air, besides possessing this drying quality, appears to be strongly impregnated with salts, the proofs of which are every where apparent. The stones are corroded by natrum, and in moist places, long crystallizations of it are to be found, which might be taken for

(*a*) It must be remarked, however, that the air near the sea is infinitely less dry than higher up the country: Thus, at Alexandria, and Rosetta, iron cannot be exposed four-and-twenty hours to the air, without rusting.



salt-petre. The wall of the Jesuits garden, at Cairo, built with earth and bricks, is every where covered with a crust of this natrum, as thick as a crown-piece; and when this garden has been overflowed by the waters of the Kalidj, the ground, after they have drained off, appears sparkling on every side with white crystals, which certainly were not brought thither by the water, since it shows no sign of salt, either to the taste, or in distillation.

It is no doubt, this property of the air, and the earth, which, added to the heat, gives vegetation an activity almost incredible in our cold climates. Wherever plants have water, the rapidity of their growth is prodigious. Whoever has travelled to Cairo, or Rosetta, knows, that the species of gourd called kara, will, in twenty-four hours, send out shoots near four inches long; but it is worthy observation, that this soil appears extremely unfavourable to all exotics. Foreign plants degenerate there rapidly: the truth of which remark is proved by daily experience. Our merchants are obliged every year to renew their seeds, and to send to Malta for their cauliflowers, beet-root, carrots, and falfify: these, when sown, succeed at first very well; but if you again



slow the seed they produce, the plants run up tall and weak. The same happens to apricots, pears, and peaches, when transported to Rosetta. The vegetation of this earth seems too violent for spongy and pulpy fruits, which should be gradually accustomed, by the arts of culture, to the soil and climate.

## C H A P. VI.

*Of the various Inhabitants of Egypt.*

AMID those revolutions which all nations have experienced, there are few countries which have preserved their original and primitive inhabitants pure and unmixed. Throughout the world, the same cupidity which leads individuals to encroach on each other's property, has excited nations one against another ; and the consequence of this opposition of interests and powers, has been to introduce into states a foreign conqueror, who, now an insolent usurper, has despoiled the vanquished nation of the domain granted them by nature ; and now, a more timid or more civilized invader, has contented himself with participating in advantages refused him by his native soil. Here we see various races of inhabitants settling themselves in the same country, who, adopting the same manners and interests, have sometimes united in the most intimate alliances ; but more frequently  
we



we find them separated by political or religious prejudices, and remaining perpetually distinct. In the first case, the different races, losing by the mixture their distinguishing characters, have formed an homogeneous people, among whom it is impossible to discover any traces of the revolution. In the second, living distinct, their perpetuated differences are become a monument which has outlived ages, and which in some cases may supply the silence of history.

Such is the case with Egypt: deprived three-and-twenty centuries ago of her natural proprietors, she has seen her fertile fields successively a prey to the Persians, the Macedonians, the Romans, the Greeks, the Arabs, the Georgians, and, at length, the race of Tartars, distinguished by the name of Ottoman Turks. Among so many nations, several of them have left vestiges of their transient possession; but as they have been blended in succession, they have been so confounded as to render it very difficult to discriminate their respective characters. We may, however, still distinguish the inhabitants of Egypt into four principal races, of different origin.

The



The first, and most generally dispersed, is that of the Arabs, which may be divided into three classes. First, the posterity of those who, on the conquest of Egypt by Amrou, in the year 640, hastened from the Hedjaz, and every part of Arabia, to settle in this country, so justly celebrated for its fertility. Every one was anxious to possess lands in it, and the Delta was presently filled with foreigners, to the prejudice of the vanquished Greeks. This first race is preserved in the present class of fellahs, or husbandmen, and artizans, who still retain the characteristic features of their ancestors, but are taller and stronger made, the natural effect of a more plentiful nourishment than that of the deserts. In general, the Egyptian peasants reach the height of five feet four inches, and many among them attain to five feet six or seven. They are muscular, without being fleshy and corpulent, as men will be who are hardened to fatigue. Their skin, tanned by the sun, is almost black, but their countenances have nothing disagreeable. The greatest part of them have heads of a fine oval, large and projecting foreheads, and, under a dark eyebrow, a black, sunken, but brilliant eye, the



the nose large, but not aquiline, well-shaped mouths, and, without exception, fine teeth. The inhabitants of the great towns, more motley, have a less uniform and marked physiognomy. Those of the villages, on the contrary, forming no alliances but in their own families, have more general and more constant characteristics, and something of ferocity in their air, which originates in the passions of a mind continually soured by the perpetual war and tyranny which surround them.

A second class of Arabs is that of the Africans, or Occidentals (*a*), who have arrived at different periods, and under different chiefs, and united themselves to the former; like them, they are descended from the Mussulmen conquerors, who expelled the Greeks from Mauritania; like them, they exercise agriculture and trades; but they are more especially numerous in the Said, where they have villages, and even distinct sovereigns of their own.

The third class is that of the *Bedouins*, or inhabitants of the deserts (*b*), known to

(*a*) In Arabic *magarbe*, the plural of *magrebi*, western.

(*b*) In Arabic *bedaoui*, formed of *bid*, desert, country without habitations.



the ancients by the name of *Scenites*, that is, dwellers in tents. Some of these, dispersed in families, inhabit the rocks, caverns, ruins, and sequestered places where there is water; others, united in tribes, encamp under low and smoaky tents, and pass their lives in perpetual journeyings, sometimes in the desert, sometimes on the banks of the river; having no other attachment to the soil than what arises from their own safety, or the subsistence of their flocks. There are tribes of them who arrive every year after the inundation, from the heart of Africa, to profit by the fertility of the country, and who in the spring retire into the depths of the desert; others are stationary in Egypt, where they farm lands, which they sow, and annually change. All of them observe among themselves stated limits, which they never pass, on pain of war. They all lead nearly the same kind of life, and have the same manners and customs. Ignorant and poor, the Bedouins preserve an original character distinct from surrounding nations. Pacific in their camp, they are every where else in an habitual state of war. The husbandmen, whom they pillage, hate them; the travellers, whom they despoil,



despoil, speak ill of them; and the Turks who dread them, endeavour to divide and corrupt them. It is calculated that the different tribes of them in Egypt might form a body of thirty thousand horsemen; but these are so dispersed and disunited, that they are only considered as robbers and vagabonds.

A second race of inhabitants are the Copts, called in Arabic *el Kopt*. Several families of them are to be found in the Delta; but the greatest part inhabit the Said, where they in some places occupy whole villages. Both history and tradition attest their descent from the people who were conquered by the Arabs, that is, from that mixture of Egyptians, Persians, and, above all, Greeks, who, under the Ptolemies and Constantines, were so long in possession of Egypt. They differ from the Arabs by their religion, which is Christianity; but they are again distinct from other Christians by their sect, being Eutychians. Their adherence to the theological distinctions of this heresy, has drawn persecutions on them on the part of the other Greeks, which has rendered them irreconcilable enemies. When the Arabs conquered the country, they took advantage of these animosities, to enfeeble them



them both. The Copts have at length expelled their rivals, and, as they have been always intimately acquainted with the interior of the country, they are become the depositaries of the registers of the lands and tribes. Under the name of *writers*, they are at Cairo the intendants, secretaries, and collectors of government. These writers, despised by the Turks, whom they serve, and hated by the peasants, whom they oppress, form a kind of separate class, the head of which is the writer to the principal chief. He disposes of all employments in that department, which, according to the spirit of the Turkish government, he bestows on the best bidder.

It is pretended that the name of *Copts* is derived from the city of *Coptos*, whither it has been affirmed they retired from the tyranny of the Greeks; but I am inclined to think it has a more natural and more ancient origin. The Arabic term *Kobti*, a Copt, seems to me an evident abbreviation of the Greek word *Ai-goupti-os*, an Egyptian; for the *y* was pronounced *ou*, among the ancient Greeks, and the Arabs having neither *p* nor *g* before *a*, *o*, *u*, always substitute for these letters *k* and *b*; the Copts then are properly the remains  
of



of the ancient Egyptians (*c*). This will be rendered still more probable, if we consider the distinguishing features of this race of people, we shall find them all characterized by a sort of yellowish dusky complexion, which is neither Grecian nor Arabian; they have all a puffed visage, swollen eyes, flat noses, and thick lips, in short, the exact countenance of a Mulatto. I was at first tempted to attribute this to the climate (*d*), but when I visited the sphynx, I could not help thinking the figure of that monster furnished the true solution of

(*c*) This is the more probable, since we find them in the Said before the time of Dioclesian, and it is certain the Greeks were less numerous in the Said than the Delta.

(*d*) In fact, we may observe the countenance of the negroes represents precisely that state of contraction which our faces assume when strongly affected by heat. The eyebrows are knit, the cheeks rise, the eye-lids are contracted, and the mouth distorted. This state of contraction, to which the features are perpetually exposed in the hot climates of the negroes, is become the peculiar characteristic of their countenance. Excessive cold, wind and snow produce the same effect, and thus we discover the same faces among the Tartars; while, in the temperate zones, where these extremes are unknown, the features are lengthened, the eyes less prominent, and the whole countenance more expanded.

the enigma: when I saw its features precisely those of a negro, I recollected the remarkable passage of Herodotus, in which he says, “For my part, I believe the Colchi to be  
 “ a colony of Egyptians, because, like them,  
 “ they have black skins and frizzled hair(*e*):”  
 that is, that the ancient Egyptians were real negroes, of the same species with all the natives of Africa; and though, as might be expected, after mixing for so many ages with the Greeks and Romans, they have lost the intensity of their first colour, yet they still retain strong marks of their original conformation.

This observation may be still farther extended, and it may be laid down as a general principle, that the features are a kind of monument capable, in many cases, of elucidating and ascertaining the testimony of history, concerning the origin of nations. Among us, a lapse of nine hundred years has not been able to efface those discriminating marks which distinguished the inhabitants of Gaul from those Northern invaders, who, under Charles the Great, settled themselves in our

(*e*) Μελαγχρόες εἰσι καὶ ὠλοτρύχες, Lib. II. p. 150.



richest provinces. Travellers who go from Normandy to Denmark, observe, with astonishment, the extreme resemblance of the inhabitants of those two countries, which still subsists, notwithstanding the distance of times and places. The same remark may be made with respect to Franconia and Burgundy; and throughout England, France, and every other country, the same proofs of emigration are found in the features of the inhabitants. Do not the Jews, in whatever part of the world they reside, carry with them distinguishing marks never to be effaced? In those states where the nobility have descended from a foreign people, introduced by conquest, if those nobles contract no alliance with the natives, they will always remain distinct in their features and persons. The Calmuc race is, on this account, extremely distinguishable in India; and were we attentively to examine the various nations of Europe, and the North of Asia, we might possibly discover many resemblances which have been long since forgotten.

But to return to Egypt: this historical fact affords to philosophy an interesting subject of reflection. How are we astonished when we  
behold



behold the present barbarism and ignorance of the Copts, descended from the profound genius of the Egyptians, and the brilliant intelligence of the Greeks; when we reflect that to the race of negroes, at present our slaves, and the objects of our extreme contempt, we owe our arts, sciences, and even the very use of speech; and when we recollect that, in the midst of those nations who call themselves the friends of liberty and humanity, the most barbarous of slaveries is justified; and that it is even a problem whether the understanding of negroes be of the same species with that of white men!

Language may be considered as another monument whose indications are neither less just nor less instructive. That formerly spoken by the Copts well confirms this observation. On one hand, the form of their letters, and the greater part of their words, demonstrate that the Greek nation, during the thousand years it continued in Egypt, has left deep marks of its power and influence; but, on the other, the Coptic alphabet has five letters, and the language a number of words, which may be considered as the remains of the ancient Egyptian. These words, criti-



cally examined, have a sensible analogy with the dialects of the ancient neighbouring nations, such as the Arabs, Ethiopians, Syrians, and even those who lived on the banks of the Euphrates; nor can it be doubted but all these languages are derived from one common stock. For upwards of three centuries, that of the Copts has fallen into disuse. The Arabs, disdaining the language of the nations they subdued, imposed on them, together with their yoke, the necessity of learning that of their conquerors. This obligation became even a law, when, about the end of the first century of the Hejira, the Caliph Waled I. prohibited the Greek tongue throughout his whole empire. From that time the Arabic became universal; and the other languages, confined to books, subsisted only for the learned, who neglected them. Such has been the fate of the Coptic; the priests and monks no longer understand it, in their scriptures and books of devotion, in which alone it exists; and in Egypt, as in Syria, every one, whether Mahometan or Christian, speaks Arabic, nor is any other language understood.

Some observations, important to geography and history, here present themselves. Travellers,



vellers, in treating of the countries they have seen, are accustomed, and frequently find it absolutely necessary, to employ some words of the language; as in giving the proper names of nations, men, cities, rivers, and natural productions peculiar to the country; but hence has arisen this inconvenience, that by conveying the words of one language in the characters of another, they have so disfigured them, as to render them difficult to be known. This has happened particularly with respect to the countries of which I treat; and, in books of history and geography, the consequence has been an inexplicable, and incredible confusion. Any Arab, who should learn French, would not recognize in our maps ten words of his own language, and, when we ourselves have learnt Arabic, we experience the same inconvenience. The causes of this are various.

First, the ignorance of travellers, in general, of the Arabic language, and especially of the pronunciation; which ignorance occasions their ear, unaccustomed to foreign sounds, to make a vicious comparison of them with those of their own language (*f*).

(*f*) This is true even of the learned Pococke, who, notwithstanding his great knowledge of oriental books,



Secondly, the nature of several sounds, which have nothing analogous to them in the language in which they attempt to convey them. This the French experience every day in the *th* of the English, and in the *jota* of the Spaniards. Without hearing, it is impossible for any man to form an idea of these; but it is far worse with respect to the Arabs, in whose language there are three vowels, and seven or eight consonants, to which Europeans are utter strangers. How then is it possible to represent them, so as to retain their true sound, and not confound them with others totally different?

A third cause of confusion has arisen from writers who have compiled books and maps. In collecting their information from all the Europeans who have travelled in the East, they have adopted the orthography of proper names, such as they found it in the author they consulted, without considering that the different

could never dispense with an interpreter; and very lately Vonhaven, Professor of Arabic in Denmark, was unable even to understand the *salam alai kam* (good-morrow) when he arrived in Egypt; and his young companion Forskal, at the end of a year, had made a much greater progress than he had.

nations



nations of Europe, though they equally use the Roman characters, found them differently.— For example, the *u* of the Italians is not the *u* of the French, but *ou*. Their *gh* is sounded like *gu*, and their *c*, *tch*: hence an apparent diversity of names, which are, in fact, the same. Thus it is, that what should be written in French *chaik*, or *chék*, is variously expressed by (*g*) *schek*, *shekh*, *schech*, *sciek*, according as the word has been copied from English, German, or Italian writers, with whom *sh*, *sch*, *sc*, are respectively sounded like our *ché*. The Poles would write *szech*, and the Spaniards *chej*. This difference of the final *j*, *ch*, and *kh*, arises from the Arabic letter being the Spanish *jota*, or German *ch* (*b*), the sound of which is unknown to the English, French, or Italians. Hence it is that the English write *Rooda*, for the name of the island, which the Italians write *Ruda*, and which we, like the Arabs, should pronounce *Rouda*; that Pococke writes *harammee* for *harami*, a robber; and Niebuhr *dsjebel* for *djebel*, a mountain; that Danville, who has

(*g*) To make these differences sensible in reading, the letters must be pronounced one by one.

(*b*) Not in all cases, but after *o* and *u*, as in *buch*, a book.



made great use of English memoirs, writes *Sbâm* for *Châm*, Syria; *wadi* for *ouadi*, a valley; and a thousand other examples.

This, as I have said, has introduced a great confusion into orthography; and, if it be not remedied, we shall find the same uncertainty in modern writers we so justly complain of in the ancients, who, by their ignorance of the barbarous languages, and by their rage for accommodating the sounds of them to the taste of the Greeks and Romans, have destroyed all traces of the original names, and deprived us of an invaluable mean of discovering the ancient state of things in that now subsisting. Our language is subject to the same delicacy; it disfigures every thing, and our ear rejects, as barbarous, whatever it is not accustomed to. It is useless, no doubt, to introduce new characters; but it might not be amiss to approach, as near as possible, the sound of those we would express, and represent them by those of our letters which are best adapted, adding to them some certain marks (*i*). Were this done by every nation,

(*i*) When the French travellers, who are making the tour of the world, return, we shall, no doubt, see no small

con-



tion, there would be but one nomenclature, and this would be a first step towards an invention, which every day becomes more wanted, and more easy, a *general alphabet*, adapted to all languages, or at least to those of Europe. In the course of this work I shall make as little use as possible of Arabic words; but when I shall be under that necessity, let not the reader be surprised, if I frequently depart from the orthography of the generality of travellers. To judge from what they have written, we should be induced to think, that not one of them has known the true pronunciation of the Arabic alphabet, or understood how to convey the sounds of that language in our characters. But I return to my subject.

A third race of inhabitants in Egypt are the Turks, who are the masters of the country, or at least possess that title. The name of confusion produced in their narratives, by the variations of the English and French orthography. (This confusion is already sufficiently exemplified in the different accounts of the same voyages, published respectively by Hawkesworth, Parkinson, Cook, Forster, &c. and by the different modes of writing the same words, by the officers, and others, in the different ships. T.)

*Turk*



*Turk*, originally, was not peculiar to the nation to which it is now applied: it denoted, in general, all the hordes dispersed to the east, and even to the north, of the Caspian Sea, as far as beyond Lake Aral, over those vast countries which have taken from them the denomination of *Tourk-estan* (*k*). These are the same people, who were known to the ancient Greeks by the names of Parthians, Massagetes, and even of Scythians, for which we have substituted that of Tartars. A nation of shepherds, continually wandering, like the Bedouin Arabs; they have shewn themselves, in every age, brave and formidable warriors. Neither Cyrus nor Alexander were able to subdue them. But the Arabs were more fortunate. About eighty years after Mahomet, they invaded, by order of the Caliph Waled I. the country of the Turks, and, by force of arms, imposed on them their religion: they even obliged them to pay tribute. But the empire falling into confusion, the rebel governors had recourse to their aid to resist the power of the

(*k*) *Estan* is a Persian word, signifying *country*, and is used as a termination to proper names; as in *Arab-estan*, *Frank-estan*, and we may add *Kourdestan*, and *Indo-estan*, &c.

Caliphs,

Caliphs, and they took part in every contest; nor were they long in acquiring the ascendant this might be expected to give them: for, continually encamped, and with arms in their hands, they became a warlike people, and initiated in every military manœuvre. Like the Bedouins, they were divided into tribes, or camps, called, in their language, *ordou*, of which we have made *horde*; and these tribes, allied or at variance, according to their several interests, were perpetually engaged in wars. Hence we see, in their history, several nations, all equally called Turks, alternately attacking, destroying, and expelling each other. To avoid this confusion, I shall confine the name of *Turks* to those of Constantinople, and shall give that of *Turk-* +  
*men* to their predecessors.

Some hordes of Turkmen, then, having been introduced into the Arabian empire, proceeded in a short time to give law to those who had called them in, either as mercenaries or allies. This the Caliphs themselves experienced in a remarkable instance. Motaz-zam (1), brother and successor of Almamoun,

(1) In 834.

having



having taken a body of Turkmen for his guards, saw himself compelled to quit Bagdad on account of their disorders; and, after his time, their power and insolence encreased to such a degree, that they became the disposers of the throne and life of their Princes, and murdered three of them in less than thirty years. The Caliphs, when freed from this first bondage, did not profit by their experience; for, about the year 935, Radi B'el-lah (*m*) having again resigned his authority to a Turkman, his successors were entangled in their former chains, and guarded by the Emirs-el-omara; possessed only the shadow of power. Amid the disorders of this anarchy, a multitude of Turkmen hordes penetrated into the empire, and founded different independent states, in the Kerman, and the Korasan; at Iconium, Aleppo, Damascus, and in Egypt.

'Till then, the present Turks, distinguished by the name of *Ogouzians*, had remained to the east of the Caspian, and toward the Djihoun; but, about the beginning of the thirteenth century, Djenkiz-kan having unit-

(*m*) *Who delights in God.*



ed all the tribes of Upper Tartary against the Princes of Balk and Samarcand, the Ogouzians did not think proper to wait for the Mogols, but began their march under their Chief Soliman, and, driving their herds before them, encamped (in 1214) in the Aderbedjân, to the number of fifty thousand horsemen. The Mogols followed them, and pushed them still farther to the west, into Armenia. Soliman being drowned (in 1220), in endeavouring to pass the Euphrates on horseback, Ertogrul, his son took the command of the hordes, and advanced into the plains of Asia Minor, to which he was allured by the abundant pasturage they afforded for his cattle. The good conduct of this chief procured him, in these countries, a power and respect which made his alliance sought after by other Princes. Among these was the Turkman Ala-el-din, Sultan of Iconium. Ala-el-din, finding himself old, and harassed by the Tartars of Djenkiz-kan, granted lands to the Turks under Ertogrul, and even made their Chief general of all his troops. Ertogrul proved himself deserving the confidence of the Sultan, vanquished the Mogols, acquired still greater power and reputation, and transmitted his



his honours to his son Osman, who received from Ala-el-din, successor of the former of that name, the Kofetan, drum, and horse-tails, which are symbols of command among all the Tartars. This Osman, to distinguish the Turks, his followers, from the others, gave them the name of *Osmanles*, from which we have made *Ottomans* (*n*); which new name soon became formidable to the Greeks of Constantinople, from whom Osman conquered a sufficient extent of territory to found a powerful kingdom. He soon bestowed on it that title, by assuming, in 1300, the dignity of *Sultan*, which signifies absolute sovereign.

No one is ignorant in what manner his successors, the heirs of his ambition and activity, continued to aggrandize themselves at the expence of the Greeks; till, continually depriving them of whole provinces in Europe and Asia, they at length shut them up within the walls of Constantinople; and Mahomet II. son of Amurath, having taken that city in 1453, annihilated this branch of the

(*n*) This change of the *s* to the *t*, arises from the original letter being the English *th*, which foreigners express sometimes by *t*, sometimes by *s*.

Roman empire. The Turks, now finding themselves disengaged from the affairs of Europe, turned their ambitious arms to the southern provinces. Bagdad, subjugated by the Tartars, had been without Caliphs for two hundred years (*o*), but a new power, established in Persia, had succeeded to a part of their domains; and another, formed in Egypt, so early as the tenth century, and subsisting, at that time, under the name of Mamlouks, had seized on Syria.

The Turks determined to despoil these two rivals. Bayazid, the son of Mahomet, executed a part of this plan, by taking Armenia from the Soff of Persia, and Selim his son completed it, by the conquest of the Mamlouks. This Sultan having drawn them near to Aleppo, in 1517, under pretext of desiring their assistance in the war with Persia, suddenly turned his arms against them, and took from them successively Syria and Egypt, whither he pursued them. From that time the Turks established themselves in that coun-

(*o*) In 1239, Holagoukan, a descendant of Djenkiz, put an end to the Caliphate in the person of Mostazem.



try; but they are not settled much among the villages. We rarely meet with any individuals of that nation, except at Cairo; there they exercise the arts, and occupy the religious and military employments. Formerly they also were advanced to posts under government, but within the last thirty years, a tacit revolution has taken place, which, without taking from them the title, has deprived them of the reality of power.

This revolution has been effected by a fourth and last race, of which it now remains for us to speak. The individuals of it, all born at the foot of Mount Caucasus, are distinguished from the other inhabitants by the flaxen colour of their hair, which is entirely different from that of the natives of Egypt. These were found there by the Crusaders in the thirteenth century, and called by them Mamelus, or, more correctly, Mamlouks. After remaining almost annihilated for two hundred and thirty years, under the government of the Ottomans, they have found means to regain their consequence. The history of this class of soldiers, the events which first brought them into Egypt, the manner

manner in which they have continued, and re-established themselves in that country, and the nature of their government, are political phænomena of so very singular a nature, that they well deserve we should bestow a few pages in giving a distinct account of them.



## C H A P. VII.

*A summary of the history of the Mamlouks.*

THE Greeks of Constantinople, debased by a despotic and bigoted government, had seen, in the course of the seventh century, the finest provinces of their empire fall a prey to a new people. The Arabs, inflamed by the fanaticism of their religion, and still more by the enjoyment of luxuries, to which they had hitherto been strangers, conquered, in eighty years, the whole north of Africa, as far as the Canaries, and all the south of Asia, quite to the river Indus, and the Tartarian deserts. But the book of the prophet, which prescribed them their ablutions, fasts, and prayers, did not teach them either the science of legislation, or those principles of natural morality which are the solid foundations of empires and societies. The Arabs knew how to conquer, but by no means to govern: wherefore, the misshapen edifice of their power soon mouldered into ruins. The vast empire of the Caliphs, passing from despotism to anarchy,



anarchy, was dismembered on every side; and the temporal governors, undeceived respecting the sanctity of their spiritual chief, every where erected themselves into sovereigns, and formed independent states.

Egypt was not the last to follow this example; but it was not till 969, (*a*) that a regular power was established, in that country, in the person of princes, who, assuming the name of Fatmite Caliphs, disputed, even the title of their dignity, with those of Bagdad. The latter, at this period, stripped of their authority, by the Turkman soldiers, were no longer capable of opposing their pretensions. Thus did the Egyptian Caliphs peaceably obtain possession of that rich country, of which they might have formed a powerful state. But the whole history of the Arabs uniformly tends to prove that this nation never knew the science of government. The sovereigns of Egypt, no less despotic than those of Bagdad, proceeded, by like steps, to the same destruction. They took part in the quarrels of religious sects; they even set up new ones, and endeavoured to make proselytes by persecution. One of them,

(*a*) Or, 972, according to D'Herbelot.



called *Hakem b'amr ellah*, (a) was so absurdly extravagant as to declare himself an incarnate God, and barbarous enough to set fire to Cairo, for his amusement. Others dissipated the public treasure in a capricious luxury. The people, whom they oppressed, held them in abhorrence, and their own courtiers, emboldened by their weakness, were eager to share their spoils. Thus it happened to Adhad-el-din, the last of that race. After having been invaded by the crusaders, who had imposed on him a tribute, one of his generals, whom he had dismissed his service, threatened to deprive him of a power of which he shewed himself so unworthy. Knowing, that he was incapable of resisting by himself, and unable to confide in a nation he had alienated from him, he had recourse to foreigners. In vain did reason and experience dictate to him that these, once employed as his defenders, would soon become the masters of his person; one false step necessarily led to a second. He called in that tribe of Turkmen who had en-

(a) *Commander by the order of God*—This is the apostle of the *Druses*. See the curious account of that singular people, published in 1786, from the manuscript of Mr. *Venture de Paradis*, and printed for Robinsons.



slaved the Bagdad caliphs, and implored the aid of Nour-el-din, the sovereign of Aleppo, who, already ravaging Egypt, hastened to send an army into that country. These troops effectually delivered Adhad from the tribute of the Franks, and the menaces of his general. But the Caliph soon found he had only changed his enemies; they left him nothing but the shadow of power; and Selah-el-din, who took the command of the army in 1171, concluded by strangling him. Thus, the Egyptian Arabs were subjected to strangers, whose princes commenced a new dynasty in the person of Selah-el-din.

During these transactions in Egypt, and while the crusaders were, by their ill-conduct, laying the foundation for their expulsion from Syria, other revolutions were preparing in upper Asia. Djenkiz-Kan, become the sole chief of almost all the Tartar hordes, was only waiting for a favourable opportunity to invade the neighbouring states: an insult committed on some merchants, under his protection, determined him to turn his arms against the Sultan of Balk, and the eastern part of Persia; which countries, about the year 1218, became the theatre of one of the



most bloody devastations recorded in history. The Mogols, sword in hand, pillaging, murdering, and burning without distinction, either of age or sex, reduced the whole country of Sihoun, quite to the Tigris, to a heap of ashes; and passing to the north of the Caspian sea, extended their ravages even into Russia and the Cuban. This expedition, which took place in 1227, eventually introduced the Mamlouks into Egypt. The Tartars, weary of massacring, had brought back with them a prodigious quantity of young slaves, of both sexes; their camps, and the markets of Asia, were full of them. The successors of Selah-el-din, who, in the quality of Turkmen, corresponded with the coasts of the Caspian sea, perceived they had now an opportunity of forming, at a cheap rate, a body of soldiers of tried courage, and remarkable beauty; and about the year 1230, one of them purchased to the number of twelve thousand of these young men, who were Tcherkasses, (Circassians), Mingrelians and Abazans. He had them trained up to military exercises, and soon obtained a body of the handsomest, and best soldiers in Asia, though at the same time, the most mutinous, as he very soon experienced.



rienced. This soldiery, like the Pretorian bands, presently gave laws to their master. They became still more insolent under his successor, whom they deposed; in 1250, and shortly after the disaster of Saint Louis, slew the last Turkman prince, and substituted one of their own chiefs, with the title of Sultan (*a*), retaining themselves that of Mamlouks, which signifies military slaves.

(*b*)

Such is this militia of slaves, converted into despots, who, for many centuries, have continued to decide the fate of Egypt. From their first establishment, the effects corresponded with the means. Without any other bond of union than the interest of the moment, or any public right to authority, but that of conquest, the Mamlouks had no other rule of conduct and government, than the violence of a licentious and insolent soldiery. The first

(*a*) The old French writers made Soldan and Soudan of this word, by the frequent change of *ol* into *ou*; as in *fol fou*, *mol*, *mou*, &c.

(*b*) *Mamlouk*, the participle passive of *malak*, to possess, signifies one *possessed* by, or the property of, another; which gives the sense of *slave*. But these are to be distinguished from domestic slaves, or blacks, who are called *Abd*.



leader whom they elected, having found employment for their turbulent spirit in the conquest of Syria, reigned seventeen years; but since him not one of them has governed so long. The sword, the bow-string, or poison, public murder, or private assassination, have been the fate of a series of tyrants, forty-seven of whom are enumerated in the space of two hundred and fifty-seven years. At length, in 1517, Selim, Sultan of the Ottomans, having taken and hanged Toumam Bey, their last chief, put a period to that dynasty.

Agreeable to the principles of Turkish policy, Selim should have exterminated the whole body of Mamlouks; but more refined views induced him, in this instance, to depart from that sanguinary custom. He was sensible that if he established a Pacha in Egypt, with the same authority as the Pachas in the other provinces, the distance from the capital would be a strong temptation to revolt. To prevent this inconvenience, he projected such a form of government that the power, being distributed among the different members of the state, should preserve such an equilibrium as should keep them all dependent on himself. The remnant of the Mamlouks, who had  
escaped



escaped his first massacre, appeared proper for this purpose ; and he next established a Divan, or Council of Regency, composed of the Pacha and the chiefs of the seven military corps. The office of the Pacha was to notify to this council the orders of the Porte, to expedite the tribute to Constantinople, to watch over the safety of the country against foreign enemies, and to counteract the ambitious views of the different parties ; on the other hand, the Members of the Council possessed the right of rejecting the orders of the Pacha, on assigning their reasons, nay, even of deposing him ; they also must ratify all civil or political ordinances. As for the Mam-louks, it was agreed that from them should be chosen the twenty-four governors, or Beys (*c*), of the provinces : to them was entrusted the care of restraining the Arabs, superintending the collection of the tributes, and the whole civil government of the country ; but their authority was purely passive, and they were only to be considered as the instruments of the determinations of the council. One of

(*c*) This word the author always writes *Bek*, but we have retained the most customary spelling, though the other is probably nearest the true pronunciation.

them,



them, residing at Cairo, was to bear the title of *Sbaik-el-beled* (*e*), which should be rendered *Governor of the city*, in a sense merely civil, that is to say, unaccompanied with any idea of military power.

The Sultan likewise established tributes, one part of which was destined to pay twenty thousand infantry, and a corps of twelve thousand cavalry, resident in the country; the other, to procure for Mecca and Medina, the supplies of corn necessary for them; and the third, to swell the *Kasna*, or treasure of Constantinople, and to support the luxury of the *seraglio*. In other respects, the people, who were to provide for these expences, have been considered, as M. Savary very well observes, only as mere passive agents, and remain in subjection, as heretofore, to all the rigours of a military despotism.

This form of government has not ill corresponded with the views of Selim, since it has subsisted about two centuries; but for the last fifty years, the Porte, having relaxed from

(*e*) *Sbaik* properly signifies an old man, *senior populi*; it has the same acceptation in the East as among us, and means a lord or chief.



its vigilance, innovations have taken place; the Mamlouks have increased, become masters of all the riches and strength of the country, and, in short, gained such an ascendancy over the Ottomans, that the power of the latter is reduced almost to nothing. To conceive the nature of this revolution, we must consider the manner in which the Mamlouks are continued and multiplied in Egypt.

On seeing them subsisting in this country for several centuries, we should be led to imagine their race is preserved by the ordinary means; but if their first establishment was a singular event, their continuation is not less extraordinary. During five hundred and fifty years that there have been Mamlouks in Egypt, not one of them has left subsisting issue; there does not exist one single family of them in the second generation; all their children perish in the first or second descent. Almost the same thing happens to the Turks; and it is observed that they can only secure the continuance of their families, by marrying women who are natives, which the Mamlouks have always dis-



disdained (*f*). Let the naturalist explain why men, well formed, and married to healthy women, are unable to naturalize on the banks of the Nile, a race born at the foot of Mount Caucasus! and let it be remembered, at the same time, that the

(*f*) The wives of the Mamlouks, are, like them, slaves brought from Georgia, Mingrelia, &c. Their beauty is a constant topic among us, and we must believe it on the credit of Fame. But an European, who has only been in Turkey, has no right to give his testimony on the subject. These women are more invisible there than the others, and to this no doubt the reputation they have for beauty is greatly owing. I had an opportunity of learning some particulars concerning them from the wife of one of our merchants at Cairo, who, by dealing in the laces and stuffs of Lyons, had access to all the Harems. This lady, who has more than one claim to form a correct judgment of them, assured me that, among a thousand, or twelve hundred, chosen women she had seen, she had not found ten real beauties. But the Turks are not difficult: provided a woman be fair, she is handsome; and if she be fat, she is enchanting: "her countenance is like the full moon; her haunches are like cushions," say they, to express the superlative of beauty. They may be said to measure them by the quintal. They have besides a proverb worthy the notice of naturalists: "Take a fair female for thy eyes, but for pleasure an Egyptian." Experience has proved to them, that the Northern women are colder than those of the South.

plants



plants of Europe, in that country, are equally unable to continue their species! Some may refuse to believe this extraordinary fact, but it is not on that account less certain; nor does it appear to be new. The ancients have made observations of the same nature: thus, when Hippocrates (*g*) asserts, that among the Scythians and Egyptians, all the individuals resemble each other, though they are like no other nations; when he adds, that in the countries inhabited by these two races of men, the climate, seasons, elements, and soil possess an uniformity no where else to be found, does he not recognize that kind of exclusion of which I speak? When such countries impress so peculiar a character on every thing native, is it not a reason why they should reject whatever is foreign? It seems, then, that the only means of naturalizing animals, and plants would be to contract an affinity with the climate, by alliance with the native species; and this, as I have before said, the Mamlouks have constantly refused.

The means therefore by which they are perpetuated and multiplied, are the same by

(*g*) Hippocrates, lib. de Aere, Locis et Aquis.

which



which they were first established; that is to say, when they die, they are replaced by slaves brought from their original country. From the time of the Mogols, this commerce has been continued on the confines of the Cuban and the Phasis (*b*), in the same manner as it is carried on in Africa, by the wars among the numerous tribes, and by the misery of the inhabitants, who sell their own children for a subsistence.

These slaves, of both sexes, carried first to Constantinople, are afterwards dispersed throughout the empire, and purchased by the wealthy. The Turks, when they subdued Egypt, should undoubtedly have prohibited this dangerous traffic: their omitting this has been the cause of that reverse of fortune which seems about to dispossess them of their conquest, and which many political errors have been long preparing.

For a considerable time the Porte had neglected the affairs of this province; and, in

(*b*) This country has been at all times a nursery for slaves; it furnished the Greeks, Romans, and ancient Asia with them. But is it not extraordinary to read in Herodotus, that formerly Colchis (now called Georgia), received black inhabitants from Egypt, and to see the same country, at this day, make so different a return?

order



order to restrain the Pachas, had suffered the Divan to extend its power, till the chiefs of the Janisaries and Azabs were left without controul. The soldiers themselves, become citizens, by the marriages they had contracted, were no longer the creatures of Constantinople; and a change introduced into their discipline still more increased these disorders.

At first, the seven military corps had one common treasury, and, though the society was rich, individuals, not having any thing at their own disposal, could effect nothing. The chiefs, finding their power diminished by this regulation, had interest enough to get it abolished, and obtained permission to possess distinct property, lands, and villages. And, as these lands and villages depended on the Mamlouk governors, it was necessary to conciliate them, to prevent their oppressions. From that moment, the Beys acquired an ascendancy over the soldiers, who, till then, had treated them with disdain; and this could not but continually increase, since their governments procured them considerable riches. These they employed in creating themselves friends and creatures; they multiplied their slaves, and, after emancipating them, employed



ployed all their interest to advance them in the army, and promote them to various employments. These upstarts, retaining for their respective patrons the submissive reverence usual in the East, formed factions implicitly devoted to their pleasure.

By such means Ibrahim, one of the Kiayas, (*i*) or veteran colonels of the Janisaries, about the year 1746, rendered himself, in reality, master of Egypt; he had so multiplied and advanced his freed men that, of the twenty-four Beys, which should be their number, no less than eight were of his household. His influence too was the more certain, as the Pacha always left vacancies in the number, in order to receive the emoluments. On the other hand, the largesses he bestowed on the officers and soldiers of his corps, attached them to his interest, and Rodoan, the most powerful of the Azab colonels, uniting himself with him, completed his power.

The Pacha, incapable of opposing this faction, was now no more than a phantom,

(*i*) The military corps of the Janisaries, Azabs, &c. were commanded by Kiayas, who, after the first year, laid down their employments, and became veterans, with a voice in the Divan.

and the orders of the Sultan vanished before those of Ibrahim. At his death, which happened in 1757, his house, that is, his enfranchised slaves, divided among themselves, but united against all others, continued to give the law. Rodoan, who had succeeded his colleague, being expelled and slain by a party of young Beys, several chiefs followed each other in a very short interval. At length, about the year 1766, Ali Bey, one of the principal actors in the troubles which attracted the attention of Europe for several years, gained a decided ascendancy over his rivals, and, under the titles of Emir-Hadj, and Shaik-el-Beled, rendered himself absolute master of the country. The history of the Mamlouks being intimately connected with his, I shall continue the former, by giving an abstract of the latter.



## C H A P. VIII.

*Summary of the History of Ali Bey (a).*

THE birth of Ali Bey is subject to the same uncertainty as that of the Mamlouks in general, who, sold by their parents, or carried off by

(a) Since this chapter was written, M. Savary has published two more volumes on Egypt, in one of which is the life of this same Ali Bey. I expected to have found in it particulars proper to verify or correct my own narrative; but what was my astonishment to perceive, we have hardly a single circumstance in common? This disagreement was so much the more unpleasing to me, since, as I have already differed from him on several other subjects, it may seem, to many readers, as if I made a point of contradicting that traveller. But, besides that I am not personally acquainted with M. Savary, I protest, that such partiality is no part of my character. How then does it happen that, having been upon the same spot, having necessarily drawn our materials from like sources, our accounts should be so different? I confess, I cannot well discover the reason; all I can say is, that, during the six months I lived at Cairo, I carefully enquired of such of our merchants, and Christian traders, as, from long residence in the country, and being persons of understanding, appeared to me likely to give the most authentic



by their enemies, at a very early age, seldom remember much of their origin or their country ; or if they do, conceal them. The opinion

thentic testimony. I found them agreed on the principal facts, and I had the advantage of hearing the relations they gave me confirmed by a Venetian merchant (M. C. Rosetti) who was one of the confidential friends of Ali Bey, and the counsellor and promoter of his connections with the Russians, and his projects respecting the commerce of India. In Syria I have met with great numbers who had been eye-witnesses of the principal events in the history of Shaik-Daher and Ali Bey ; and, from their testimony, have been able to ascertain the degree of credit due to the information I received in Egypt. During eight months I resided among the Druzes, I learnt from the Bishop of Aleppo, formerly Bishop of Acre, a thousand anecdotes, the more indubitable, as Ibrahim Sabbar, the Minister of Daher, was frequently in his house. In Palestine I have lived with Christians and Mussulmen, who had been officers under Daher, were at the first siege of Yafa (Joppa) with Ali Bey, and defended that place in the second against Mohammad Bey. I have been on the spot, and examined all the necessary witnesses. I have received historical notes from the Venetian agent at Yafa, who had a considerable share in all these troubles. These are the materials from which I have compiled my narrative. Not but I have met with some circumstances which are differently related. But from such what history is free ? Are there not ten different relations of the battle of Fontenoy ? All we can hope is to collect what is



opinion the most general respecting Ali is, that he was born among the Abazans, a people inhabiting Mount Caucasus, and which furnishes

most probable; for I cannot but confess I have myself been frequently convinced, on this occasion, how difficult it is to ascertain the real truth in any historical facts.

Not but I have heard before several of the stories related by M. Savary, who cannot be accused of having invented them himself, for his account is taken, word for word, from an English book, printed in 1783, and entitled *A History of the Revolt of Ali Bey*, though there are only forty pages appropriated to that subject, the remainder being common-place remarks on the manners and geography of the country. I was at Cairo when the public papers gave an account of this work; and I well recollect that when our merchants heard of Maria, wife of Ali Bey; of the Greek Daoud, his father, and his finding his son, as Jacob found Joseph, they were strangely surprised, and laughed heartily at the tales trumped up in Europe. It is in vain, therefore, for the English Factor, who was in Egypt in 1771, to appeal to the authority of the Kiaya of Ali Bey, and a number of Beys, whom he consulted, *without understanding Arabic*; he can never be looked upon as well informed. I suspect him the more since he sets out with an unpardonable error, in asserting that the country of Abaza is the same as that of Amafea; for one of these is a country of Caucasus, stretching towards the Cuban; and the other a city of ancient Cappadocia, or modern Natolia. To conclude, we may find at Paris

*Memoirs*



furnishes the slaves in greatest request (*b*). The merchants, who carry on this traffic, brought him to one of their annual sales, at Cairo, where he was purchased by the brothers Isaac and Yousef, Jews, employed in the custom-house, who made a present of him to Ybrahim Kiaya. It is supposed he might then be about twelve or fourteen years old; but, in the East, neither Mahometans nor Christians keeping any registers of births, their precise age is never known. +

Ali performed for his patron the usual services of the Mamlouks, which are nearly similar to those of the pages to our Princes. He received the customary education, which consists in learning to manage a horse well, fire the carbine and pistol, throw the djerid, use the

*Memoirs of Ali Bey*, collected by a person of distinction, who has been in Egypt, as well as M. Savary and myself, and those Memoirs will satisfy all doubts which may remain on this subject. /

(*b*) The Turks hold the Tcherkasses, or Circassian slaves, in the highest estimation; next to them the Abazans, next the Mingrelians, after them the Georgians, after them the Russians and the Poles, next the Hungarians and the Germans, then the Negroes; and, last of all, the Spaniards, Maltese, and other Franks, whom they despise as drunkards, debauchees, idle, and mutinous. |



fabre, and even a little reading and writing. In all these exercises he displayed an activity and fire which obtained him the surname of *Djendali*, or madman. But the solicitude of ambition soon moderated this excessive warmth. About the age of eighteen or twenty, his patron suffered him to let his beard grow, that is to say, gave him his freedom; for, among the Turks, to want mustachios and beard, is thought fit only for slaves and women; and hence arises the unfavourable impression they receive on the first sight of an European. When he had made him free, Ibrahim gave him a wife and revenues, promoted him to the rank of Kachef, or Governor of a district, and, at length, procured him to be elected one of the four-and-twenty Beys.

These successive promotions, and the power and riches he acquired, awakened the ambition of Ali Bey. The death of his patron, which happened in 1757, opened a free course for his projects. He engaged in every intrigue for raising or displacing the chiefs, and was the principal author of the ruin of Rodan Kiaya. After Rodan, various factions alternately advanced their leaders into  
his



his station. He who occupied it in 1762, was Abd-el-Rahman, of little consequence himself, but supported by several confederate houses. Ali was then Shaik-el-Beled, and seized the moment when Abd-el-Rahman was conducting the caravan of Mecca to get him exiled; but he himself had his turn, and was condemned to retire to Gaza. Gaza, dependent on a Turkish Pacha, was neither so agreeable nor so secure a residence as to tempt him to make it his abode; he therefore only made a feint of taking that route, and, on the third day, turned towards the Said, where he was joined by his partizans.

He resided two years at Djirdja, where he matured his plans for obtaining and securing that power to which he so ardently aspired. The friends his money had gained him at Cairo having at length procured his recall, in 1766, he appeared suddenly in that city, and, in one night, slew four Beys, who were his enemies, exiled four others, and became, from that time, the chief of the most numerous party. As he had now possessed himself of the whole authority, he resolved to employ it still further to promote his ambitious views. No longer contented with the trivial title of



Bey, he could not submit to the supremacy of the Porte, and aimed at nothing less than the title of Sultan of Egypt. To this object all his measures tended; he expelled the Pacha, who was only a shadow of representation; he refused the accustomed tribute; and, in 1768, even proceeded to coin money in his own name (*c*).

The Porte did not see without indignation these attacks on her authority; but open war alone could repel them, and circumstances were not favourable. Daher, established in Acre, kept Syria in awe; and the Divan of Constantinople, occupied with the affairs of Poland, and the pretensions of Russia, bestowed its whole attention on the transactions in the North. The usual method of *capidjis* was had recourse to; but poison, or the poniard, always anticipated the bow-string they bore. Ali Bey, availing himself of these circumstances, pushed forward his enterprizes with success. For several years a port of the

(*c*) After the ruin of his affairs, his piasters fell 20 per cent, because it was pretended they were too much debased with alloy; but a merchant sent ten thousand of them to Marseilles, and made a considerable profit by melting them down.

Said

Said had been occupied by Arab Shaiks under little subjection. One of them, named Hammam, had formed there a power capable of giving disturbance. Ali began by delivering himself from this danger; and, under pretext that this Shaik concealed a treasure entrusted to him by Ibrahim Kiaya, and that he harboured rebels, sent a corps of Mamlouks against him, in 1769, commanded by his favourite Mohammad Bey, who destroyed in one day both Hammam and his power.

The end of this year was productive of another expedition, which in its consequences must have affected Europe. Ali Bey fitted out some vessels at Suez, and, manning them with Mamlouks, ordered the Bey Hassan to sail with them to Djedda, (Gedda), the port of Mecca, which he was to seize on, while a body of cavalry, under the command of Mohammad Bey, marched by land to take possession of Mecca itself, which was given up to plunder. His project was to render Djedda the emporium of the Indian commerce; and this plan, which was suggested by a young Venetian merchant, (*a*) who pos-

(*a*) M. C. Rosetti; his brother, Balthazar Rosetti, was to be made commissioner of the customs at Djedda.



ferred his confidence, was to make Europe abandon the passage by the cape of Good Hope, by substituting the ancient route of the Mediterranean, and the Red Sea; but the event has proved that the attempt was too precipitate, and, that before gold is introduced into a country, laws should be established.

Ali, the vanquisher of a petty prince of the Said, and conqueror of the huts of Mecca, from this time thought himself formed to command the whole world. His courtiers told him he was as powerful as the Sultan of Constantinople, and he believed his courtiers. Had he exercised his reason, he would have perceived that Egypt, compared with the rest of the empire, constituted only a very inconsiderable state, and that the seven or eight thousand cavalry he commanded were nothing when opposed to a hundred thousand Janisaries, whom the Sultan has at his disposal: but the Mamlouks know nothing of geography; and Ali, who viewed Egypt near, found it much larger than Turkey at a distance. He determined therefore to commence his conquests: Syria, which was in his neighbourhood, naturally presented the first object, and every thing was favourable to his



his views. The war with the Russians, which broke out in 1769, occupied all the Turkish forces in the north. Shaik Daher, in rebellion against the Porte, was a powerful and faithful ally ; and the extortions of the Pacha of Damascus, by disposing those he oppressed to revolt, afforded the most favourable opportunity of invading his government, and meriting the title of the deliverer of nations.

Ali saw perfectly well the advantage of this posture of affairs, and made no delay in putting his forces in motion. All his measures being at length taken, he detached, in 1770, under the command of five Beys, a corps of about five hundred Mamlouks, all cavalry, (for they never march on foot), and sent them to take possession of Gaza, in order to secure an entrance into Palestine. Osman, Pacha of Damascus, no sooner heard of the invasion, than he flew to arms. The Mamlouks, terrified at his activity, and the number of his troops, held themselves in readiness to fly at the first attack ; but Daher, the most indefatigable chief that Syria has seen for many centuries, hastened from Acre, and extricated them from their embarrassment. Osman, who was encamped near Yafa, fled without even offering



offering battle; and Daher, making himself master of Yafa, Ramla, and all Palestine, opened a road for the grand army he expected.

This arrived about the end of February, 1771: and the gazettes of that time, stating it at sixty thousand men, induced Europe to believe it was an army similar to those of Russia or Germany; but the Turks, and more especially those of Asia, differ still more from the Europeans in their military than their civil customs. Sixty thousand men with them are very far from being synonymous with sixty thousand soldiers, as in our armies. That of which we are now speaking affords a proof of this: it might amount in fact to forty thousand men, which may be classed as follows. Five thousand Mamlouk cavalry, which was the whole effective army; about fifteen hundred Barbary Arabs on foot, and no other infantry, for the Turks are acquainted with none; with them, the cavalry is every thing. Besides these, each Mamlouk having in his suite two footmen, armed with staves, these would form a body of ten thousand valets; besides a number of servants and ferradjis, or attendants on horseback, for the  
Beys

Beys and Kachefs, which may be estimated at two thousand: all the rest were sutlers, and the usual train of followers.

Such was this army, as described to me in Palestine by persons who had seen and followed it. It was commanded by the friend of Ali, Mohammad Bey, surnamed *Aboudabab*, or father of gold, from the luxury of his tent and caparisons. As to order and discipline these must not be mentioned. The armies of the Turks and Mamlouks are nothing but a confused multitude of horsemen, without uniforms, on horses of all sizes and colours, riding without either keeping their ranks, or observing any regular order.

This rabble took the road to Acre, leaving, wherever they passed, sufficient marks of their want of discipline and rapacity. At Acre, a junction was formed with the troops of Shaik Daher, which consisted of fifteen hundred Safadians (*a*), on horseback, and commanded by his son Ali; twelve hundred Motualis cavalry, having for their leader the Shaik Nasif, and about one thousand Mogradian in-

(*a*) Daher's subjects were called by this name, because his seat of government was originally at Safad, a village of Galilee.



fantry. This union effected, and their plan concerted, they proceeded towards Damascus some time in the month of April. Osman had employed this interval in preparations, and had, on his side, collected an army equally numerous and ill-regulated. The Pachas of Said, (*a*) Tripoli, and Aleppo, had joined him with their forces, and were waiting for the enemy under the walls of Damascus.

The reader must not here figure to himself a number of complicated and artificial movements, such as those which, within the last century, have reduced war with us to a science of system and calculation. The Asiatics are unacquainted with the first elements of this conduct. Their armies are mobs, their marches ravages, their campaigns mere inroads, and their battles, bloody frays; the strongest, or the most adventurous party goes in search of the other, which not unfrequently flies without offering resistance; if they stand their ground, they engage pell-mell, discharge their carbines, break their spears, and hack each other with

(*a*) Pronounced Sède, in French; in English Said, as above; it is the ancient Sidon.



their sabres, for they rarely have any cannon ; and when they have they are but of little service. A panic frequently diffuses itself without cause ; one party flies, the other pursues, and shouts victory : the vanquished submit to the will of the conqueror, and the campaign often terminates without a battle.

Such, in a great measure, were the military operations in Syria, in 1771. The combined army of Ali Bey and Daher marched to Damascus. The Pachas waited for them ; they approached, and, on the 6th of June, a decisive action took place : the Mamlouks and Safadians rushed with so much fury on the Turks, that, terrified at the carnage, they immediately took to flight, and the Pachas were not the last in endeavouring to make their escape. The allies became masters of the country, and took possession of the city without opposition, there being neither walls nor soldiers to defend it. The castle alone resisted. Its ruined fortifications had not a single cannon, much less gunners ; but it was surrounded by a muddy ditch, and behind the ruins were posted a few musqueteers, and these alone were sufficient to check this army of cavalry. As the besieged, however, were  
already



already conquered by their fears, they capitulated the third day, and the place was to be surrendered the next morning, when at day-break a most extraordinary revolution took place.

At the moment that the signal of surrender was expected, Mohammad suddenly commanded a retreat, and all his cavalry turned towards Egypt. In vain did the astonished Ali-Daher and Nafif fly to demand the cause of so strange a measure : the Mamlouk made no other reply to their reiterated questions, than a haughty menace ; and the whole army decamped in confusion. Nor was this merely a retreat, but a positive flight ; they seemed as if hotly pursued by a victorious enemy ; the road from Damascus to Cairo was covered with men on foot, scattered horsemen, and stores and baggage they had abandoned. This singular occurrence was attributed, at the time, to a pretended report of the death of Ali Bey ; but the real solution of the enigma was a secret conference which passed at night in the tent of Mohammad Bey. Osman, finding himself too weak to oppose these combined forces, had recourse to artifice. He contrived to introduce to the  
Egyptian

Egyptian general a crafty agent, who, under pretence of proposing terms of peace, endeavoured to disseminate discord and revolt. He insinuated to Mohammad that the part he was acting was equally ill befitting his honour, and contrary to his interest; that he was deceived in imagining the Sultan would leave unpunished the offences of Ali Bey; that it was a sacrilege to violate so holy a city as Damascus, one of the two gates of the Caaba (*g*); that he was astonished that Mohammad should prefer the favour of a slave of the Sultan, to that of the Sultan himself, and that he should set up a second master between him and his sovereign; besides, that it was evident this master, by daily exposing him to fresh dangers, was sacrificing him both to his own personal ambition, and to the jealousy of his Kiaya, the Copt Rezk.

These reasons, and especially the two latter, which were founded on indisputable facts, made a strong impression on Mohammad and his Beys: they immediately held a

(*g*) The two great caravans which make the pilgrimage to Mecca, set out from Cairo and Damascus.



council, and swore solemnly, by the *fabre* and the Koran, to return without delay to Cairo. In consequence of this determination, they decamped so suddenly, and abandoned their conquests with such precipitation, that the report of their coming preceded their arrival at Cairo only by six hours. Ali Bey was struck with terror, and wished to have punished his general upon the spot; but Mo-hammad appeared so well supported, that it was impracticable to attempt any thing against his person; it was necessary to dis-semble, and Ali Bey submitted to this with the less difficulty, as he owed his fortune to his dissimulation much more than to his courage.

Though thus deprived, at one stroke, of the fruits of so expensive a war, Ali Bey did not renounce his projects. He continued to send succours to his ally, Daher, and prepared a second army for the campaign of 1772; but fortune, weary of effecting more for him than his own abilities could have accomplished, ceased to favour him.

The first reverse he experienced was in the loss of several *cayassies*, or boats, loaded with rice, for Shaik Daher, which were taken  
by



by a Russian privateer, within sight of Damietta; but another, and still more serious accident, was the escape of Mohammad Bey. Ali Bey could not easily forget the affair of Damascus; nevertheless, from the remains of that affection we retain for those whom we have served, he could not bring himself to resolve on having recourse to violence, when an expression made use of by the Venetian merchant who enjoyed his confidence fixed his wavering resolution.

“Have the Sultans of the Franks,” said Ali Bey, one day, to that European (*b*), “children as rich as my son Mohammad?” “No, Seignior,” replied the courtier, “they are careful of that; for they think that when children become too great, they are often in haste to enjoy their inheritance.” This insinuation went to the heart of Ali Bey. From that moment he beheld in Mohammad a dangerous rival, and resolved his ruin. To effect this, without risk, he first sent directions to all the gates of Cairo, that no Mamlouk should be suffered to pass in the evening, or at night; he then ordered

(*b*) This anecdote I received from that merchant.



Mohammad into immediate exile in the Said. By these opposite orders he imagined Mohammad would be stopped at the gates, and that, the keepers taking him into custody, he should easily free himself from his fears; but chance disconcerted these vague and timid measures. Mohammad, by some mistake, was supposed to be charged with private orders from Ali. He and his retinue were allowed to pass, and from this moment all was lost. Ali Bey, informed of his flight, gave orders to pursue him; but Mahammad appeared so well prepared and determined that none dared attack him. He retired into the Said, foaming with rage, and thirsting for vengeance. Even after his arrival there, he had another narrow escape. Ayoub Bey, an officer of Ali's, feigning great detestation of the injustice of his master, received Mohammad with transport, and swore upon his sabre and the Koran, to share his fortune; but, a few days after, letters were intercepted from this same Ayoub, to Ali, in which he promised him, without delay, the head of his enemy. Mohammad, having discovered the plot, seized the traitor; and, after cutting off his hands



hands and tongue, sent him to Cairo to receive the recompense of his patron.

The Mamlouks, however, wearied with the insolence of Ali Bey, repaired in crowds to his rival ; and, in about six weeks, Mohammad saw himself sufficiently strong to leave the Said, and march towards Cairo. Ali Bey, on his side, sent his troops against him ; but several of them likewise deserted to the enemy : at length, in the month of April 1772, the armies had a rencounter in the plain of El-Mafateb, at the gates of Cairo, the issue of which was, that Mohammad and his party entered the city, sabre in hand. Ali Bey, having barely time to make his escape with eight hundred of his Mamlouks, repaired to Gaza, for the first time in his life, and endeavoured to get to Acre, to join his ally, Daher ; but the inhabitants of Nablous and Yafa cut off his retreat ; and Daher himself was obliged to open him a passage. The Arab received him with that simplicity and frankness which in all ages have characterized that people, and conducted him to Acre. It was necessary to succour Said (Sidon), then besieged by the troops of Osman, in conjunction with the Druzes. He



accordingly marched to that place, accompanied by Ali. Their combined troops formed a body of about seven thousand cavalry, and, at their approach, the Turks raised the siege, and retired to a place a league to the northward of the city, on the river Aoula. There, in July 1772, the most considerable and most methodical engagement of the whole war took place. The Turkish army, three times more numerous than that of the two allies, was entirely defeated. The seven Pachas who commanded it took to flight, and Said remained in the possession of Daher, and his governor Degnizla.

Ali Bey and Daher, on their return to Acre, proceeded to chastise the inhabitants of Yafa, who had revolted that they might convert to their use the ammunition and clothing left there by one of Ali's fleets, before he was expelled from Cairo. The city, which was held by a Shaik of Nablous, shut its gates, and resolved to stand the siege. This commenced in July, and lasted eight months, though Yafa had no other rampart than a mere garden-wall, without a ditch; but in Syria and Egypt they know still less of carrying on a siege than of engagements  
in



in the field; at length, however, the besieged capitulated in February 1773.

Ali, now feeling himself disengaged, thought of nothing but his return to Cairo. Daher offered to furnish him with succours; and the Russians, with whom Ali had contracted an alliance, while treating of the affair of the privateer, promised to second him: time however was necessary for collecting these scattered aids, and Ali became impatient. The promises of Rezk, his Kiaya and his oracle, rendered him still more desirous to be gone. This Copt never ceased assuring him that the hour of his return was come; that the aspects of the stars were most propitious; and that the downfall of Mohammad was now most certain. Ali, who like all the Turks, believed firmly in astrology, and who put the greater faith in Rezk, because he believed his predictions had been often verified, could no longer endure delay; and the news he received from Cairo completed his impatience.

In the beginning of April, letters were sent him by his friends, in which they informed him that the people were tired of his ungrateful slave, and that nothing but his presence was wanting to expel him. He



determined, therefore, to set out immediately, and, without giving the Russians time to arrive, departed with his Mamlouks, and fifteen hundred Safadians, commanded by Osman, the son of Daher; but he was ignorant that the letters from Cairo were a stratagem of Mohammad's, and that this Bey had extorted them by force, in order to deceive and lead him into the snare he was preparing. In fact, no sooner had Ali advanced into the desert which separates Gaza from Egypt, than he fell in, near Salakia, with a chosen body of a thousand Mamlouks, who were lying in ambush, waiting his arrival. This corps was commanded by the young Bey, Mourad, who, being enamoured of the wife of Ali Bey, had obtained a promise of her from Mohammad, in case he could bring him the head of that illustrious unfortunate. Scarcely did Mourad perceive the dust which announced the approach of his enemies before he rushed upon them with his Mamlouks, and threw them into confusion. To crown his good fortune, he met with Ali in the crowd, attacked, and wounded him in the forehead with a sabre, made him prisoner, and conducted him to Mohammad. The latter, who was encamped two leagues in  
the



the rear, received his former master with all that exaggerated respect which is so customary with the Turks, and that sensibility which perfidy knows so well how to feign. He provided a magnificent tent for him, ordered him to be taken the greatest care of, stiled himself a thousand times, "his slave, who  
"licked the dust of his feet;" but the third day, this parade of politeness terminated by the death of Ali Bey, who died, according to some, of his wounds; or, as others report, by poison: the probability of both these accounts is so equal, that it is impossible to decide between them.

Thus terminated the enterprizes of this celebrated man, who for some time engaged the attention of Europe, and afforded many politicians hopes of a great revolution. That he was an extraordinary character, cannot be denied; but it is exaggeration to place him in the class of great men: the accounts given of him by witnesses highly worthy credit, prove that though he possessed the seeds of great qualities, the want of culture prevented them from coming to maturity. Let us pass over his credulity in astrology, which more frequently influenced his conduct



duct than more substantial motives; let us not mention his treacheries, his perjuries, the murders even of his benefactors (*i*), by which he acquired, or maintained his power, the morality of a rude society is doubtless less rigid than that of a well-regulated state; but, judging ambitious men on their own principles, we shall find that Ali Bey either ill understood, or erroneously pursued his plan of greatness; and that it was he himself who paved the way for his own ruin. We are certainly justified in charging him with three errors: First, that imprudent thirst after conquest, which fruitlessly exhausted his revenue, and his forces, and made him neglect the interior administration of his own country. Secondly, the premature indolence to which he resigned himself, executing nothing but by his lieutenants, which diminished the respect entertained for his person by the Mamlouks, and encouraged the spirit of revolt. Thirdly, the excessive riches he showered on his favourite, which procured him the influence he abused. Supposing Mohammad virtuous, ought not Ali

(*i*) Such as Saleh Bey.



to have dreaded the seduction of flatterers, who, in all countries, are the constant attendants on opulence? In Ali Bey, however, we must admire one quality, which distinguishes him from the multitude of tyrants who have governed Egypt: if a vicious education prevented him from knowing what true glory is, it is certain, at least, he was animated with the desire of obtaining it; and this was never the portion of vulgar minds. He wanted nothing but to be advised by those who knew the true road to it; and among those who are born to command, how few are there who merit this eulogium?

I cannot proceed without a few remarks on an observation I remember to have frequently heard made at Cairo. Those among our merchants who had witnessed the reign of Ali, and his downfall, after extolling his good government, his zeal for justice, and his beneficence to the Franks, never failed to express their astonishment at his not being regretted by the people; and thence took occasion to repeat those charges of inconstancy and ingratitude with which the orientals are usually reproached; but, on maturely examining every



every circumstance, this does not appear to me so extraordinary as it may at first seem.

In Egypt, as in every other country, the judgment of the people is guided by the penury or plenty in which they live; their love or hatred, their censure or applause, are measured by the ease or difficulty with which they can procure the means of subsistence, in consequence of the administration of their rulers; nor can this be esteemed an improper criterion. In vain may we tell them that the honour of the empire, the glory of the nation, the encouragement of commerce, and the improvement of the fine arts, require such and such measures. Every thing is superseded by the necessities of life; and when the multitude want bread, they have at least a right to withhold their praise and admiration. Of what consequence was it to the people of Egypt, that Ali Bey had conquered the Said, Mecca, and Syria, if these conquests only augmented, instead of relieving their burthens? The expences incurred by these wars, increased the contributions they were obliged to raise. The expedition against Mecca alone cost twenty-six millions of French livres (above one million eighty-three thousand



thousand pounds), and the exportation of corn for the use of the armies, added to the monopoly of some merchants in favour, caused a famine, which desolated the country during the whole of the years 1770 and 1771. When, therefore, the inhabitants of Cairo, and the peasants in the villages, were dying with hunger, what wonder if they murmured against Ali Bey? Who can blame them for disapproving of the commerce with India, if all its advantages were to center in a few hands? When Ali Bey expended two hundred and twenty-five thousand livres (above nine thousand pounds), in the useless handle of a *kandjar* (*k*), though jewellers might applaud his magnificence, had not the people reason to detest his luxury? This liberality, which his courtiers called virtue, the people, at whose expence it was exercised, were justly entitled to stigmatize as vice. Had this man any merit in lavishing what cost him nothing? Was it an act of justice to gratify his favourite at the expence of the people, or repay with their money his private obligations, as in the case of his purveyor-

(*k*) A poniard carried in the belt.



general (1)? It must be confessed, that the greatest part of the actions of Ali Bey were founded much less on general principles of justice and humanity, than personal motives of vanity and ambition. Egypt, in his eyes, was his private property, and the people a vile herd of worthless animals, of whom he might dispose at his pleasure. Ought we then to be astonished, if those whom he treated like an imperious master have vilified his fame like mercenary malecontents?

(1) Ali Bey, setting out to go into exile, for he was exiled no less than three times, was encamped near Cairo, being allowed a delay of twenty-four hours, to pay his debts: a Janisary, named Hassan, to whom he owed five hundred sequins (one hundred and fifty-six pounds), came to find him. Ali, thinking he wanted his money, began to make excuses. But Hassan, producing five hundred more sequins, said to him, "Thou art in misfortune, take these also." Ali, confounded with this generosity, swore, by the head of the Prophet, that, if ever he returned, he would bestow on this man unexampled wealth; and, on his return, created him Purveyor-general: and though he was informed of the scandalous extortions of Hassan, never even reprimanded him.



## C H A P. IX.

*Summary of occurrences from the death of  
Ali Bey to the year 1785.*

SINCE the death of Ali Bey, the fate of the Egyptians has not been bettered ; his successors have not even imitated what was laudable in his conduct. Mohammad Bey, who succeeded him in April 1773, during a reign of two years, displayed nothing but the ferocity of a robber, and the baseness of a traitor. To colour his ingratitude towards his patron, he at first pretended to be only the defender of the rights of the Sultan, and the minister of his will ; he therefore remitted to Constantinople the tribute which had been interrupted for the last six years, and took the customary oath of unlimited obedience. He renewed his submission at the death of Ali Bey ; and, under pretext of proving his loyalty to the Sultan, demanded permission to make war on the Arab Daher. The Porte, who would gladly have solicited this, was happy to permit it as a favour : Mohammad was invested with



with the title of Pacha of Cairo, and every thing immediately prepared for this expedition. It may be asked what interest an Egyptian Governor could have in destroying the Arab Daher, in rebellion in Syria? But refined views of policy had no more share in this than in other measures. It originated merely in private resentment. Mohammad Bey could not forget a reproachful letter written to him by Daher, at the time of the revolution of Damascus, nor the part the Shaik had taken against him in his quarrel with Ali Bey. To hatred was added the prospect of plunder. Ibrahim Sabbar (*a*), Daher's Minister, was reputed to possess prodigious wealth; and the Egyptian, could he destroy Daher, hoped equally to gratify his avarice and revenge.

He did not hesitate, therefore, to undertake this war, and made his preparations with all the activity which hatred inspires. He provided himself with an extraordinary train of artillery, procured foreign gunners, and gave the command of them to an Englishman,

(*a*) *Sabbâr*, with the *r* pronounced thick, which signifies *dyer*; with the ordinary *r*, it signifies *plumber*.

named



named Robinson; he brought from Suez a cannon sixteen feet in length, which had long remained useless; and, at length, in the month of February, 1776, appeared in Palestine, with an army equal to that he had formerly headed against Damascus. On his approach, Daher's forces, which occupied Gaza, despairing of being able to defend it, retired; he took possession of it, and, without stopping, marched against Yafa. This town, which had a garrison, and whose inhabitants were all inured to war, shewed more resolution than Gaza, and determined to stand the siege. The history of this siege would well exemplify the ignorance of these countries in the art of war, as a few of the principal particulars will sufficiently evince.

Yafa, the ancient Joppa, is situated on a part of the coast the general level of which is very little above the sea. The city is built on an eminence, in the form of a sugar-loaf, in height about one hundred and thirty feet perpendicular. The houses, distributed on the declivity, appear rising above each other, like the steps of an amphitheatre. On the summit is a small citadel, which commands the town; the bottom of the hill is sur-



rounded by a wall without a rampart, of twelve or fourteen feet high, and two or three in thickness. The battlements at the top are the only tokens by which it is distinguishable from a common garden-wall. This wall, which has no ditch, is environed by gardens, where lemons, oranges, and citrons, in this light soil, grow to a most prodigious size. Such was the city Mohammad undertook to besiege. It was defended by five or six hundred Safadians, and as many inhabitants, who, at sight of the enemy, armed themselves with their sabres and muskets; they had likewise a few brass cannon, twenty-four pounders, without carriages; these they mounted, as well as they could, on timbers prepared in a hurry; and, supplying the place of experience and address by hatred and courage, replied to the summons of the enemy by menaces and musket-shot.

Mohammad, finding he must have recourse to force, formed his camp before the town; but was so little acquainted with the business in which he was engaged that he advanced within half cannon shot. The bullets, which showered upon the tents, apprized him of his error; he retreated, and, by making a fresh experiment,



experiment, was convinced he was still too near; at length he discovered the proper distance, and set up his tent, in which the most extravagant luxury was displayed: around it, without any order, were pitched those of the Mamlouks, while the Barbary Arabs formed huts with the trunks and branches of the orange and lemon trees, and the followers of the army arranged themselves as they could: a few guards were distributed here and there, and, without making a single entrenchment, they called themselves encamped.

Batteries were now to be erected; and a spot of rising ground was made choice of, to the south-eastward of the town, where, behind some garden-walls, eight pieces of cannon were pointed, at two hundred paces from the town, and the firing began, notwithstanding the musquetry of the enemy, who, from the tops of the terraces, killed several of the gunners. This conduct will appear so singular in Europe, that the truth of it may be, perhaps, called in question; but these things passed eleven years ago; I have been on the spot, have seen many who were eye-witnesses, and I esteem it a duty, neither to alter for the better or the worse, facts, by which the



character of a nation may so well be estimated.

It is evident, that a wall, only three feet thick, and without a rampart, must soon have a large breach made in it; and the question was, not how to mount, but how to get through it. The Mamlouks were for doing it on horseback; but they were made to comprehend that this was impossible; and they consented, for the first time, to march on foot. It must have been a curious sight to see them, with their huge breeches of thick Venetian cloth, embarrassed with their tucked-up *beniches*, their crooked sabres in hand, and pistols hanging to their sides, advancing, and tumbling among the ruins of the wall. They imagined they had conquered every difficulty when they had surmounted this obstacle; but the besieged, who formed a better judgment, waited till they arrived at the empty space between the city and the wall; there they assailed them from the terraces, and the windows, of the houses, with such a shower of bullets, that the Mamlouks did not so much as think of setting them on fire, but retired, under a persuasion that the breach was utterly impracticable, since it was impossible



fible to enter it on horseback. Morad Bey brought them several times back to the charge, but in vain.

Six weeks passed in this manner, and Mohammad was distracted with rage, anxiety, and despair. The besieged, however, whose numbers were diminished by the repeated attacks, and who did not see that any succours were to be expected from Acre, became weary of defending alone the cause of Daher. The Mussulmen, especially, complained, that the Christians, regarding nothing but their prayers, were more in their churches than the field of battle. Some persons began to treat with the enemy, and it was proposed to abandon the place, on the Egyptians giving hostages. Conditions were agreed on, and the treaty might be considered as concluded, when, in the midst of the security occasioned by that belief, some Mamlouks entered the city; numbers followed them, and attempted to plunder; the inhabitants defended themselves, and the attack recommenced: the whole army then rushed into the town, which suffered all the horrors of war: women and children, young and old, all were cut to pieces; and Mohammad, equally mean and



barbarous, caused a pyramid, formed of the heads of these unfortunate sufferers, to be raised as a monument of his victory. (b) It is said the number of these exceeded twelve hundred. This catastrophe, which happened the 19th of May, 1776, spread terror through the country. Shaik Daher himself fled from Acre, the government of which he left to his son Ali, whose intrepidity is still celebrated in Syria, but whose glory is tarnished by his frequent rebellions against his father. Ali imagined, that Mohammad would pay respect to the treaty he had made with him; but the Mamlouk, being arrived at the gates of Acre, declared, the price of his friendship must be the head of Daher himself. Ali, finding himself deceived, refused to commit this parricide, and abandoned the town to the Egyptians, who gave it up to be plundered. The French merchants, with difficulty, procured an exemption, and soon saw themselves in most imminent danger. Mohammad, informed that the wealth of Ibrahim, Kiaya of Daher, had been depo-

(b) See Memoirs of Baron de Tott, Part IV.



sited with them, declared that, unless it was instantly delivered up, they should all be put to death. The ensuing Sunday was the day appointed for this terrible research, when fortune happily freed them and Syria from the impending danger, for Mohammad was seized with a malignant fever, and died, after two days illness, in the prime of his age (c).

The Christians of Syria are persuaded his death was a punishment of the Prophet Elias, whose church, on Mount Carmel, he had violated. They even affirm the prophet appeared to him several times in the form of an old man, and that Mohammad was afterwards continually exclaiming—"Take from me that old man, who distresses and terrifies me." But they who saw this General in his last moments, have reported at Cairo, to persons worthy of credit, that this vision, the effects of a delirium, was caused by the consciousness of some private murders: indeed, the death of Mohammad may easily be accounted for from natural causes, and is to be attributed to the known unhealthiness of the climate, excessive heat, immoderate fatigue, and the

(c) In the month of June, 1776:



anxiety occasioned by the siege of Yafa. It may not be improper to remark, in this place, that were we to write the memoirs of modern times, as dictated by the Christians of Syria and Egypt, they would no less abound in prodigies and apparitions, than the histories of antiquity.

The death of Mohammad was no sooner known than this whole army made a precipitate retreat, similar to that of Damascus, and tumultuously took the road to Egypt. Morad Bey, who had acquired great credit by the favour of Mohammad, hastened to regain Cairo, that he might be enabled to dispute the supreme command with Ibrahim Bey. The latter, also a freed-man and favourite of the deceased, no sooner learnt the state of affairs, than he took measures to secure an authority with which he had been entrusted in the absence of his patron. Every appearance threatened open war; but the two rivals, when each came to consider the power and resources of the other, found themselves so equal, as to make them dread the issue of a combat. They determined therefore on peace, and entered into an agreement, by which the authority was to be divided, on condition that Ibrahim should retain



tain the title of Shaik-el-Beled : this arrangement was dictated by their common interest. Since the death of Ali Bey, the Beys and the Cachefs, who owed their promotion to his house (*a*), had repined in secret at seeing all the authority passed into the hands of a new faction : the power possessed by Mohammad, formerly their equal, had hurt their pride, and that of his slaves appeared to them still more insupportable : they resolved, therefore, to shake off this yoke, and entered into intrigues and cabals, which terminated in a union of the parties under the title of the House of Ali Bey. The chiefs were Hassan Bey, formerly Governor of Djedda, and surnamed, on that account, El-djed-daoui ; he had for his colleague Ismael, the only remaining Bey of those created by Ibrahim Kiaya. These confederates conducted their plot so well that Morad and Ibrahim were obliged to abandon Cairo, and retire into the Said, where they were exiled ; but, being soon reinforced by the refugees, who joined them, they returned, and routed their enemies, who were three

(*a*) That is to say, of whom he had been the patron : among the Mamlouks, the freed-man is called the child of the *house*.



times their number. Ismael and Hassan, expelled in their turn, fled into the Said, where they still remain. Morad and Ibrahim, jealous of this party, have made several efforts to destroy it, without success. They at last granted to the rebels a district above Djirdja; but the Mamlouks, who continually long for the luxuries of Cairo, having made some movements in 1783, Morad Bey thought it necessary to make a fresh attempt to exterminate them, and I arrived at the time when he was making his preparations. His adherents, dispersed along the Nile, stopped all the boats they met, and, staff-in-hand, forced the wretched proprietors to follow them to Cairo. Every body fled from a service which was to produce them no profit. In the city a contribution of five hundred thousand dahlers (*a*) was imposed upon commerce; the bakers and different tradesmen were compelled to furnish their commodities below prime cost, and all these extortions, so odious in Europe, were deemed mere matters of course in Egypt.

Every thing was ready in the beginning of

(*a*) Two million, six hundred and twenty-five thousand livres, (109,375*l*.)



April, and Morad set out for the Said. The advices from Constantinople, and the gazettes of Europe, which re-echoed them, represented this expedition, at the time, as an important war, and the force of Morad as a powerful army, and it was so relatively to the forces he could raise and the situation of Egypt; but it is no less true that it did not exceed two thousand horsemen. To observe the constant falsification of news at Constantinople, one would believe, either that the Turks of the capital are wholly ignorant of the affairs of Egypt and Syria, or that they wish to impose on the Europeans. The little communication there is between them and these remote provinces of the empire renders the former supposition more probable than the latter. On the other hand, it should seem as if our merchants, who reside in the different factories, might procure us authentic information; but they, shut up in their kans, as in prisons, concern themselves but little with what is foreign to their commerce, and content themselves with laughing at the newspapers they receive from Europe. Sometimes they have attempted to rectify these errors; but their information was so ill-employed,



ployed that they have abandoned so troublesome and unprofitable an undertaking.

Morad, leaving Cairo, led his cavalry, by forced marches, along the river; his baggage and stores followed him in boats; and the north-wind, which is always most prevalent, was favourable to his designs. The exiles, to the number of five hundred, were posted above Djirdja. They no sooner were apprized of the enemy's approach than they became a prey to dissension; some were for fighting, and others advised to capitulate; several of them even adopted the latter measure, and surrendered to Morad Bey: but Hassan and Ismael, continuing inflexible, removed up the river towards Asouan, followed by about two hundred and fifty horse. Morad pursued them almost to the Cataract, where they took post so advantageously, on rocky precipices, that the Mamlouks, utterly ignorant how to conduct a war of posts, held it impossible to force them. Besides, Morad, dreading lest too long an absence from Cairo might give encouragement to new projects, hastened to return thither; and the exiles, delivered from their embarrassment, returned likewise to their former station in the Said.

In



In a society where the passions of individuals are not directed to one general end, where each man, attentive only to himself, considers the uncertainty of the next day, merely as a motive to improve the advantage of the moment; where the chiefs, impressing no sentiment of respect, are unable to maintain subordination; in such a society, a fixed and regular state of affairs is impossible; and the incessant jarring of the incoherent parts must give a perpetual vibration to the whole machine: this is what continually happens among the body of the Mamlouks at Cairo. Scarcely was Morad returned, when a new combination of interests excited new troubles; besides his faction, and those of Ibrahim, and the house of Ali Bey, there were, at Cairo, other Beys allied to other houses. These Beys, who from their individual weakness were neglected by the ruling Beys, thought proper, in the month of July, 1783, to unite their hitherto detached forces, and form a party, which also had its pretensions to sovereign power. This league, however, was discovered too soon, and the leaders, to the number of five, found themselves unexpectedly exiled to the Delta. To this order they feigned submission;



mission ; but they had scarcely left the city, before they took the route of the Said, the usual and convenient asylum of all the malecontents : they were pursued to no purpose for a day, through the desert of the Pyramids ; but they escaped both the Mamlouks and Arabs, and arrived safe at Miniah, where they took up their residence.

This village, situated forty leagues above Cairo, on the banks of the Nile, which it commands, was well calculated to promote their designs. Masters of the river, they could stop every thing which came from the Said ; and they availed themselves of this advantage : the corn, annually sent from that province, at this season, was a favourable circumstance ; this they seized ; and Cairo, deprived of provisions, was in danger of a famine ; while the Beys, and others whose lands lay in, or beyond, the province of Fayoum, no longer received their revenues, as the exiles had laid them under contribution. To remove these evils, a new expedition was necessary. Morad Bey, fatigued with the former, refused to undertake a second ; and Ibrahim Bey took it on himself. In the month of August, notwithstanding



standing the Ramadan, the preparations were begun; all the boats, and their owners, were seized on, as before. Contributions were levied, and the dealers compelled to supply the troops.

At length, in the beginning of October, Ibrahim set out with an army which was thought formidable, since it consisted of about three thousand cavalry. It was resolved to go down the Nile, the waters of the inundation having not yet left the whole country, and the ground continuing to be marshy. In a few days the armies came in sight of each other; but Ibrahim, who had not the same fondness for war with Morad, did not attack the confederates; he entered into a negociation, and concluded a verbal treaty, the conditions of which were the return of the Beys, and their re-establishment. Morad, who suspected some plot against himself, was much dissatisfied with this convention; distrust took place more than ever between him and his rival; and the arrogance displayed by the exiles, in a general Divan, still more increased his fears. He thought himself betrayed, and, to secure himself from treachery, set out from Cairo with his adherents,



herents, and retired into the Said. Open war was expected to be the consequence, but Ibrahim temporized, and, at the end of four months, Morad advanced to Djiza, as if to decide the quarrel by a battle.

For five-and-twenty days the two parties, separated by the river, remained opposite each other, without attempting any thing. A treaty was proposed, but Morad, dissatisfied with the conditions, and too weak to dictate others, returned into the Said, whither he was followed by deputies, who, after four months negociation, at length succeeded in bringing him back to Cairo: the conditions stipulated were, that he should continue to share the authority with Ibrahim, and that the five Beys should be deprived of their possessions. These Beys, perceiving they were given up by Ibrahim, took to flight; Morad pursued them, and the Arabs of the desert, having taken them, he brought them back to Cairo, that they might be under his eye. Peace now seemed re-established; but what had passed between the two chiefs had too clearly manifested their respective views, to suffer them to continue friends; and each, well convinced that his rival was only watch-  
ing



ing an opportunity to destroy him, kept constantly on his guard, either to avoid or endeavour a surprize.

These secret machinations obliged Morad Bey again to quit Cairo, in 1784; but, forming his camp close to the gates, he appeared so determined, that Ibrahim, terrified in his turn, fled with his partisans into the Said, where he remained till March 1785, when, in consequence of a new treaty, he returned to Cairo, where he now shares, as formerly, the supreme authority with his rival, until some fresh intrigue shall afford him an opportunity of taking his revenge. Such is the summary of the revolutions which have taken place in Egypt for some years past. I have not circumstantially related the various incidents of these events, because, not to mention their uncertainty, they can neither interest nor convey information. The whole is a tissue of cabals, intrigues, treachery, and murders, which could only weary the reader in the repetition; it is sufficient if he is acquainted with the leading facts, and is enabled from them to form just ideas of the manners and political state of the country, which subject I shall now proceed to discuss more amply.



## CHAP. X.

*Present State of Egypt.*

SINCE the revolution of Ibrahim Kiaya, and especially since the revolt of Ali Bey, the Ottoman power has become more precarious in Egypt than in any other province. It is true the Porte still retains there a Pacha; but this Pacha, confined and watched in the castle of Cairo, is rather the prisoner of the Mamlouks, than the representative of the Sultan. He is deposed, exiled, or expelled at pleasure; and, on the mere summons of a herald, clothed in black (*a*), must descend (*b*) from his high station. Some Pachas, chosen expressly for that purpose by the Porte, have endeavoured, by secret intrigues, to recover the power formerly annexed to their title; but the Beys have rendered all such attempts so dangerous, that they now submit quietly to their three years captivity, and confine themselves to the peaceable enjoyment of their salary and emoluments.

(*a*) This officer is named *Caracoulouk*.

(*b*) The formulary of deposition consists in the word *enzel*, that is, *descend from the castle*.



The Beys, however, apprehensive of driving the Porte to adopt some violent measure, dare not declare their independence. Every thing continues to be transacted in the name of the Sultan; his orders are received, as they express it, *on the head and on the eyes*; that is with the greatest respect; but this ridiculous appearance of reverence is never followed by obedience. The tribute is frequently intermitted, and always undergoes great deductions. Various expences are carried to account, such as the maintenance of the canals, the carriage of the rubbish of Cairo to the sea, the pay of the troops, the repair of the mosques, &c. &c. which are all so many false and pretended charges. Deceit is practised respecting the degree of inundation; and nothing short of the dread inspired by the Turkish Caravelles, which come annually to Damietta and Alexandria, could procure the contribution of rice and grain: even in this too, means are found to diminish the effective supplies, by a collusion with those appointed to receive them. On the other hand, the Porte, abiding by her usual policy, is blind to all these abuses, well knowing, that to correct them, will require expensive efforts, and pos-



sibly an open war, in which the dignity of the empire might suffer considerably. Other, and more urgent affairs, have, besides, forced the Turks, for some years past, to collect all their forces towards the North. Obligated to bestow all their attention on their immediate safety in Constantinople, they leave the restoration of their authority in the distant provinces to time, and the course of events. They take care, however, to foment divisions among the rival parties, that none of them may acquire an established power; and this method has been found equally beneficial to the state, and advantageous to the great officers, who derive large profits from the rebels, by selling them their influence and protection. The present Admiral, Hasan Pacha, has more than once availed himself of this practice, so as to obtain considerable sums from Ibrahim and Morad.



## C H A P. XI.

*Military Constitution of the Mamlouks.*

THE Mamlouks, on obtaining the government of Egypt, adopted measures which seem to secure to them the possession of the country. The most efficacious is the precaution they have taken to degrade the military corps of the Azabs and Janissaries: These two bodies, which were formerly the terror of the Pacha, are now as insignificant as himself. Of this the corrupt and wretched government of the Turks has alone been the cause; for, previous to the insurrection of Ibrahim Kiaya, the number of Turkish troops, which should consist of forty thousand men, infantry and cavalry, had been reduced to less than half that number, by the avarice of their officers, who diverted the pay to their own use. After Ibrahim, Ali Bey completely destroyed their consequence. He first displaced all the officers who gave him umbrage; left unfilled the places that became



vacant ; deprived the commanders of all influence ; and so degraded all the Turkish troops, that at this day the Janissaries, the Azabs, and the five other corps, are only a rabble of artizans and vagabonds, who guard the gates of those who pay them, and tremble in the presence of the Mamlouks, as much as the populace of Cairo. The whole military force of Egypt really consists in the Mamlouks. Some hundreds of these are dispersed throughout the country, and in the villages, to maintain the authority of their corps, collect the tributes, and improve every opportunity of extortion ; but the main body continually remains at Cairo. From the computation of well-informed persons, it appears, their number cannot exceed eight thousand five hundred men, reckoning Beys and Cachefs, common freed-men, and Mamlouks, who are still slaves. In this number there are a multitude of youth under twenty and twenty-two years of age.

The most powerful house is that of Ibrahim Bey, who has about six hundred Mamlouks. Next to him is Mourad, who has not above four hundred, but who, by his audacity and prodigality, forms a counterpoise



poise to the insatiable avarice of his rival : the rest of the Beys, to the number of eighteen or twenty, have each of them from fifty to two hundred. Besides these, there is a great number of Mamlouks who may be called *individual*, who being sprung from houses which are extinct, attach themselves sometimes to one, and sometimes to another, as they find it their interest, and are always ready to enter into the service of the best bidder. We must reckon likewise some Serradjes, a sort of domestics on horseback, who carry the orders of the Beys ; but the whole together does not exceed ten thousand horse. No mention is here made of infantry, which is neither known nor esteemed in Turkey, especially in the Asiatic provinces. The prejudices of the ancient Persians, and of the Tartars, still prevail in those countries, where war, consisting only in flight and pursuit, the horseman, who is best qualified for both these, is reputed the only soldier ; and as, among Barbarians, the warrior is alone the man of distinction ; to walk on foot is held to be degrading, and is, for that reason, reserved for the common people. The Mamlouks, therefore, permit the inhabitants of



Egypt to be carried only by mules or asses (*c*), reserving to themselves the exclusive privilege of riding on horseback; and of this they make sufficient use; for whether they are in town or the country, or if they only make a visit to the next door, they are never seen but on horseback. Their dress, as well as the support of their dignity, obliges them to this. This dress, which does not differ from that of every other person in easy circumstances in Turkey, deserves to be described.

#### S E C T. I.

##### *Dress of the Mamlouks.*

First, they have a wide shirt of thin cotton, of a yellowish colour, over which they wear a sort of gown of Indian linen, or the

(*c*) The Franks of all nations are subjected to the same humiliating restriction, but, by proper management, and liberal presents, this may be got over by strangers of consequence, who come only to visit the country. *Lord Algernon Percy*, now *Lord Louvaine*, and the *Earl of Charlemont*, obtained permission to ride on horseback in 1776.—See Colonel Capper's excellent little work, p. 31. T.

light



light stuffs of Damascus and Aleppo. This robe, called *antari*, descends from the neck to the ankles, and folds over the fore-part of the body, towards the hips, where it is fastened by two strings. Over this first covering is a second, of the same form and width, the ample sleeves of which descend likewise to the finger ends. This is called a *coftan*, and is usually made of silk stuff, richer than the former. Both these are fastened at the waist by a long belt, which divides the whole dress into two bundles. Above them is a third, which is called *djouba*, which is of cloth without lining, and is made nearly in the same manner, only the sleeves are cut at the elbow. In winter, nay frequently even in summer, this *djouba* is lined with fur, and is converted into a pelisse. Lastly, over these three wrappers, they put on an outer garment, called the *beniche*. This is the cloak or robe of ceremony, and completely covers the whole body, even the ends of the fingers, which it would be deemed highly indecent to suffer to appear before the great. The whole habit, when the *beniche* is on, has the appearance of a long sack, from out of which is thrust a  
bare



bare neck, and a bald head, covered with a turban. The turban of the Mamlouks, called a *Kaouk*, is of a cylindrical shape, yellow, and turned up on the outside with a roll of muslin artificially folded. On their feet, they wear a sock of yellow leather, which reaches up to the heels, and slippers without quarters, always liable to be left on the road. But the most singular part of this dress is a sort of pantaloons, or trowsers, so long as to reach up to the chin, and so wide, that each of the legs is large enough to contain the whole body, and made of that kind of Venetian cloth which the French call *faille*, which, although as pliant as the *d'Elbæuf* cloth, is thicker than the *burre* of Rouen; and that they may walk more at their ease, they fasten, with a running sash, all the loose parts of the dress I have been describing. Thus swaddled, we may imagine the Mamlouks are not very active walkers; and those who are not acquainted by experience with the prejudices of different countries, will find it scarcely possible to believe, what however is the fact, that they look on this dress as exceedingly commodious. In vain may we object that it hinders them from walking,  
and



and encumbers them, unnecessarily, on horseback, and that in battle a horseman, once dismounted, is a lost man. They reply, *It is the custom*, and every objection is answered.

## S E C T. II.

### *Horse accoutrements of the Mamlouks.*

Let us now examine, whether their horse accoutrements are more rational. Since the Europeans have had the good sense to examine the principles of every art, they have found that the horse, in order to move freely under his rider, should be as little harnessed as the solidity necessary would permit. This improvement, which has taken place among us in the eighteenth century, is still very far from being adopted by the Mamlouks, who have scarcely arrived at the knowledge of the ninth. Continually the slaves of custom, the horse's saddle among them is a clumsy frame, loaded with wood, leather, and iron, on which a trussequin rises behind, eight inches in height above the hips of the horseman. A pommel before projects four or five inches, so as to endanger his



his breast, should he stoop. Under the saddle, instead of a stuffed frame, they spread three thick woollen coverings, and the whole is fastened by a surcingle, which, instead of a buckle, is tied with leather thongs, in very complicated knots, and liable to slip. They use no crupper, but have a large martingale, which throws them on the shoulders of the horse. Each stirrup is a plate of copper longer and wider than the foot, with circular edges, an inch high in the middle, and gradually declining toward each end; the edges are sharp, and are used, instead of spurs, to make long wounds in the horse's sides. The common weight of a pair of these stirrups is between nine and ten pounds, and frequently exceeds twelve or thirteen. The saddle and saddle-cloths do not weigh less than five-and-twenty; thus the horse's furniture weighs above six-and-thirty pounds, which is so much the more ridiculous, as the Egyptian horses are very small.

The bridle is equally ill contrived; it is a kind of snaffle, but without a joint, and with a curb, which, being only an iron ring, binds the jaw so as to lacerate the skin, so that the bars are injured, and the horse absolutely



folutely has no mouth. This necessarily results from the practice of the Mamlouks, who, instead of managing the mouth, like us, destroy it by violent and sudden checks, which they employ particularly in a manœuvre peculiar to them. This consists in putting the horse on a full gallop, and suddenly stopping him, when at his highest speed. Checked thus by the bit, the horse bends in his hind legs, stiffens the fore, and slides along like a horse of wood. How much this manœuvre must injure the legs and mouth may easily be conceived; but the Mamlouks think it graceful, and it is adapted to their mode of fighting. Notwithstanding however their short stirrups, and the perpetual motion of their bodies, it cannot be denied that they are firm and vigorous horsemen, and that they have a warlike appearance, which pleases the eye even of a stranger; it must also be allowed, they have shewn more judgment in the choice of their arms.



## S E C T. III.

*Arms of the Mamlouks.*

Their principal weapon is an English carbine about thirty inches long, and of so large a bore as to discharge ten or twelve balls at a time, which, even without skill, cannot fail of great execution. They besides carry at their belt two large pistols, which are fastened to some part of their garments by a silk string. At the bow of the saddle sometimes hangs a heavy mace, to knock down their enemy, and on the left thigh is suspended, by a shoulder-belt, a crooked sabre, of a kind little known in Europe; the length of the blade, in a right line, from the hilt to the point, is not more than twenty-four inches, but measured in the curve is at least thirty. This form, which appears whimsical to us, has not been adopted without motives; experience teaches us, that the effect of a strait blade is limited to the place and moment of its fall, as it acts merely from pressure: a crooked blade, on the contrary, presenting its edge in retiring,



tiring, slides by the effort of the arm, and continues its action longer. The Barbarians, who generally apply themselves most to the destructive arts, have not suffered this observation to escape them; and hence the use of scymetars, so general and so ancient in the Eastern world. The Mamlouks commonly procure theirs from Constantinople, and from Europe; but the Beys rival each other in Persian blades, and in sabres of the ancient steel of Damascus (*b*), for which they frequently pay as high as forty or fifty pounds sterling. The qualities they esteem in them are lightness, the equality and ring of the temper, the waving of the iron, and, above all, the keenness of the edge, which it must be allowed is exquisite; but these blades have the defect of being as brittle as glass.

#### S E C T. IV.

##### *Education and Exercises of the Mamlouks.*

The art of using these arms constitutes the education of the Mamlouks, and the whole occupation of their lives. Every day, early

(*b*) I say ancient, for steel is now no longer made there.



in the morning, the greater part of them resort to a plain, without Cairo, and there, riding full speed, exercise themselves in drawing out their carbine expeditiously from the bandaleer, discharging it with good aim, and then throwing it under their thigh, to seize a pistol, which they fire and throw over their shoulder; immediately firing a second, and throwing it in the same manner, trusting to the string by which they are fastened, without losing time to return them to their place. The Beys who are present encourage them; and whoever breaks the earthen vessel which serves by way of butt, receives great commendations and money, as a recompense. They practise also the management of the sabre, and especially the *coup de revers* which cuts upwards, and is the most difficult to parry. Their blades are so keen, and they handle them so well, that many of them can cut a clew of wet cotton, like a piece of butter. They likewise shoot with bows and arrows, though they no longer use them in battle; but their favourite exercise is throwing the *djerid*: this word, which properly means a reed, is generally used to signify any staff thrown by the hand, after the manner of  
the



the Roman pilum. Instead of a staff, the Mamlouks make use of branches of the palm-tree, fresh stripped. These branches, which have the form of the stalk of an artichoke, are four feet long, and weigh five or six pounds. Armed with these, the Cavaliers enter the lists, and, riding full speed, throw them at each other from a considerable distance. The assailant, as soon as he has thrown, turns his horse, and his antagonist pursues, and throws his in his turn. The horses, accustomed to this exercise, second their masters so well, that they seem also to share in the pleasure. But this pleasure is attended with danger; for some can dart this weapon with so much force, as frequently to wound, and sometimes mortally. Ill-fated was the man who could not escape the djerid of Ali Bey! These sports, which to us seem barbarous, are intimately connected with the political state of nations. Not three centuries ago they existed among ourselves, and their being laid aside is less owing to the accident of Henry the Second, or to a spirit of philosophy, than to the state of internal peace which has rendered them useless. Among



the Turks and Mamlouks, on the contrary, they are retained, because the anarchy in which they live continues to render whatever relates to the art of war absolutely necessary. Let us now consider whether their progress in this art be proportionate to their practice.

## S E C T. V.

*Military skill of the Mamlouks.*

In Europe, when we hear of troops, and of war, we immediately figure to ourselves a number of men distributed into companies, battalions, and squadrons; with uniforms well fitted, and of different colours, ranks and lines formed, combinations of particular manœuvres, or general evolutions; and, in a word, a complete system of operations founded on established principles. These ideas are just, relative to ourselves, but, when applied to the countries of which we are treating, are erroneous indeed. The Mamlouks know nothing of our military arts; they have neither uniforms, nor order, nor discipline, nor even subordination. Their troops are a mob,  
their



their march a riot, their battles duels, and their war a scene of robbery and plunder, which ordinarily begins even in the very city of Cairo; and, at the moment when there is the least reason to expect it. A cabal gathers together, the Beys mount on horseback, the alarm spreads, and their adversaries appear: they charge each other in the street, sabre in hand; a few murders decide the quarrel, and the weakest or most timid is exiled. The people are mere cyphers in these affrays. Of what importance is it to them that their tyrants cut each others throats? But it must not be imagined that they stand by indifferent spectators, that would be too dangerous in the midst of bullets and scymetars; every one makes his escape from the scene of action till tranquillity is restored. Sometimes the populace pillage the houses of the exiled, which the conquerors never attempt to prevent. And it will not be improper here to observe, that the phrases employed in the European Gazettes, such as “*The Beys have raised recruits, the Beys have excited the people to revolt, the Beys have favoured one party,*” are ill calculated to furnish accurate ideas. In the differences of the Beys,



the people are never any thing more than merely passive instruments.

Sometimes the war is transferred to the country, but the art and conduct of the combatants is not more conspicuous. The strongest, or most daring party pursues the other. If they are equal in courage, they wait for each other, or appoint a rendezvous, where, without regarding the advantages of situation, the respective troops assemble in platoons, the boldest marching at their head. They advance towards their enemies, mutual defiance passes, the attack begins, and every one chooses his man: they fire, if they can, and presently fall on with the sabre: it is then the manageableness of the horse and dexterity of the cavalier are displayed. If the former falls, the destruction of the latter is inevitable. In defeats, the valets, who are always present, remount their masters; and if there are no witnesses near, frequently knock them on the head to obtain the sequins they never fail to carry. The battle is often decided by the death of two or three of the combatants. Of late years, especially, the Mamlouks seem convinced, that as their patrons are the persons principally interested, they



they ought to encounter the greatest dangers, and therefore presently leave them the enjoyment of that honour. If they gain the advantage, so much the better for all concerned; if they are overcome, they capitulate with the conqueror, who frequently makes his conditions before hand. There is nothing to be gained but by remaining quiet; they are sure of finding a master who pays, and they return to Cairo to live at his expence until some new revolution takes place.

## S E C T. VI.

### *Discipline of the Mamlouks.*

The interested and inconstant character of this militia, is a necessary consequence of its origin and constitution. The young peasant, sold in Mingrelia or Georgia, no sooner arrives in Egypt, than his ideas undergo a total alteration. A new and extraordinary scene opens before him, where every thing conduces to awaken his audacity and ambition; though now a slave, he seems destined to become a master, and already assumes the



spirit of his future condition. He calculates how far he is necessary to his patron, and obliges him to purchase his services and his zeal; these he measures by the salary he receives, or that which he expects; and as in such states money is the only motive, the chief attention of the master is to satisfy the avidity of his servants, in order to secure their attachment. Hence, that prodigality of the Beys, so ruinous to Egypt, which they pillage; that want of subordination in the Mamlouks, so fatal to the chiefs whom they despoil; and those intrigues, which never cease to agitate the whole nation. No sooner is a slave enfranchised than he aspires to the principal employments; and, who is to oppose his pretensions? In those who command, he discovers no superiority of talents which can impress him with respect; in them he only sees soldiers like himself, arrived at power by *the decrees of fate*; and if it please fate to favour him, he will attain it also, nor will he be less able in the art of governing, which consists only in taking money, and giving blows with the sabre.

From this system also has arisen an unbridled luxury, which, indulging the gratification



cation of every imaginary want, has opened an unlimited field to the rapacity of the great. This luxury is so excessive, that there is not a Mamlouk, whose maintenance costs less than twenty-five hundred livres (a hundred and four pounds) annually, and many of them cost double that sum. At every return of the Ramadan, they must have a new suit, French and Venetian cloths, and Damascus and India stuffs. They must often likewise be provided with new horses and harness. They must have pistols and sabres from Damascus, gilt stirrups, and saddles and bridles plated with silver. The chiefs, to distinguish them from the vulgar, must have trinkets, precious stones, Arabian horses of two or three hundred pounds value, shawls of Cashmere worth from five-and-twenty to fifty pounds each, and a variety of pelisses, the cheapest of which costs above twenty pounds (*e*). The women have rejected the ancient custom of wearing sequins on the head and breast, as not sufficiently splendid and costly, and in their stead

(*e*) The European merchants, who have adopted this luxury, do not think they have a decent wardrobe, unless its value exceeds twelve or fifteen thousand livres (five or six hundred pounds.)



have substituted diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and the finest pearls ; and to their fondness of shawls and furs, have added a passion for Lyons stuffs and laces. When such luxuries are become the necessaries of those whose authority is without controul, and who neither respect the rights of property, nor the life of their inferiors, it is easy to conceive what must be the condition of their subjects who are obliged to furnish them with whatever their caprice may require.

#### S E C T. VII.

##### *Manners of the Mamlouks.*

The manners of the Mamlouks are such, that though I shall strictly adhere to truth, I am almost afraid I shall be suspected of prejudice and exaggeration. Born for the most part in the rites of the Greek church, and circumcised the moment they are bought, they are considered by the Turks themselves as Renegadoes, void of faith and of religion. Strangers to each other, they are not bound by those natural ties which unite the rest of mankind.

Without



Without parents, without children, the past has done nothing for them, and they do nothing for the future. Ignorant and superstitious from education, they become ferocious from the murders they commit, perfidious from frequent cabals, seditious from tumults, and base, deceitful, and corrupted by every species of debauchery. They are, above all, addicted to that abominable wickedness which was at all times the vice of the Greeks and of the Tartars, and is the first lesson they receive from their masters. It is difficult to account for this taste, when we consider that they all have women, unless we suppose they seek in one sex, that poignancy of refusal which they do not permit the other. It is however very certain, that there is not a single Mamlouk but is polluted by this depravity; and the contagion has spread among the inhabitants of Cairo, and even the Christians of Syria who reside in that city.



## CHAP. XII.

*Government of the Mamlouks.*

SUCH are the men who at present govern and decide the fate of Egypt: a few lucky strokes of the sabre, a greater portion of cunning, or audacity, have conferred on them this pre-eminence; but it is not to be imagined that in changing fortune these upstarts change their character; they have still the meanness of slaves, though advanced to the rank of monarchs. Sovereignty with them is not the difficult art of directing to one common object the various passions of a numerous society, but only the means of possessing more women, more toys, horses, and slaves, and satisfying all their caprices. The whole administration, internal and external, is conducted on this principle. It consists in managing the Court of Constantinople, so as to elude the tribute, or the menaces of the Sultan; and in purchasing a number of slaves, multiplying partisans, countermining plots, and destroying their secret enemies by the dagger, or by poison. Ever tortured by  
the



the anxiety of suspicion, the chiefs live like the ancient tyrants of Syracuse. Morad and Ibrahim sleep continually in the midst of carbines and sabres, nor have they any idea of police or public order (*a*). Their only employment is to procure money; and the method considered as the most simple, is to seize it wherever it is to be found, to wrest it by violence from its possessor, and to impose arbitrary contributions every moment on the villages, and on the custom-house, which, in its turn, levies them again upon commerce.

## S E C T. I.

*Condition of the people in Egypt.*

We may easily judge that in such a country, every thing is analogous to so wretched

(*a*) When I was at Cairo, some Mamlouks carried off the wife of a Jew, who was passing the Nile with her husband. The Jew having complained to Morad, that Bey replied in his rough tone of voice: *Well, let the young folks amuse themselves!* In the evening, the Mamlouks acquainted the Jew that they would restore him his wife if he would pay them one hundred piasters for their trouble; and to this he was obliged to submit. This instance is the more in point, since in this country women are held more sacred than life itself.



a government. Wherever the cultivator enjoys not the fruit of his labour, he works only by constraint, and agriculture languishes: Wherever there is no security in property, there can be no industry to procure it, and the arts must remain in their infancy. Wherever knowledge has no object, men will do nothing to acquire it, and their minds will continue in a state of barbarism. Such is the condition of Egypt. The greater part of the lands are in the hands of the Beys, the Mamlouks, and the professors of the law; the number of the other proprietors is extremely small, and their property liable to a thousand impositions. Every moment some contribution is to be paid, or some damage repaired; there is no right of succession or inheritance for real property; every thing returns to government, from which every thing must be re-purchased. The peasants are hired labourers, to whom no more is left than barely suffices to sustain life. The rice and corn they gather are carried to the table of their masters, and nothing reserved for them but dourra or Indian millet, of which they make a bread without leaven, which is tasteless when cold. This bread,  
baked



baked by a fire kindled with the dried dung of buffaloes and cows (*f*), is, with water and raw onions, their only food throughout the year; and they esteem themselves happy if they can sometimes procure a little honey, cheese, sour milk, and dates. Flesh meat, and fat, which they are passionately fond of, make their appearance only on the great festivals, and among those who are in the best circumstances.

Their whole clothing consists in a shirt of coarse blue linen, and in a clumsy black cloak. Their head-dress is a sort of cloth bonnet, over which they roll a long handkerchief of red woollen. Their arms, legs and breasts, are naked, and the greatest part of them do not even wear drawers. Their habitations are mud-walled huts, in which they are suffocated with heat and smoke, and frequently attacked by maladies arising from uncleanness, humidity, and unwholesome food; and, to fill the measure of their wretchedness, to these physical evils are added continual alarms, the dread of the robberies of

(*f*) The reader will recollect that Egypt is a naked country, which affords no fire-wood.



the Arabs, and the extortions of the Mam-louks, family feuds, and all the anxieties of a perpetual civil war.

This is a just picture of all the villages, and equally resembles the towns. At Cairo itself, the stranger, on his arrival, is struck with the universal appearance of wretchedness and misery. The crowds which throng the the streets, present to his sight nothing but hideous rags, and disgusting nudities. It is true, he often meets with horsemen richly clad; but this display of luxury only renders the contrast of indigence the more shocking. Every thing he sees or hears, reminds him he is in the country of slavery and tyranny. Nothing is talked of but intestine troubles, the public misery, pecuniary extortions, bastinadoes and murders. There is no security for life or property. The blood of men is shed like that of the vilest animals. Justice herself puts to death without formality. The officer of the night in his rounds, and the officer of the day in his circuit, judge, condemn, and execute in the twinkling of an eye, without appeal. Executioners attend them, and, on the first signal, the head of the unhappy victim falls into the leathern bag, in  
which



which it is received for fear of soiling the place. Were even the appearance of criminality necessary to expose to the danger of punishment, this would be more tolerable; but frequently, without any other reason than the avidity of a powerful chief, or the information of an enemy, a man is summoned before some Bey, on suspicion of having money. A sum is demanded from him, and if he denies that he possesses it, he is thrown on his back, and receives two or three hundred blows on the soles of his feet, nay, sometimes is put to death. Unfortunate is he who is suspected of being in easy circumstances! A hundred spies are every moment ready to accuse him; and it is only by assuming the appearance of poverty, that he can hope to escape the rapaciousness of power.

## S E C T. II.

### *The misery and famine of late years.*

During the last three years, the capital of Egypt, and all the country, has presented a  
spectacle



1500  
spectacle of the most deplorable misery. To the constant evils of an uncontrouled tyranny, and the consequences of the troubles of the preceding years, were added natural calamities still more destructive. The plague, brought from Constantinople in the month of November, 1783, made its accustomed ravages during the whole winter. Not less than fifteen hundred dead bodies were reckoned to be carried out of the gates of Cairo in a day (*c*). The summer, as is usual, asswaged its fury; but to this scourge another equally terrible, soon succeeded. The inundation of 1783 was not sufficient, great part of the lands therefore could not be sown for want of being watered, and another part was in the same predicament for want of seed. In 1784, the Nile again did not rise to the favourable height, and the dearth immediately became excessive. Soon after the end of November, the famine carried off, at Cairo, nearly as

(*c*) In Turkey, the tombs, according to the custom of the ancients, are always without the towns; and as each tomb has usually a large stone, and some masonry, they constitute what may almost be called a second town, which may be named, as formerly at Alexandria, *Necropolis*, or the city of the dead.

many



many as the plague; the streets, which before were full of beggars, now afforded not a single one: all had perished, or deserted the city. Nor were its ravages less dreadful in the villages; an infinite number of wretches, who attempted to escape death, were scattered over the adjacent countries. I saw Syria full of them. In January 1785, the streets of Saide and Acre, and every town in Palestine, were crowded with Egyptians, easily distinguishable by their tawny skin; and some of them had wandered even as far as Aleppo and the Diarbekar. The depopulation of these two years cannot be precisely estimated, as the Turks keep no registers of births, deaths, or the number of the people (*a*); but it was the received opinion, that the country had lost one-sixth part of its inhabitants.

In these circumstances were renewed all those dreadful scenes at the bare relation of which human nature shudders, and the sight of which impresses a melancholy horror never to be effaced. For, as was the case, during the famine, some years ago in Bengal, the

(*a*) They have superstitious prejudices against this practice.



streets and public places swarmed with meagre and dying skeletons ; whose faltering voices implored, in vain, the pity of passengers, the common danger having hardened every heart. These wretches expired, leaning against the houses of the Beys, which they knew were stored with rice and corn, and, not unfrequently, the Mamlouks, importuned by their cries, chased them away with blows. Every disgusting means of appeasing the rage of hunger was tried, every thing the most filthy devoured ; nor, shall I ever forget that, when I was returning from Syria to France, in March 1785, I saw, under the walls of ancient Alexandria, two wretches sitting on the dead carcase of a camel, and disputing its putrid fragments with the dogs.

We have among us, minds of noble and exalted sentiments, who, after paying the tribute of compassion due to such dismal calamities, find their indignation return, and impute it as a crime to the men who will submit to suffer them. They deem those well-deserving death, who have not the courage to defend themselves from it, or seek, at least, the consolation of exemplary vengeance. They even go so far as to adduce these facts  
in



in proof of a moral paradox, perhaps rashly advanced, and endeavour to demonstrate from them the pretended axiom—"that the inhabitants of hot countries, debased by climate and temperament, are destined, by nature, to be the slaves of despotism."

But have they maturely examined whether similar facts have never happened in climates they are pleased to honour with the exclusive privilege of liberty? Have they accurately observed whether the general facts on which they build be not accompanied with circumstances and accessaries which make an essential difference in the consequences? In politics, as in medicine, detached phænomena continually lead us into error respecting the real causes of the malady. Men are too anxious to erect particular cases into general rules; and yet those universal principles, which are so flattering to the mind, have almost invariably the defect of being vague. So rarely are the facts on which we reason exact, and so liable to mistake is the most careful observer, that we ought to be extremely cautious, or we shall be continually raising systems on imaginary foundations.



In the case of which we are treating, if we attentively examine the causes of the debasement of the Egyptians, we shall find that this people, depressed by cruel circumstances, are more deserving of pity than contempt, for the political situation of this country is very unlike that of Europe. Among us, the traces of ancient revolutions are becoming fainter every day; the foreign conquerors have assimilated with the conquered natives; and from this mixture has been formed one national body, all the members of which have the same interest. In Egypt, on the contrary, and throughout almost all Asia, the original inhabitants, enslaved by revolutions, the effects of which are still apparent, are become a prey to foreign conquerors, who, mixing with the natives, have formed distinct parties, whose interests are directly opposite. The state is properly divided into two factions; one, that of the conquering nation, who are in possession of all the civil and military employments; and the other, that of the vanquished, who constitute the subaltern classes of society. The ruling party assuming, by right of conquest, an exclusive



clusive title to all property, treat the governed faction as merely the passive instrument of their pleasures, while the latter, in their turn, destitute of all personal interest, contribute as little as possible to the service of the other. Their state is that of a slave, to whom the opulence of his master is a burthen, and who would willingly free himself from his servitude, were it in his power.

This feebleness is another characteristic which distinguishes the constitution of these nations from those of Europe. In the European states, the governments, deriving from each respective nation the means of governing it, find it neither an easy matter, nor their interest to abuse their power. And even supposing they formed distinct interests, they would still be unable to obtain unlimited powers. The reason is, that besides the multitude called *people*, which, though powerful from its number, is always feeble from its disunion, there exists a middle order, which, partaking of the qualities of the governors and the governed, maintains, in some measure, an equilibrium between the one and the other. This is the class of the opulent and independent citizens, who, dis-



perfed through the different occupations of fociety, have a common intereft in feeing thofe rights of property and fecurity which they enjoy refpected. In Egypt, on the contrary, there is no middle ftate; none of our numerous claffes of nobility; no clergy, merchants, or landholders, which, in fome degree, conftitute an intermediate body between the common people and the government. There, every man is a foldier, or profeflor of the law, that is to fay, a creature of government; or he is a labourer, an artizan, or fhopkeeper, that is to fay, one of the people, and the people above all are deficient in the firft requifite to combat oppreffion, the art of combining and directing their force. To deftroy or to reform the Mamlouks, a general league of the peasantry is neceffary; and this it is impoffible to form. The fyftem of oppreffion is methodical. One would imagine thefe tyrants were every where endued with an intuitive knowledge of its principles. Each province, each diftrict, has its governor, and each village its lieutenant (*b*), who

(*b*) In Arabic *kaiem makam*, literally *locum tenens*, from which is formed *caïmacam*, lieutenant.



watches the motions of the multitude. Single against such numbers, he may appear feeble; but the power he represents renders him formidable. Besides, experience proves that wherever a man has the courage to make himself master he finds enough whose meanness will second his pretensions. This lieutenant transfers a portion of his authority to some individuals of the society he oppresses, and these become his supporters: jealous of each other, they strive who shall best merit his favour, and he employs them alternately to effect their mutual destruction.

The same jealousies and inveterate hatreds pervade also and disunite the villages. But even supposing an union which is so difficult to take place, what could a crowd of bare-footed and almost naked peasants, with only sticks, or even with muskets, effect against a body of disciplined and well-armed cavalry. I am, above all, led to believe Egypt can never shake off this yoke, when I consider the nature of the country, which is but too advantageous for cavalry. If the best regulated infantry among us dread to en-



counter the horse in a plain, how formidable must they be to a people who are wholly ignorant of the very first elements of tactics, and who can never possibly acquire a knowledge which can only be the result of an experience their situation denies them. Mountainous countries, alone, afford to liberty its great resources. It is there that skill and address, favoured by situation, supply the deficiency of numbers. The revolvers, unanimous, because they are at first not numerous, acquire every day new strength, from the habit of exercising it, while the oppressor, less active, because he is already powerful, delays his attack, till at length these bands of peasants, or plunderers, whom he despised, become soldiers inured to war, and dispute with him, even in the plains, the superiority in military skill, and the palm of victory. In flat countries, on the contrary, the first tumult is suppressed, and the ignorant peasant, who does not even know how to throw up an entrenchment, has no other resource but in the clemency of his master, and a quiet submission to his slavery. We shall therefore find, that no general principle



ciple can be advanced more true than the following: *That plains are the habitation of indolence and of slavery, and mountains the country of energy and freedom (c).*

In the present situation of the Egyptians, it is possible they might not display much courage; and yet it may not be true that the seeds of it are wanting in them, or that it is denied them by the climate. For that continued effort of the mind, called courage, is a quality more nearly allied to our moral, than our physical constitution. It is not the greater or less degree of heat in the climate,

(c) In fact, the ancient and modern nations in general, who have displayed the greatest activity, were mountaineers. The Assyrians, who extended their conquests from the Indus to the Mediterranean, came from the mountains of Atouria. The Chaldeans were originally from the same countries; the Persians, who conquered under Cyrus, descended from the mountains of the Elymais, and the Macedonians from Mount Rhodope. In modern times, the Swiss, the Scots, the Savoyards, the Miquelets, the Asturians, the inhabitants of the Cevennes, always free, or difficult to subject, would seem to prove this a general rule, did not the exception of the Arabs and the Tartars indicate some other moral cause, common to the plains as well as to the mountains.

but



but rather the energy of the passions, and the confidence we have in our own powers, which enables us to brave danger. Where these two requisites do not exist, courage may remain inert; though circumstances alone are wanting to call it into action. Besides, if any men are capable of this energy, it should be those whose minds and bodies, inured to suffering by habit, have acquired a hardiness which blunts the edge of pain, and such are the Egyptians. We deceive ourselves when we represent them as enervated by heat, or effeminate from debauchery. The inhabitants of the cities, and men of opulence, may indeed be a prey to that effeminacy which is common to them in every climate; but the poor despised peasants, denominated *fellahs*, support astonishing fatigues. I have seen them pass whole days in drawing water from the Nile, exposed naked to a sun which would kill us. Those who are valets to the Mamlouks, continually follow their masters. In town, or in the country, and amid all the dangers of war, they accompany them every where, and always on foot; they will run before or after their horses for days together, and when they  
are



are fatigued, tie themselves to their tails rather than be left behind.

The character of their minds is every way correspondent to the hardness of their bodies. The implacability displayed by these peasants in their hatreds, and their revenges (*d*); their obstinacy in the battles which frequently happen between different villages; their sense of honour in suffering the bastinado, without discovering a secret, (*e*) and even the barbarity with which they punish the slightest deviation from chastity in their wives and daughters (*f*), all prove that their minds, when swayed by certain

(*d*) When a man is slain by another, the family of the deceased demand a retaliation from the family of the assassin, and this vengeance is pursued from generation to generation, without ever being forgotten.

(*e*) When a person has undergone the torture, without discovering his wealth, he is said to be *a man*, and this eulogium indemnifies him for his suffering.

(*f*) They frequently put them to death on mere suspicion; and this is equally true in Syria. When I was at Ramla, a peasant came into the market for several days, with his cloak stained with the blood of his daughter, whom he had thus killed: the action indeed was generally approved. Turkish justice never meddles with these affairs,

preju-



prejudices, are capable of great energy, and that that energy only wants a proper direction, to become a formidable courage. The cruelties and seditions which have sometimes been the consequence of their exhausted patience, especially in the province of Sharkia, indicate a latent fire, which waits only for proper agents to put it in motion, and produce great and unexpected effects.

### S E C T. III.

#### *State of the arts.*

But a powerful obstacle to every fortunate revolution in Egypt, is the profound ignorance of the nation, which equally prevents them from perceiving the causes of their evils, or applying the necessary remedies.

As I propose treating this article, which, like several of the preceding ones, is common to all the Turkish empire, more fully in another place, I shall not at present dwell on particulars. It will be sufficient to observe, that this ignorance, diffused through every class, extends its effects to every species of  
moral



moral and physical knowledge, to the sciences, and the fine arts, and even to the mechanical professions. The most simple of these are still in a state of infancy. The work of their cabinet-makers, locksmiths, and gunsmiths, is extremely clumsy. Their mercery, their hardware, their gun and pistol barrels, are all imported from foreign countries. With difficulty can you find one watchmaker at Cairo who knows how to repair a watch, and he too is an European. Jewellers are more common there than at Smyrna and Aleppo ; but they know not how to mount properly the simplest rose. Gunpowder is made there, but it is coarse. Sugar is refined there, but it is full of melasses, and the white is excessively dear. The only manufacture in any degree of perfection is their silk stuffs ; and the workmanship of them is much less highly finished, and the price far greater than in Europe.



## C H A P. XIII.

*State of Commerce.*

IN this state of universal barbarism, it cannot but appear astonishing that commerce should still continue so flourishing as we find it at Cairo ; but an attentive enquiry into the sources from whence it is derived will explain the reason.

Two powerful causes have contributed to render Cairo the seat of an extensive commerce; the first of which is, that all the commodities consumed in Egypt are collected within the walls of that city ; and all the persons of property, that is, the Mamlouks and lawyers, are assembled there, and draw thither their whole revenues, without making any return to the country from which they receive them.

The second is the situation, which makes this city a centre of circulation, while by the Red Sea, it corresponds with Arabia and India ; by the Nile, with Abyssinia and the interior parts of Africa ; and by the Mediterranean, with Europe and the empire of Turkey.



Turkey. Every year a caravan from Abyssinia arrives at Cairo, and brings from a thousand to twelve hundred black slaves, as also elephants teeth, gold dust, ostrich-feathers, gums, parrots and monkeys (*g*), while another, destined for Mecca, leaves the extremities of Morocco, and receiving pilgrims even from the river of Senegal (*b*), coasts along the Mediterranean, collecting those of Algiers, Tripoli, and Tunis, and arrives by the desert at Alexandria, consisting of not less than three or four thousand camels. From thence it proceeds to Cairo, where it joins the caravan of Egypt. They then jointly set out for Mecca, whence they return one hundred days after. But the pilgrims of Morocco, who have six hundred leagues more to travel, do not reach home

(*g*) This caravan comes by land along the Nile; it was with that Mr. Bruce returned in 1772, from Abyssinia, after having performed the most adventurous journey attempted in the present age. In traversing the desert, the provisions of the caravan fell short, and the travellers lived several days on *gum* alone.

(*b*) I saw several negroes who came by this caravan, from the country of the *Foulis*, to the north of Senegal, and who said they had seen Europeans in their country.

till



till after an absence of more than a year. The lading of these caravans consists in India stuffs, shawls, gums, pearls, perfumes, and especially the coffee of Yemen.

The same commodities arrive by another route at Suez, to which port the southerly winds bring, in May, six or eight and twenty sail of vessels from Djedda. Cairo does not retain the whole quantity of this merchandize; but, besides what is there consumed, considerable profits arise from the duties, and the sums expended by the pilgrims. On the other hand, small caravans arrive from time to time from Damascus, with silk and cotton stuffs, oils, and dried fruits. During the favourable season, there are always some vessels in the road of Damietta, unloading hogsheds of tobacco from Latakia, the consumption of which in Egypt is enormous. These vessels take rice in exchange, whilst others arrive successively at Alexandria, bringing clothing, arms, furs, passengers, and wrought silk, from Constantinople. Vessels come likewise from Marseilles, Leghorn and Venice, with cloths, cochineal, Lyons stuffs, and laces, grocery, paper, iron, lead, Venetian sequins, and German dahlers. All these  
articles



articles conveyed by sea to Rosetta in barks called *djerm* (*i*), are first landed there, then re-imbarked on the Nile, and sent to Cairo. From this account, it is not surprizing that commerce should continue so flourishing in that capital, and we need not hesitate to admit the report of the commissioner general of the customs, who asserted, that in 1783, Cairo had traded to the amount of near a hundred and fifty millions of livres, (six millions two hundred and fifty thousand pounds.) But if we examine the channels into which this wealth is poured, if we consider that a great part of the merchandize and coffee of India passes into foreign countries, the value of which is paid in goods from Europe and Turkey; that the consumption of the country almost entirely consists of articles of luxury completely finished, and that the produce given in return is principally in raw materials, we shall perceive that all this commerce is carried on without contributing greatly to the real riches of Egypt, or the benefit of the people.

(*i*) A sort of boat which carries an extremely large lateen sail, striped with blue and brown, like ticking.



## C H A P. XIV.

*Of the Isthmus of Suez, and the junction of the Red Sea with the Mediterranean.*

I HAVE mentioned the commerce carried on at Cairo, with Arabia and India, by the way of Suez ; and this subject naturally leads to a question frequently agitated in Europe ; which is, whether it would be practicable to cut through the Isthmus which separates the Red Sea from the Mediterranean, that vessels might arrive at India by a shorter route than by the Cape of Good Hope. The narrowness of the Isthmus induces us to believe it easily practicable ; but, in a journey I made to Suez, the following reasons induced me to change my opinion.

First, It is certainly true, that the space which separates the two seas is not more than eighteen or nineteen ordinary leagues ; it is true, also, that this interval is not intersected by mountains, and that, from the tops of the terraces at Suez, we cannot discover,  
with



with any telescopes, a single obstacle on the naked and barren plain to the north-west; it is not therefore the difference of levels which prevents the junction (*a*); but, the great difficulty arises from the nature of the corresponding coasts of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, which are of a low and sandy soil, where the waters form lakes, shoals, and morasses, so that vessels cannot approach within a considerable distance. It will therefore be found scarcely possible to dig a permanent canal amid these shifting sands: not to mention that the shore is destitute of harbours, which must be entirely the work of art. The country besides has not a drop of fresh water, and to supply the inhabitants, it must be brought as far as from the Nile.

The best and only method therefore of effecting this junction, is that which has been

(*a*) The ancients were of opinion that the Red Sea was higher than the Mediterranean; and, in fact, if we observe that, from the canal of Kolzoum to the sea, the Nile has a declivity, for the space of thirty leagues, this idea will not appear so ridiculous; besides that, to me, it appears probable the level will be found at the Cape of Good Hope.



already successfully practised at different times; which is, by making the river itself the medium of communication, for which the ground is perfectly well calculated; for Mount Mokattam suddenly terminating in the latitude of Cairo, forms only a low and semicircular mound, round which is a continued plain from the banks of the Nile, as far as the point of the Red Sea. The ancients, who early understood the advantage to be derived from this situation, adopted the idea of joining the two seas by a canal connected with the river. Strabo (lib. 17.) observes, that this first was executed under Sesostris, who reigned about the time of the Trojan war (*b*); and this work was so considerable as to occasion it to be remarked; “that it was a hundred cubits, (or a hundred and seventy feet) wide and deep enough for large vessels.” After the Greeks conquered the country, it was restored by the Ptolemies, and again renewed by Trajan. In short, even the Arabs them-

(*b*) That is, according to certain calculations of mine, in the time of Solomon. See *Mémoire sur la Chronologie Ancienne*, inserted in the *Journal des Sçavans*, of January 1782.



selves followed these examples. “ In the time  
“ of Omar ebn-el-Kattab,” says the historian  
El Makin, “ the cities of Mecca and Medina-  
“ suffering from famine, the Calif ordered  
“ Amrou, Governor of Egypt, to cut a canal  
“ from the Nile to Kolzoum, that the con-  
“ tributions of corn and barley, appointed  
“ for Arabia, might be conveyed that way.”

This canal is the same which runs at present to Cairo, and loses itself in the country to the north-east of *Berket-el-Hadj*, or the Lake of the Pilgrims. Kolzoum, the Clysma of the Greeks, where it terminated, has been destroyed for many ages; but the name and situation still subsist in a hillock of sand, bricks, and stones, three hundred paces to the north of Suez, on the border of the sea, opposite the ford which leads to the spring of El-Naba. I have been on the spot as well as M. Niebuhr, and the Arabs told me, as they did him, it was called *Kolzoum*; Danville therefore is deceived, when, copying an error of Ptolemy's, he places Clysma eight leagues to the southward. I am of opinion that he is likewise mistaken, in supposing Suez the Arfinoe of the ancients.



This city having been situated, according to the Greeks and Arabs, to the north of Clyfma, we should endeavour to trace it according to the words of Strabo (*c*), “quite at the bottom of the gulph, as we approach Egypt,” without proceeding however with M. Savary as far as *Adjeroud*, which is too far to the westward. We ought to confine ourselves to the low country, which extends about two leagues from the bottom of the present gulph, that space being all we can reasonably allow for the retreat of the sea in seventeen centuries.

Formerly these districts were covered with towns which have disappeared with the waters of the Nile; the canals which conveyed these are destroyed, for in this shifting soil they are rapidly choaked up, both by the action of the winds, and by the cavalry of the Bedouin Arabs. At present the commerce of Cairo with Suez is only carried on by means of caravans, which wait the arrival, and set out on the departure of the vessels, that is, towards the end of April,

(*c*) Strabo, lib. 17.



or the beginning of May, and in the course of the months of July and August. That which I accompanied in 1783, consisted of about three thousand camels, and five or six thousand men (*d*). The merchandize consisted in wood, sails, and cordage for the ships at Suez; in some anchors, carried each of them by four camels, iron bars, carded wool, and lead; it likewise carried bales of cloth, and barrels of cochineal, corn, barley, and beans, Turkish piaſtres, Venetian ſequins, and Imperial dahlers. All these commodities were destined for Djedda, Mecca, and Moka, where they were to be bartered for Indian goods, and the coffee of Arabia, which forms the principal article of the returns. There was besides a great number of pilgrims, who preferred the voyage by sea to a land journey; and it also carried

(*d*) It remained upwards of forty days assembled, deferring its departure for various reasons; among others, on account of the *unlucky* days, in which respect the Turks are as superstitious as the Romans formerly were. At length it set out on the 27th of July, and arrived the 29th at Suez, having journeyed twenty-nine hours by the route of the Haouatat Arabs, a league farther to the south than the Lake of the Pilgrims.



the necessary provisions, such as rice, meat, wood, and even water; for no place in the world is more destitute of every necessary than Suez. From the tops of the terraces, the eye, surveying the sandy plain to the north-west, the white rocks of Arabia to the east, or the sea, and the mountain Mokattam, to the south, cannot discern even a single tree, or the smallest spot of verdure. Suez presents no prospect but extensive yellow sands, or a lake of green water; the ruinous condition of the houses heightens this melancholy scenery. The only water which can be drunk is brought from *El-Naba*, or the *spring*, situated at the distance of three hours journey on the Arabian shore; but it is so brackish, that without a mixture of rum, it is insupportable to Europeans. The sea might furnish a quantity of shell and other fish; but the Arabs seldom attempt fishing, at which they are far from expert; when the vessels are gone, therefore, nobody remains at Suez, but the governor, who is a Mamlouk, and twelve or fourteen persons, who form his household, and the garrison.

The fortress is a defenceless heap of ruins,  
which



which the Arabs consider as a citadel, because it contains six brass four pounders, and two Greek gunners, who turn their heads aside when they fire. The harbour is a wretched quay, where the smallest boats are unable to reach the shore, except at the highest tides. There, however, the merchandize is embarked, to convey it over the banks of sand, to the vessels which anchor in the road. This road, situated a league from the town, is separated from it by a shore which is left dry at low water; it has no works for its defence, so that the vessels which I have seen there, to the number of eight-and-twenty at a time, might be attacked without opposition; for the ships themselves are incapable of resistance, none having any other artillery than four rusty swivels. Their number diminishes every year, since, by continually coasting along a shore full of shoals, one out of nine, at least, is shipwrecked. In 1783, one of them having anchored at *El-Tor*, to take in water, was surpris'd by the Arabs, while the crew were sleeping on shore. After plundering it of fifteen hundred bags of coffee, they abandoned the vessel to the wind, which threw it



it upon the coast. The dock at Suez is ill adapted to repair such damages; scarcely do they build a *cayasse* in three years. Besides that the sea, which, from its flux and reflux, accumulates the sand upon that coast, will at last choak up the entrance, and the same change will take place at Suez, which has already at Kolzoum and Arfinoe.

Were Egypt under the administration of a wise government, advantage might be then taken of that accident to build another town in the same road, which might be done on a causeway of only seven or eight feet in height, as the tide usually rises no more than three feet and a half. The canal of the Nile would be cleansed and repaired, and the five hundred thousand livres (near twenty-one thousand pounds), paid annually to the escort of the Arabs of Haouatat and Ayaidi entirely saved. In short, to avoid the very dangerous bar of the Bogaz of Rosetta, the canal of Alexandria would be rendered navigable, from whence the merchandize might be conveyed immediately to the Porte. But such are not the cares of the present government. The small degree of encouragement it grants to commerce is not even founded on rational motives;



motives ; if it be tolerated, it is merely because it furnishes a means of gratifying rapacity, and is a source from whence tyranny perpetually derives profit, without considering how soon it may be exhausted. It does not even know how to make advantage of the eagerness of the Europeans to communicate with India. In vain have the English and French attempted to concert with the Turks a plan for opening such a passage ; they either inflexibly refuse, or discourage every application. We should be wrong in flattering ourselves with any durable success ; for even were treaties concluded, the revolutions which, between evening and morning, so often alter the face of affairs at Cairo, would render them of no effect, as was the case with the treaty concluded in 1775, between Mohammad Bey and the Governor of Bengal. Such besides is the avarice and treachery of the Mamlouks, that they would never want pretexts to harass the merchants, and would augment, in spite of every engagement, the duties on commodities.

Those on coffee are at this moment enormous. The *farde*, or bale of this commodity, weighing



weighing from three hundred and seventy to three hundred and seventy-five pounds, and costing, at Moka, forty-five pataques (*e*), or two hundred and thirty-six livres Tournois, (nine pounds sixteen and eightpence), pays in *bahr*, or sea duties, one hundred and forty-seven livres (six pounds two shillings and six-pence), besides an addition of sixty-nine livres (two pounds seventeen shillings and six-pence) laid on in 1783 (*f*). So that on adding the six per cent. collected at Djedda, we

(*e*) This is the name given by the inhabitants of Provence to the dahler of the empire, after the Arabs, who call it *Rial aboutaka*, or *Father of the window*, on account of the arms on the reverse, which, according to them, resemble a window. The dahler is worth five livres five sols (four and four pence half-penny.)

(*f*) In May 1783, the fleet of Djedda, consisting of twenty-eight sail, four of which were vessels pierced for sixty guns, brought near thirty thousand fardes of coffee, which, at the rate of 370 pounds the farde, form a total of eleven millions one hundred thousand pounds weight, or one hundred and one thousand quintals; but it must be observed, that the demand of that year was more than a third greater than usual. Accordingly, we must only reckon, on an average, from sixty to seventy thousand quintals annually. The farde, paying two hundred



we shall find that the duties nearly equal the prime cost (*g*).

hundred and sixteen livres (nine pounds), duty at Suez, the thirty thousand fardes of 1783 produced to the Custom-house six millions four hundred and eighty thousand livres Tournois (two hundred and seventy thousand pounds.)

(*g*) At Moka - - - 16 livres.

At Suez - - - 147

Extra-duty - - - 69

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Total of duties - 232

Prime cost - - 236

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Total - - 468

adding to which the freight, losses, and waste, it is not astonishing that the Moka coffee should sell at five-and-forty, and fifty sols (one and ten-pence, and two and a penny), the pound in Egypt, and for three livres, (half a crown) at Marseilles.



## C H A P. XV.

*Of the customhouses and imposts.*

THE administration of the customs forms, in Egypt, as in all Turkey, one of the principal offices of government. He who exercises it is at once the comptroller and farmer-general. All the duties on entry, exports, and the circulation of commodities, depend on him. He names all the subalterns who collect them. To this he adds the *paltes*, or exclusive privileges of the *natron* of Terane, the *kali* of Alexandria, the *castia* of the Thebais, the *fenna* of Nubia, and, in a word, is the despot of commerce, which he regulates at his pleasure. His office is never held for longer than a year. The price of his contract in 1783, was one thousand purses, which, at the rate of five hundred piasters the purse, and fifty sols the piafter, make twelve hundred and fifty thousand livres, (above fifty-two thousand pounds.) It is true we must include among the conditions of his farm eventual extortions, or casual demands ;



demands ; that is, when Mourad Bey, or Ibrahim, are in want of five hundred thousand livres, they send for the commissioner of the customs, who cannot dispense with advancing them that sum ; but he receives a warrant in return, which empowers him to levy this extortion on commerce, for which he taxes, in a friendly way, the different corps or nations, such as the Franks, the Barbary Arabs, and the Turks ; and this frequently turns out not a little to his advantage. In some provinces of Turkey, he has also the collecting of the *miri*, or tax levied only on the lands. But in Egypt, this administration is entrusted with the Copt writers, who exercise it under the direction of the secretary of the commandant. These writers have registers of each village, and are employed in receiving the payments, and accounting for them to the treasury ; they frequently profit by the ignorance of the peasants, in not carrying to account the partial payments, and by obliging them to discharge the debt a second time : they often sell the oxen, the buffaloes, and even the mat on which these wretches lie ; and it may be truly said, that they are agents every way worthy



worthy of their masters. The ordinary tax should amount to thirty-three piasters for each *feddan*; that is to say, to near eighty-three livres (three pounds nine and two-pence) for every yoke of oxen; but this is sometimes carried, by abuse, as far as two hundred livres, (four pounds six and six-pence.) It is calculated that the whole produce of the miri, collected as well in money as in corn, barley, beans, rice, &c. may amount to from forty-six to fifty millions of France, (about two millions sterling) when bread sells at one *fadda* the *rotle*, that is, at five liards (something more than a half-penny) the pound of fourteen ounces.

But to return to the custom-houses; they were managed formerly, according to ancient custom, by the Jews; but Ali Bey having completely ruined them in 1769, by an enormous extortion, they passed into the hands of the Christians of Syria, with whom they still remain. These Christians, who came from Damascus to Cairo, about fifty years ago, consisted at first of but about two or three families; their profits attracted others, and their number is now multiplied to near five hundred. Their original modesty and œconomy



nomy enabled them to gain possession, first of one branch of commerce, and then of another, so that at length they were able to take the farm of the custom-house after the ruin of the Jews. From that time they have acquired great opulence, and made pretensions which may possibly end by a fate similar to that of their predecessors. Their hour was thought to be come when their chief, Anthony Faraoun, fled from Egypt in 1784, and went to Leghorn, to enjoy in safety a fortune of several millions; but this event, as it was without example (*a*), so it had no consequences.

## S E C T. I.

*Of the commerce of the Franks at Cairo.*

Next to these Christians of Syria, the most considerable body of merchants is that of the Europeans, known in the Levant under the name of *Franks*. From a very early period

(*a*) In general the orientals hold the manners of Europe in detestation, which prevents every idea of emigration.



the Venetians have had establishments at Cairo, to which they send sadlery, silk stuffs, looking-glasses, mercery, &c. The English also partook of this trade, and sent cloths, arms, and hardware, which have to this day preserved their superiority of reputation. But the French, by furnishing similar articles at a much cheaper rate, have obtained the preference, to the exclusion of their rivals. The pillage of the caravan which attempted to pass from Suez to Cairo, in 1779 (*b*), has given

(*b*) The newspapers of the day spoke much of this pillage, on account of M. de St. Germain, of the Isle of Bourbon, whose misfortunes were greatly talked of in France. The caravan was composed of English officers and passengers, who had landed from two vessels at Suez, in their way to Europe, by Cairo. The Bedouin Arabs of Tor, informed that these passengers were richly laden, resolved to plunder them, and attacked them five leagues from Suez. The Europeans, stripped stark naked, and dispersed by fear, separated into two parties. Some of them returned to Suez; the remainder, to the number of seven, thinking they could reach Cairo, pushed forward into the Desert. Fatigue, thirst, hunger, and the heat of the sun, destroyed the one after the other. M. de Saint Germain alone survived all these horrors. During three days and two nights, he wandered in this bare and sandy desert, frozen at night by the north wind, (it was in



given the last blow to the English; and since that period there has not appeared in either of

in the month of January) and burnt by the sun during the day, without any other shade but a single bush, into which he thrust his head among the thorns, or any drink but his own urine. At length, on the third day, perceiving the water of *Berket-el-Hadj*, he strove to make towards it; but he had already fallen three times from weakness, and undoubtedly would have remained where he last fell, but for a peasant, mounted on a camel, who saw him at a great distance. This charitable man conveyed him to his dwelling, and took care of him for three days with the utmost humanity. At the expiration of that time, the merchants of Cairo, apprized of his misfortune, procured him a conveyance to that city, where he arrived in the most deplorable condition. His body was one entire wound, his breath cadaverous, and he had scarcely a spark of life remaining. By dint of great care and attention, however, Mr. Charles Magallon, who received him in his house, had the satisfaction of saving him, and even of re-establishing his health. Much was said at the time of the barbarity of the Arabs, who notwithstanding killed no one: at present we may venture to blame the imprudence of the Europeans, who conducted themselves throughout the whole affair like madmen. So great was the discord among them, and they had carried their negligence so far, as not to have a single pistol fit for use. All their arms were at the bottom of their chests. Besides, it appears that the Arabs did not act merely from their usual motives; well in-



of these towns a single factor of that nation.

The principal articles of the French trade in Egypt consist, as throughout the Levant, in light cloths of Languedoc, called first *Londrins*, and second *Londrins*. They sell annually, upon an average, between nine hundred and a thousand bales. The profit is from thirty-five to forty per cent, but their drawing and re-drawing causing a loss of from twenty to twenty-five, the net produce is only fifteen per cent. The other articles of importation are iron, lead, groceries, cochineal, some laces, and Lyons stuffs, various articles of mercery, and dahlers and sequins.

In exchange they take coffee of Arabia, African gums, clumsy cottons, manufactured at Manouf, and which are re-shipped to the French West-Indies, untanned hides,

formed persons assert that the affair was concerted at Constantinople, by *the English East-India Company's agents*, who saw, with a jealous eye, individuals entering into competition with them for the traffic of Bengal; and what has passed in the course of the enquiries into this event, has proved the truth of the assertion.

safranum,



safranum, sal ammoniac, and rice (*c*). These articles rarely balance the exports, and the merchant is at a loss for his returns, not however from a want of a variety of productions, as Egypt furnishes corn, rice, doura, millet, sesamum, cotton, flax, fenna, cassia, sugar-canes, nitre, natrum, sal ammoniac, honey, and wax; silks also and wine might be produced: but industry and exertion are wanting, because the cultivator would not be permitted to enjoy the fruits of his labour.

The importation of the French is estimated, *communibus annis*, at three millions of livres (a hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds). France maintained a Consul at Cairo till 1777, when he was withdrawn on account of the expence. He was transferred to Alexandria, and the merchants, who suffered him to go without demanding an indemnity, remained at Cairo at the peril of their lives and fortunes. Their situation, which has not changed, is nearly similar to that of the

(*c*) The exportation of corn is prohibited, and Pococke remarked in 1737, that this measure had been detrimental to agriculture.



Dutch at Nangazaki; that is to say, shut up in a confined place, they live among themselves, with scarcely any external communication; they even dread it, and go as little out as possible, to avoid the insults of the common people, who hate the very name of the Franks, and the insolence of the Mamlouks, who force them to dismount from their asses in the middle of the streets. In this kind of habitual imprisonment, they tremble every instant, lest the plague should oblige them entirely to shut themselves up in their houses, or some revolt expose their quarter to be plundered; lest the chief of some party should make a pecuniary demand (*d*), or the Beys compel them to furnish them with what they want, which is always attended with no little danger.

Nor do their mercantile affairs cause them less uneasiness. Obligated to sell on credit, they are rarely paid at the stipulated time. There are no regulations even for bills of exchange, no recourse can be had to justice,

(*d*) They have observed, that these extortions amount, annually, on an average, to sixty-three thousand livres (two thousand six hundred and twenty-five pounds.)

because



because justice there is always worse than bankruptcy. Every thing depends on conscience, and that conscience has been sensibly losing its influence for some time past. Payments are delayed for whole years; frequently they receive no payment at all, and great deductions are almost always made. The Christians, who are their principal correspondents, are, in this respect, more faithless even than the Turks; and it is remarkable that, throughout the empire, the character of the Christians is greatly inferior to that of the Mussulmen; they are reduced, however, to the necessity of letting every thing pass through such hands. Add to this, that it is impossible ever to realize their capital; and to obtain an outstanding debt they are under a necessity of giving still greater credit. For all these reasons, Cairo is the most precarious and most disagreeable factory of the Levant. Fifteen years ago, there were nine French mercantile houses at Cairo; in 1785, they were reduced to three, and shortly perhaps there will not remain one. The Christians of Syria, settled some time ago at Leghorn, have given another fatal blow to



this settlement, by the immediate correspondence they carry on with their countrymen ; and the Grand Duke of Tuscany, who treats them like his other subjects, contributes every thing in his power toward the augmentation of their commerce.



## C H A P. XVI.

*Of the city of Cairo.*

GRAND Cairo, of which I have already said so much, is so celebrated a city that it well deserves a still more particular description. This capital does not, in the country, bear the name of *El-Kabera*, given it by its founder ; the Arabs know it only by that of *Mafr*, which has no known signification, but which seems to have been the ancient eastern name of the Lower Egypt (*a*).

This city stands on the eastern bank of the Nile, at the distance of a quarter of a league from the river, which deprives it of a great advantage ; for the loss of which the canal, which comes up to it, cannot compensate, since it contains no running water, except in the time of the inundation.

(*a*) This name of *Mafr* has the same consonants with that of *Mefr-aim*, used by the Hebrews ; which, on account of its plural form, seems properly to denote the inhabitants of the Delta, while those of the Thebais are called *Beni Kous*, or children of Kous.

When



When we hear of *Grand Cairo*, we are led to imagine that it must be a capital, at least, like those of Europe ; but if we reflect that, even among ourselves, towns have only begun to be rendered convenient and elegant within these hundred years, we shall easily believe that, in a country where nothing has been improved since the tenth century, they must partake of the common barbarism ; and, indeed, we shall find that Cairo contains none of those public or private edifices, those regular squares, or well-built streets, in which the architect displays his genius. Its environs are full of hills of dust, formed by the rubbish which is accumulating every day (*b*), while the multitude of tombs, and the stench of the common sewers, are at once offensive to the smell and the sight. Within the walls, the streets are winding and narrow ; and as they are not paved, the crowds of men, camels, asses, and dogs, which press against each other, raise a very disagreeable dust ; individuals often water their doors, and

(*b*) Sultan Selim had appointed boats to carry it to the sea ; but this regulation has been laid aside, to divert the money to other purposes.



to this dust succeeds mud and pestiferous exhalations. Contrary to the general custom of the east, the houses have two and three stories, over which is a terrace of stone or tiles ; in general they are of earth and bricks badly burnt ; the rest are of soft stone, of a fine grain, procured from the neighbouring Mount Mokattam. All these houses have the air of prisons, for they have no light from the street ; as it is extremely dangerous to have many windows in such a country : they even take the precaution to make the entering door very low. The rooms within are ill contrived. Among the great, however, are to be found a few ornaments and conveniencies, their vast halls, especially, in which water spouts up into marble basons, are peculiarly well adapted to the climate. The paved floor, inlaid with marble and coloured earthen ware, is covered with mats and mattresses, and over all is spread a rich carpet, on which they sit cross-legged. Around the wall is a sort of sofa, with cushions, to support the back and elbows ; and above, at the height of seven or eight feet, a range of shelves, decked out with China and Japanese porcelain. The walls, naked in other respects,



are chequered with sentences extracted from the Koran, and painted foliage and flowers, with which also the porticos of the Beys are covered; the windows have neither glafs, nor moving fashes, but only an open lattice work, which frequently costs more than our glazing. The light enters from the inner courts, from whence the fycamores reflect a verdure pleasing to the eye. An opening to the north, or at the top of the cieling, admits a refreshing breeze, while, by a whimsical contradiction, they wrap themselves up in warm woollen cloths and furs. The rich pretend by this means to escape diseases; but the common people, with their blue shirts and hard mats, are less liable to take cold, and enjoy better health.

#### S E C T. I.

##### *Of the population of Cairo and Egypt.*

The population of Cairo has frequently been a subject of dispute. If we may credit the head officer of the customs, Anthony Faraoun, cited by Baron *De Tott*, it approaches seven hundred thousand souls, including Boulak, a  
port



port and suburb detached from the city; but all calculations of the number of inhabitants in Turkey are arbitrary, as no registers are kept of births, deaths, or marriages. The Mahometans have even superstitious prejudices against numbering their people. The Christians may indeed be estimated by means of their tickets of capitation (*c*). All we know with certainty is, that, according to the plan of M. Niebuhr, taken in 1761, Cairo is three leagues in circumference, which is about the same with Paris, by the line of the Boulevards. Within this space is comprised a number of gardens, courts, vacant grounds and ruins. Now, if Paris, within the Boulevards, does not contain above seven hundred thousand inhabitants, though the houses are five stories high, it is difficult to conceive that Cairo, where they are only two stories, can contain more than two hundred and fifty thousand. It is equally impracticable to form a just estimate of the population of all Egypt. Nevertheless, as it is known that the number of towns and villages does not exceed two thousand three hun-

(*c*) Called *karadj*; *k* is here the Spanish *jota*:



dred (*d*), and the number of inhabitants in each of them, one with another, including Cairo itself, is not more than a thousand, the total cannot be more than two millions three hundred thousand. The cultivable lands, according to Danville, consist of two thousand one hundred square leagues, whence there results, for each square league, one thousand one hundred and forty-two inhabitants. This number, which is greater than even that of France, may lead us to imagine that Egypt is not so depopulated as it has been represented; but if we observe that the lands never lie fallow, but are continually productive, it must be allowed that its population is very little in comparison of what it has been, and of what it is capable of becoming.

Among the singularities which appear most extraordinary to a stranger at Cairo, may be

(*d*) Danville had seen two lists of villages in Egypt; one, which is of the last century, gives two thousand six hundred and ninety-six towns and villages; the other, of the middle of the present century, two thousand four hundred and ninety-five, nine hundred and fifty-seven of which are in the Said, and one thousand four hundred and thirty-nine in the Delta: that I have given is of 1783.

mentioned



mentioned the great number of ugly dogs which roam about the streets, and the kites which skim over the houses, with frequent and doleful cries. The Mussulmen kill neither of these, though they are equally held to be unclean (*e*) ; on the contrary, they often throw them the fragments of their tables ; and devotees even endow charitable foundations of bread and water for the dogs. These animals have besides the resource of the common sewers, which, however, does not prevent them from suffering by hunger and thirst ; but it is very astonishing that these extremities never occasion madness. Prosper Alpinus has already made this remark in his treatise on the Physic of the Egyptians. Canine madness is equally unknown in Syria ; the name of the malady, however, is to be found in the Arabic language, and is not borrowed from any foreign tongue.

(*e*) The turtle-doves, which are extremely numerous, build their nests in the houses ; and even the children do not touch them.



## CHAP. XVII.

*Of the diseases of Egypt.*

## SECT. I.

*Of Blindness.*

THIS malady, of which so much has been said, is not the only remarkable one in Egypt; there are several which equally deserve our notice.

Yet nothing can appear more extraordinary to a stranger than the prodigious number of persons whose sight is either lost or impaired, and which is so great, that out of a hundred persons I have met while walking the streets of Cairo, twenty have been quite blind, ten wanting an eye, and twenty others have had their eyes red, purulent, or blemished. Almost every one wears a fillet, a token of an approaching or convalescent ophthalmia; but nothing astonished me more than the indifference and apathy with which they support so dreadful a misfortune. *It was decreed,*  
says



says the Mussulman: *praise be to God! God has willed it*, says the Christian, *blessed be his name*. This resignation is undoubtedly the best resource when the evil has happened; but, as it prevents an enquiry into the cause of the disorder, it precludes the discovery of its cure. Some physicians among us have written on this distemper, but, from not being acquainted with all the circumstances, could not treat it with sufficient accuracy. I shall therefore add a few observations, which may assist others in future enquiries.

1st. Defluxions on the eyes are not peculiar to Egypt; they are also frequent in Syria, with this difference, that they are there less general; and it is remarkable that the inhabitants of the sea-coast alone are subject to them.

2d. In the city of Cairo, which is always full of filth, these disorders are more prevalent than in all the rest of Egypt (*a*). The common people are more liable to them than persons in easy circumstances, and the natives more than foreigners. The Mamlouks

(*a*) It must be observed, however, that the blind people of the villages come and reside in the *mosque of flowers*, where they have a sort of hospital.



are rarely attacked by them ; and the peasants of the Delta, are more subject to them than the Bedouin Arabs.

3d. These defluxions happen at no certain season, notwithstanding what is said by Prosper Alpinus. They are an endemial disorder, common to every month of the year, and to every age.

In reasoning from these principles, it seems to me that we cannot admit the southerly winds as a principal cause, since, in that case, this complaint would be peculiar to the month of April, and the Bedouins be affected with it like the peasants ; nor can we ascribe it to any subtile dust with which the air is filled, because the peasants are more exposed to this than the inhabitants of towns ; the custom of sleeping on the terraces has more the appearance of reality (*b*) ; but this cause is neither confined to this country, nor is it adequate to the effects ascribed to it ; for in countries remote from the sea, as the valley of Balbek, the Diarbekar, the plains of Hauran, and the mountains, the inhabitants sleep also on their terraces, and yet their sight is

(*b*) See De Tott's Memoirs, part IV. T.



not injured. If, therefore, at Cario, throughout the Delta, and on the coast of Syria, it is dangerous to sleep in the open air, this air must acquire some noxious quality from the vicinity of the sea: and this quality doubtless is moisture combined with heat, which then becomes a first principle of these disorders. The saline quality of the air, so remarkable in the Delta, contributes still farther to this, by the irritation and itching it occasions in the eyes, as I have myself experienced.

The usual diet of the Egyptians appears likewise to be a powerful cause. The cheese, sour milk, honey, confection of grapes, green fruits, and raw vegetables, which are the ordinary food of the people, produce in the stomach a disorder, which physicians have observed to affect the sight; the raw onions, especially, which they devour in great quantities, have a peculiar heating quality, as the Monks of Syria made me remark on myself. Bodies thus nourished, abound in corrupted humours, which are constantly endeavouring a discharge. Diverted from the ordinary channels, by habitual perspiration, they fly to the exterior parts, and fix themselves where



they find the least resistance. They therefore naturally attack the head, because the Egyptians, by shaving it once a week, and covering it with a prodigiously hot head-dress, principally attract to that the perspiration; and if the head receives ever so slight an impression of cold, on being uncovered, this perspiration is suppressed, and falls upon the teeth, or still more readily on the eyes, as being the tenderest part. On every fresh cold this organ is weakened, and at length finally destroyed. A disposition to this disorder, transmitted by generation, becomes a fresh cause of malady; and hence the natives are more exposed to it than strangers. It will appear more probable that the excessive perspiration of the head is a principal cause, when we reflect that the ancient Egyptians, who went bare headed, are not mentioned by physicians as being so much afflicted with ophthalmies (*c*); and that the Arabs of the desert, who cover it very little, especially when young, are equally exempt from them.

+ (*c*) History, however, informs us that several of the Pharaohs died blind.



## S E C T. II.

*Of the Small pox.*

Blindness in Egypt is in many instances occasioned by the consequences of the small pox. This disorder, which is very fatal in that country, is not treated after a good method; during the three first days, *debs*, or confection of grapes, honey, and sugar, are administered to the sick, and, after the seventh, they are allowed milk, meat, and salt-fish, as if they were in full health; at the period of suppuration, they are never purged, and they particularly avoid washing their eyes, though they are full of matter, and their eyelids closed by the glutinous matter; this operation they never perform till after forty days, and, in that time, the pus, by irritating the ball, has produced an inflammation which affects the whole eye. Not that inoculation is unknown among them, but they make little use of it. Nor is it more practised by the Syrians and the inhabitants of



Anadolia, who have long been acquainted with it (*d*).

This improper regimen is certainly far more pernicious than the climate, which is by no means unhealthy (*e*). To unwholesome food, especially, must we attribute both the deformity of the beggars, and the miserable appearance of the children at Cairo, which are no where to be met with so mishapen and wretched. Their hollow eyes, their pale and puffed faces, swollen bellies, meagre extremities, and yellow skins, make them always seem as if they had not long to live. Their ignorant mothers pretend that this is the effect of the *evil eye* of some envious person, which has bewitched them; and this ancient prejudice (*f*) is still general in Turkey; but the real cause is the badness of their food. In spite of the *Talisman*s, there-

(*d*) They perform the operation by inserting a thread into the flesh, or by making the patient inhale, or swallow, the powder of dried pustules.

(*e*) The Mamlouks are a proof of this, who, from wholesome diet, and a proper regimen, enjoy the most robust state of health.

(*f*) *Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos.* Virgil,  
fore,



fore (g), an incredible number of them perish, nor is any city more fatal to the population of the neighbouring country than Grand Cairo.

Another very general distemper at Cairo, is that which the vulgar there call the *bleſſed evil*, and which we alſo improperly term the *Neapolitan diſorder*: one half of Cairo is infected with it. The greateſt part of the inhabitants believe it proceeds from *fright*, from *witchcraft*, or from *uncleanlineſs*. Some of them ſuſpect the real cauſe; but as that is connected with a ſubject on which they are remarkably reſerved, they chuſe not to mention it. This *bleſſed evil* is very difficult to cure; mercury, under whatever form adminiſtered, generally fails: ſudorific vegetables ſucceed better, without being however infallible; happily, the virus is not very active, on account of the great natural and artificial perſpiration. We ſee there, as in Spain, old men carrying this diſorder about them to the

(g) We often ſee, in Egypt, little pieces of red ſtuff, or branches of coral, and coloured glaſs, hanging on the faces of children, and even of grown perſons. Theſe are ſuppoſed, by their colour and motion, to fix the firſt glance of the *envious*, for it is that, they ſay, which *ſtrikes*.



age of eighty. But its effects are fatal to children born with the infection. The danger is imminent for such as carry it into a cold country; for it there never fails to make a rapid progress, and shews itself always more inveterate from this transplantation. In Syria, at Damascus, and in the mountains, it is the more dangerous, as the winter is very severe there: when neglected, it terminates in all its well-known symptoms, as I myself witnessed in two instances.

There is a troublesome complaint peculiar to the climate of Egypt, which is a cutaneous eruption that returns every year. Towards the end of June, or the beginning of July, the body is covered with red spots and pimples, the smarting of which is very troublesome. Several physicians, perceiving that this eruption regularly happened at the time of the new waters, have been of opinion, that it was occasioned by the salts with which they supposed these waters impregnated; but the existence of these salts is not proved, and a more simple reason may be assigned. I have already said, that the waters of the Nile become corrupted, towards the end of April, in the bed of the river,  
and



and, when drunk, produce humours of a malignant quality. When the new water arrives, it occasions a sort of fermentation in the blood, the result of which is to separate the vicious humours, and expel them towards the skin, whither they are invited by the perspiration. It is, in its effect, a real purgative depuration, and is always salutary.

Another disease, but too common at Cairo, is a swelling of the testicles, which frequently turns to an enormous hydrocele. It is observed to attack, principally, the Greeks and Copts, and hence arises the suspicion that it is occasioned by the great quantity of oil which they make use of two-thirds of the year. It is conjectured, also, that the hot-baths contribute to it, the immoderate use of which produces other effects not less injurious to the health (*b*). I shall remark  
on

(*b*) The Egyptians, and the Turks in general, have a fondness for the stove-baths, difficult to account for in a country so hot as theirs: but this appears to me to arise more from prejudice than the pleasure they find in them. The law of the Koran, which enjoins men a complete ablution after the conjugal act, is of itself a very powerful motive; and the vanity they attach to its execution



on this occasion, that in Syria, as well as in Egypt, constant experience has proved that brandy distilled from common figs, or from the fruit of the sycamore tree, as well as that extracted from dates, and the fruit of the nopal, has a most immediate effect on the testicles, which it renders hard and painful the third or fourth day after it has been used as drink; and if the use of it be not discon-

is another not less efficacious: as for the women they have other motives; First, the bath is the only place in which they can make a parade of their luxury, and regale themselves with melons, fruits, pastry, and other delicacies. Secondly, they believe, as Prosper Alpinus has observed, that the bath gives them that *embonpoint* which passes for beauty. With respect to strangers, their opinions differ according to their tastes. Many merchants of Cairo are pleased with the baths, others have found them disagreeable. For my part, I found the bath produce in me a vertigo, and trembling at the knees, which lasted two days. I confess it is very extraordinary that a water really scalding, and a profuse sweat, forced out by the convulsions of the lungs, as well as by the heat, should be considered as giving so much pleasure; nor do I envy the Turks either their opium, or their stoves, or their *too complaisant Massers*!

(These *Massers* are boys who knead the flesh, crack all the joints, scrape off the scurf, eradicate the superfluous hairs, rub the body gently, and are said to be subservient to the pleasures of the bather. T.)

tinued,



tinued, the disorder degenerates into a confirmed hydrocele.

Brandy made from dried raisins has not the same bad effect; it is always mixed with anniseeds, and is very strong, being distilled even three times. The Christians of Syria, and the Copts of Egypt, make great use of it; the latter, especially, drink whole bottles of it at their supper: I imagined this an exaggeration, but I have myself had ocular proofs of its truth, though nothing could equal my astonishment that such excesses do not produce instant death, or, at least, every symptom of the most insensible drunkenness.

The spring, which in Egypt is the summer of our climates, brings with it malignant fevers, which soon arrive at a crisis. A French physician, who has had opportunities to observe a great number of them, has remarked, that the bark, given in the intermissions, in doses of two or three ounces, has frequently saved the patient at the last extremity (*i*). As soon as the disorder appears, the patient must be rigorously restricted to a vegetable

(*i*) The next day he always administers a clyster to expel the bark.



acid regimen; meat is prohibited, fish likewise, and above all, eggs; the latter are a sort of poison in Egypt. In this country, as in Syria, experience proves that bleeding is always more injurious than beneficial, even in cases where it appears to be most necessary: the reason of which is, that bodies nourished with unwholesome aliments, such as green fruits, raw vegetables, cheese and olives, have, in fact, but little blood, and a great quantity of humours; their habit is generally bilious, as appears from their eyes and their black eye-brows, their brown complexion, and meagre make. Their habitual malady is the cholic; almost all of them complain of a sourness in the throat, and an acid nausea; emetics and cream of tartar are therefore very generally successful.

The malignant fevers become sometimes epidemic, in which case they are easily mistaken for the plague, of which I shall next speak.



## S E C T. III.

*Of the Plague.*

Some persons have attempted to establish an opinion that the plague is of Egyptian origin; but this supposition, founded on vague prejudices, seems to be disproved by facts. The European merchants who have been settled for many years at Alexandria, concur with the Egyptians in declaring that the plague never proceeds from the interior of the country (*k*), but first makes its appearance, on the coast, at Alexandria; from Alexandria it passes to Rosetta, from Rosetta to Cairo, from Cairo to Damietta, and through the rest of the Delta. They further observe, that it is invariably preceded by the arrival of some vessel coming from Smyrna or Constantinople; and that if the plague has been violent in one of these cities during

(*k*) Prosper Alpinus, a Venetian physician, who wrote in 1591, says also, that the plague is not of Egyptian origin; that it is brought from Greece, Syria, and Barbary; that the heats destroy it, &c. See *Medecina Aegyptiorum*, p. 28.



the summer, the danger is the greater for themselves the following winter. It appears certain, that it really originates from Constantinople, where it is perpetuated by the absurd negligence of the Turks: this is carried so far that they publicly sell the effects of persons dead of that disorder. The ships which go to Alexandria never fail to carry furs and woollen cloths purchased on these occasions, which they expose to sale in the Bazar of the city, and thereby spread the contagion. The Greeks who carry on this commerce are almost always the first victims. By degrees the disorder reaches Rosetta, and at length Cairo, following the usual road of the merchandize. As soon as it is confirmed, the European merchants shut themselves and their domestics up in their *Kans*, and have no further external communication with the city. Their provisions, deposited at the gate of the Kan, are received there by the porter, who takes them up with iron tongs, and plunges them into a barrel of water provided for this purpose. If it is necessary to speak to any one, they always keep at such a distance as to prevent touching with their clothes, or breathing on one another; by these



these means they preserve themselves from this dreadful calamity, unless by some accidental neglect of these precautions. Some years ago, a cat which passed by one of the terraces into the dwellings of our merchants at Cairo, conveyed the plague to two of them, one of whom died.

It will easily be imagined what a tiresome state of imprisonment this must be: it continues for three or four months, during which time they have no other amusement than walking, in the evening, on the terraces, or playing at cards.

The plague affords several very remarkable varieties. At Constantinople it prevails during the summer, and is greatly weakened, or entirely ceases, during the winter. In Egypt, on the contrary, it is most violent in winter, and infallibly ends in the month of June. This apparent contrariety may be explained on the same principle. The winter destroys the plague at Constantinople, because the cold there is very severe, and the summer revives it, because the heat is very humid, on account of the seas, forests, and adjacent mountains. In Egypt, the winter nourishes the plague,



plague, because it is mild and humid ; but the summer destroys it, because it is hot and dry. It seems to act on it as on flesh meat, which it does not suffer to corrupt. Heat is not prejudicial, but as it is combined with humidity (1). Egypt is afflicted with the plague every fourth or fifth year, and the ravages it causes would depopulate the country, were it not for the great numbers of strangers who resort thither from all parts of the empire, and in a great measure repair its losses.

In Syria the plague is much less common : five-and-twenty years have elapsed since it has been known there. This arises, no doubt, from the small number of vessels which come directly from Constantinople. It is remarked likewise, that it does not naturalize itself so easily to that province. When brought from the Archipelago, or even from Damietta, into the harbours of Latakia, Saide, or Acre, it will not spread : it rather chuses

(1) At Cairo, it is observed, that the water-carriers, continually wet with the fresh water they carry in skins upon their backs, are never subject to the plague ; but in this case it is *lotion*, and not humidity.



preliminary circumstances, and a combined route; but when it passes directly from Cairo to Damascus, all Syria is sure to be infected.

The doctrine of predestination, and still more the barbarism of the government, have hitherto prevented the Turks from attempting to guard against this destructive disorder: the success, however, of the precautions taken by the Franks, has of late begun to make some impression on many of them. The Christians of the country who traffic with our merchants, would be disposed to shut themselves up like them; but this they cannot do without the authority of the Porte. It seems, indeed, as if the Divan would at length pay some attention to this object, if it be true that an edict was issued last year for the establishment of a Lazaretto at Constantinople, and three others at Smyrna, Candia, and Alexandria. The government of Tunis adopted this wise measure some years ago: but the Turkish police is every where so wretched, that little success can be hoped for from these establishments, notwith-



standing their extreme importance to commerce, and the safety of the Mediterranean states (*m*).

(*m*) The very last year afforded a proof of this, since as violent a plague as ever was known, broke out there. It was brought by vessels coming from Constantinople, the masters of which corrupted the guards, and came into port without performing quarantine.



## C H A P. XVIII.

*Descriptive sketch of Egypt resumed.*

EGYPT might still furnish matter for many other observations; but as they are either foreign to my purpose, or may be included in those which I shall have occasion to make on Syria, I shall pursue them no farther.

If the reader remembers my description of the nature and aspect of the country; if he figures to himself a flat plain, intersected with canals, under water during three months, verdant and boggy for three others, and dusty and full of cracks the remainder of the year: if on this he imagines a number of wretched mud-walled and brick villages, naked and sun-burnt peasants, buffaloes, camels, sycamore and date-trees thinly scattered, lakes, cultivated fields, and vacant grounds of considerable extent; and adds besides a sun darting his rays from



an azure sky, almost invariably free from clouds; and winds constantly blowing, but not always with the same strength, he will have formed a tolerably just idea of the natural aspect of this country. He may have judged of the civil state of the inhabitants from their division into tribes, sects, and classes; from the nature of a government, which neither respects the person or property of its subjects; and from the abuses of an unlimited power entrusted to a rude and licentious soldiery. He may in short have formed a just estimation of the strength of this government, by considering its military establishment, and the character of its troops, by observing that, throughout all Egypt and on its frontiers, there is not a single fort nor redoubt, neither artillery nor engineers; and that its whole navy consists in twenty-eight vessels and cayasses of Suez, armed each with four rusty swivels, and manned by sailors who know not even the use of the compass.

From these facts the reader may judge for himself what opinion he ought to form of this country, which I may have represented



sented in a different point of view from some other writers (*n*). He ought not to be astonished at this diversity; nothing can differ more than the judgments of travellers respecting the countries they have visited: one will frequently disparage what another has extolled; and describe as a Paradise what he who comes after him may consider as having no charms. They are particularly reproached with this contrariety of opinions, but it is in fact common to them and their critics, since it is founded in the very nature of things. Notwithstanding all our efforts, our judgments are much less directed by the real merits of objects, than by the impressions we receive, or carry with us in viewing them. Daily experience demonstrates that foreign ideas always obtrude themselves; and hence it is that the same country which appears beautiful to us at one moment, seems equally disagreeable at another. Besides that it is impossible to disengage ourselves from the prejudices of early habits. The inhabitant of the mountains dislikes the plain; the inhabitant of the plain is displeased with the mountains.

(*n*) See *De Maillet*.



The Spaniard wishes for a clear sky; the Dane prefers thick weather. We admire the verdure of our fields. The Swede is better pleased with the whiteness of his snow; and the Laplander, transported from his smoky hut, would die with heat and melancholy in the groves of Chantilly. Every man has his tastes, according to which he judges. To an Egyptian, I conceive that Egypt is, and always will be, the most beautiful country upon earth, though he has never beheld any other. But if I may be permitted to give my judgment, from what I have myself seen, I confess that I cannot entertain so high an opinion of it. I am willing to do justice to its extreme fertility, to the variety of its productions, and the advantages of its situation for commerce; I admit that Egypt is but little subject to the variations of weather, which occasion the failure of harvests with us; that the hurricanes of America are unknown there; that the earthquakes which have laid waste Portugal and Italy in our days, are there extremely rare, though not without example (o). I admit even that the

(o) There was a very violent one, for instance, in the year 1112.

heat,



heat, which is so insupportable to Europeans, is no inconvenience to the natives; but the destructive southerly winds are certainly a very real evil: the wind from the north-east too is no small inconvenience, as it is the forerunner of violent head-achs; and another objection to be made, is that multitude of scorpions, gnats, and especially flies, which are so numerous, that it is impossible to eat without running the risk of swallowing them. Besides, no country presents such a sameness of aspect. A boundless naked plain; an horizon every where flat and uniform (*p*); date-trees with their slender trunks, or mud-walled huts on the causeways, are all it offers to the eye, which no where beholds that richness of landscape, that variety of objects, or diversity of scenery which true taste finds so delightful. No country is less picturesque, less adapted to the pencil of the painter, or the descriptions of the poet: nothing can be seen of what constitutes the charm and beauty of their pictures; and it is remarkable that neither the Arabs, nor the

(*p*) The reader may consult the views in Norden, in which this is very conspicuous.



ancients make any mention of Egyptian poets. What indeed could an Egyptian sing on the reed of Gesner or Theocritus? He sees neither limpid streams, nor verdant lawns, nor solitary caves; and is equally a stranger to vallies, mountain sides, and pendent rocks.

Thompson could not there have known either the whistling of the winds in the forest, the rolling of thunder among the mountains, or the peaceful majesty of ancient woods; he could not have observed the awful tempest, nor the sweet tranquillity of the succeeding calm. The face of nature, there eternally the same, presents nothing but well fed herds, fertile fields, a muddy river, a sea of fresh water, and villages which, rising out of it, resemble islands. Should the eye reach the horizon, we are terrified at finding nothing but savage deserts, where the wandering traveller, exhausted with fatigue and thirst, shudders at the immense space which separates him from the world. In vain he implores heaven and earth: his cries, lost in the boundless plain, are returned to him only by feeble echoes; destitute of every thing, and separated from mankind, he perishes in an agony of despair,  
amid



amid a gloomy desert, without even the consolation of knowing he has excited the sympathizing tear. The contrast of this melancholy scene, so near, has probably given to the cultivated fields of Egypt all their charms. The barrenness of the desert becomes a foil to the plenty of the plains, watered by the river; and the aspect of the parched sands, so totally unproductive, adds to the pleasures the country offers. These may have been numerous in former times, and might revive under the influence of a good government: but at present, the riches of nature produce not the fruits which might be expected. In vain do travellers celebrate the gardens of Rosetta, and of Cairo. The Turks are strangers to the art of gardening, so much cultivated by polished nations, and despise every kind of cultivation. Throughout the empire their gardens are only wild orchards, in which trees are planted without care or art, yet have not even the merit of irregularity. In vain may they tell us of the orange-trees and cedars, which grow naturally in the fields. Accustomed as we are to combine the ideas of opulence and culture with these trees,  
since



since with us they are necessarily connected with them, we do not discover the deception. In Egypt, where they are frequent, and, as I may say, vulgar, they are associated with the misery of the huts they cover, and recall only the idea of poverty and desolation. In vain do they describe the Turk softly reposing under their shade, and happy in smoking his pipe without reflection. Ignorance and folly, no doubt, have their enjoyments, as well as wit and learning; but, for my own part, I confess I could never bring myself to envy the repose of slaves, or to dignify insensibility with the name of happiness. I should not even have been able to conceive from whence could proceed the enthusiasm with which some travellers have extolled Egypt, had not experience revealed to me the secret motives.

## S E C T. II.

### *Of the exaggerations of Travellers.*

It has long been remarked, that travellers particularly affect to boast of the countries  
through



through which they themselves have travelled, infomuch that the exaggeration of their relations having been frequently discovered, we have been warned by a proverb, to be on our guard against their falsehoods (*q*); but the error still remains, because the causes have not ceased. These in fact originate with every one of us, and the reproach not unfrequently belongs even to those who make it. For, let us observe a traveller, newly arrived from some distant country, and endeavouring to amuse the idleness and curiosity of the company around him. The novelty of his relation procures him attention, which even extends to personal respect. He is loved because he amuses, and because his pretensions clash not with those of others. On his side, he is soon sensible that he ceases to be interesting, when he can no longer raise new ideas. The necessity of supporting, the desire even of increasing this power of pleasing, induce him to bestow higher colouring on his pictures; he paints the greatest objects, that they may be the more striking; and his success encourages him to pro-

(*q*) *Multum mentitur qui multum vidit.*



ceed. He catches the enthusiasm of his hearers, and, shortly, a kind of emulation takes place between him and his auditors, by which he returns, in wondrous narrative, what he receives in admiration. The marvellous in what he has seen, is reflected, first upon himself, and, by a usual consequence, on those who have heard, and in their turn relate it. Thus does vanity, which pervades every thing, become one of the causes of the propensity we all have, either to believe, or recount prodigies. We have besides less desire to be instructed than amused, and it is from these reasons that tale-makers of every kind, have always held a distinguished rank in the esteem of mankind, and in the class of writers.

There is also another cause of the enthusiasm of travellers. Remote from the objects which have given us pleasure the imagination takes fire; absence again inflames desire, and the satiety of surrounding enjoyments bestows a new charm on whatever is no longer within our reach. We regret a country from which we were often anxious to escape; and please ourselves with the remembrance of places in which, were we there, we could  
not



not bear to remain. Travellers who have only passed through Egypt, are not to be ranked in this class as they have not time to lose the illusion of novelty; but this remark applies to whoever has made a long residence in the country. Our merchants know it; and have made a very just observation on this subject: they remark that those among them, who have experienced the greatest inconveniencies from residing in a foreign country, are no sooner returned to France, than every thing disagreeable is effaced from their memory; their recollection assumes cheerful colours, and in two years after, one would not imagine they had ever been there. “Do you still think properly of us, and our situation,” wrote a resident at Cairo to me lately? “Do you retain just ideas of this place of misery (r); for we have experienced that

(r) No person has less reason than myself to be dissatisfied with Egypt; I experienced from our merchants in that country the utmost generosity and politeness; I never met with any disagreeable accident, nor was even obliged to alight in reverence of the Mamlouks. It is true that, notwithstanding it is held so disgraceful, I always walked on foot in the streets.

“all



“ all those who return to Europe, so far for-  
“ get them as to astonish us ?” Such general  
and such powerful causes would not have  
failed to produce their usual effect upon my-  
self, had I not taken particular pains to  
guard myself against them, and to retain my-  
former impressions, in order to give my de-  
scriptions the only merit they can have, that  
of truth. It is time now to proceed to ob-  
jects more extensively interesting ; but, as the  
reader would not pardon me should I quit  
Egypt without mentioning the ruins and  
the pyramids, I shall content myself with  
bestowing on them a few words.



## C H A P. XIX.

*Of the ruins and the pyramids.*

I HAVE already explained how much the constant difficulty of travelling in Egypt, which has increased of late years, is unfavourable to researches into antiquities. For want of means, and above all of favourable circumstances, we are reduced to be content with seeing what others have already seen, and to relate nothing but what they have already published. For this reason, I shall not repeat what has been repeated more than once in Paul Lucas, Maillet, Sicard, Pocock, Greaves, Norden, and Niebuhr, and still more lately in the Letters of M. Savary. I shall confine myself to a few general considerations.

The pyramids of Djiza are a striking example of the difficulty which I have already said attends the making of observations. Though only four leagues distant from Cairo, where the Franks reside, though they have been visited by a crowd of travellers, their  
true



true dimensions are not yet known with certainty. Several times has their height been measured by geometrical methods, and each operation has given a different result (*a*). In order to decide this question, a new and accurate mensuration should be undertaken by persons of known abilities. In the interim, however, we may safely assert that those are mistaken who have affirmed the height of the great pyramid is equal to the length of the base, since the angle at the vertex is sensibly too large. The knowledge of the true length of this base appears to me the more interesting, as I am inclined to think it has some affinity with one of the square measures of the Egyptians; and if the dimensions of the stones should be found frequently the same, we may possibly from them deduce their other measures.

The difficulty of understanding the description of the inside of the pyramid, has been frequently complained of, and, in fact, without being well versed in the nature of

(*a*) To the list of these differences, given by M. Savary, may be added a late mensuration, which assigns six hundred feet to each face of the Great Pyramid, and four hundred and eighty-feet for its perpendicular height.

plans



plans, it is not easy to form any adequate idea from engravings. The best method to convey such an idea of it, would be to form of clay, or baked earth, a pyramid in miniature, in the reduced proportion, for instance, of an inch to a toise. Such an imitation would be eight feet four inches at the base, and near seven and one half in height. By cutting it into two portions from top to bottom, it would be possible to form the first channel, which descends obliquely, the gallery which ascends in the same manner, and the sepulchral chamber at the extremity. Norden would furnish the best description; but such a model must be executed by an artist accustomed to this sort of work.

The ledge of rock on which the pyramids are built does not rise more than forty or fifty feet above the level of the plain. The stone of which it consists, is, as I have said, white and calcareous, of a grain similar to that known in some provinces under the name of *Rairie*. That of the pyramids is of a similar nature. It was imagined, at the beginning of the present century, on the authority of Herodotus, that the materials of which they have been built had been brought



from a distance ; but travellers, observing the resemblance I am speaking of, think it more natural to conclude they were taken from the rock itself ; and, at this day, the narrative of Herodotus is treated as a fable, and such a removal of the stones as an absurdity. It has been calculated that the levelling of the rock would furnish nearly enough, and the deficiency is supplied by supposed subterranean cavities, which are magnified at pleasure. But if the ancient opinion have its improbabilities, the modern system is mere supposition. It is by no means an adequate motive of judging, to say : “ it is incredible  
“ they should have transported whole quarries  
“ from such a distance, and absurd to multiply expences to so enormous an amount.” In whatever relates to the opinions, and governments of ancient nations, it is difficult to say what is probable. However improbable therefore the fact in question may seem, if we consider that the historian who relates it drew his materials from the original archives of the ancient Egyptians ; that he is remarkably accurate in every thing we are able to verify ; that the Lybic rock nowhere presents elevations similar to those  
which



which are supposed, and that the subterranean cavities remain still to be discovered; if we recollect the immense quarries which extend from Saouadi to Manfalout, for the space of five-and-twenty leagues; if we reflect, in short, that the stones extracted from them, which are of the same kind, were for no other visible purpose (*b*); we shall at least be tempted to suspend our judgment, until the fact be decided by better evidence.

Other writers, in like manner, tired of the opinion that the pyramids were tombs, have converted them into temples or observatories. They consider it as absurd to suppose a wise and polished nation would think the sepulchre of its king a matter of so much importance, or that a prince would impoverish his people by forced labours, merely to enclose a skeleton of five feet in a mountain of stones; but I repeat it, we judge of the ancients improperly, when we make our own opinions and customs a standard of comparison. The motives which influenced them,

(*b*) I do not mean the pyramids of Djiza only, but all of them in general. Some of them, such as those of Bayamout, are neither founded on rocks, nor are there any rocks near. See Pococke.



may appear to us extravagant, and possibly may really be so in the eye of reason, without having been less powerful, or less efficacious. Besides, we must engage in endless and idle contradictions of all history, to suppose in them a wisdom conformable to our principles: we reason too much from our own ideas, and do not sufficiently attend to theirs. But from whichever we reason in the present dispute, we may affirm that the pyramids never can have been astronomical observatories (*c*), since Mount Mokattam would have afforded a still more elevated situation, and which bounds the former; because every elevated observatory is useless in Egypt, where the country is very flat, and where the vapours hide the stars for several degrees above the horizon; because it is impracticable to ascend to the top of the pyramids in general; and because it could not have been necessary to erect *eleven* observatories so near each other

(*c*) It has been alleged the pyramids are built so as to correspond with the four cardinal points; but the ancients, in the greatest part of their monuments, have observed this practice, and it was well adapted to tombs, which, from their ideas of a resurrection, Tartarus, Elysium, &c. were connected with astronomy.



as the eleven pyramids of different sizes, which may be seen from Djiza. From these reasons, we shall be led to think that Plato, who first suggested the idea in question, could only have some particular cases in view, or that he has in this instance only his ordinary merit of an eloquent writer.

If, on the other hand, we weigh the testimonies of the ancients, and local circumstances; if we observe that near the pyramids there are thirty or forty monuments, which present rough outlines of the same pyramidal form; that this sterile spot, remote from all cultivable land, possesses the qualities requisite for an Egyptian cemetery, and that near it was that of the whole city of Memphis, *the Plain of Mummies*, we shall no longer doubt that the pyramids are only tombs. We shall cease to wonder that the despots of a superstitious people should have made it a point of importance and pride, to build for their skeletons impenetrable habitations, when we are informed that, even before the time of Moses, it was a dogma at Memphis, that souls at the expiration of six thousand years, should return to the bodies they had quitted. It was for this reason

T 3

son



son that so much pains were taken to preserve the body from putrefaction, and that endeavours were made to retain even its form, by means of spices, bandages, and sarcophagi. That which is still in the sepulchral chamber of the great pyramid, is precisely of its natural dimensions ; and this chamber is so obscure and narrow (*d*), that it never can have contained more than one dead body. Attempts have been made to discover some mystery in the subterranean cavity which descends perpendicularly within the pyramid, forgetting that it was the uniform practice of all antiquity to contrive communications with the inside of their tombs, in order to perform, on certain days prescribed by their religion, the customary ceremonies ; such as libations, and offerings of food to the deceased. We must recur, therefore, to the ancient opinion, antiquated as it may seem, that the pyramids are tombs ; and this hypothesis, favoured by a variety of circumstances, is still more confirmed by their name, which, according to an analysis conformable to every

(*d*) It is thirteen paces long by eleven wide, and nearly of the same height.



principle of etymology, I think I have discovered to signify *chamber*, or *cave* of the dead (*e*).

(*e*) The English and French word *pyramid*, is the Greek Πυράμις, Πυραμίδος; but in the ancient Greek, the *υ* was pronounced *oo*; we should therefore say *pooramis*. When the Greeks, after the Trojan war frequented Egypt, they could not have in their language the name of these prodigious edifices, which must have been new to them; they must have borrowed it from the Egyptians. *Pooramis* then is not Greek, but Egyptian. Now it appears certain that the dialects of Egypt, which were various, had a great analogy with those of the neighbouring countries, such as Arabic and Syriac. In these languages it is certain the letter *p* is unknown; but it is no less true, that the Greeks, in adopting barbarous words, almost always changed them, and frequently confounded one sound with another, which resembled it. It is certain also, that in the words we know, *p* is continually taken for *b*, which very much resembles it. Now, in the dialect of Palestine, *bour* (בֹּר) signifies every excavation of the earth, a *cistern*, a *prison* properly under ground, a *sepulchre*. (See Buxtorf, *Lexicon Hebr.*) There remains *amis*, in which the final *s* appears to me a termination substituted for *t*, which did not suit the genius of the Greek tongue, and which made the oriental (אֶמִית) *a-mit*, of the dead, *bour a-mit*, cave of the dead; this substitution of the *s* for *t*, has an example in *atribis*, well known to be *atribit*. The learned may determine whether this etymology be not equally plausible with many others.



The great pyramid is not the only one which has been opened. There is another at *Sakara*, the inside of which appears constructed in the same manner. A few years ago, one of the Beys tried to open the third in size of those that are at Djiza, to obtain the supposed treasure he imagined concealed there. He attempted this on the same side, and at the same height at which the great one has been opened; but after forcing out two or three hundred stones, with considerable labour and expence, he relinquished his avaricious enterprize. The time when the greatest part of the pyramids were built is unknown, but that of the great one is so evident, that it should never have been called in question. Herodotus attributes it to Cheops, with a detail of circumstances which prove his authors were well informed (*f*). But Cheops, in his list, which is the best

*(f)* This prince, he tells us, reigned fifty years, twenty of which he employed in building the pyramids. The third part of the inhabitants of Egypt were employed, by forced service, in hewing, transporting, and raising the stones.

extant,



extant, is the second king after Proteus (*g*), who was cotemporary with the Trojan war; whence it follows, that this pyramid was erected about one hundred and forty, or one hundred and sixty years after the building of Solomon's Temple, or eight hundred and sixty years before Christ. 860

Destructive time, and the still more destructive hand of man, which have so defaced and destroyed all the other monuments of antiquity, have hitherto been able to effect but little against the pyramids. The solidity of their construction, and their enormous size, have secured them against every attempt, and seem to promise them an eternal duration. • All travellers speak of them with enthusiasm, and enthusiasm they may well inspire. These artificial mountains are first discovered at ten leagues distance. They seem to retire in proportion as they are approached; and when still a league off, tower with such loftiness

(*g*) It is remarkable, that if we were to write the Egyptian name of *Proteus*, as given by the Greeks, in *Phœnician* characters, we should make use of the same letters we pronounce *pharao*; the final *o* in the Hebrew is an *h*, which, at the end of words, frequently becomes *t*.

above



above our heads, that we imagine ourselves at their feet; but when at length we reach them, nothing can express the various sensations they inspire (*h*). Their stupendous height, the steep declivity of their sides, their prodigious surface, their enormous solidity, the distant ages they recall to memory, the recollection of the labour they must have cost, and the reflection that these huge rocks are the work of man, so diminutive and feeble, who crawls at their feet, lost in wonder,

(*h*) I know nothing, at Paris, so proper to give an idea of the pyramids, as the *Hôtel des Invalides*, seen from the *Cours la Reine*. The length of that building, being six hundred feet, is precisely the same as the base of the great pyramid; but to conceive their height and solidity, we must suppose the front I have mentioned to rise into a triangle; the perpendicular of which should exceed the height of the dome of that building by two thirds of the dome itself, (it is three hundred feet high.) The same surface must be repeated on the four sides of the square, and the whole mass contained in them be supposed solid, and offer to view nothing but an immense slope on every side, disposed in steps.

[The English reader has only to suppose the vast square of *Lincoln's-inn-fields*, the dimensions of which are the exact base of the great pyramid, wholly filled up from side to side, and gradually rising in a pyramidal form, to a height exceeding that of St. Paul's, by at least one third. T.]

awe,



awe, humiliation, and reverence, altogether impress the mind of the spectator in a manner not to be described; but to this first transport other sentiments soon succeed. Elevated as we are with so exalted a proof of the power of man, when we consider the purpose for which these amazing works were intended, we cannot but view them with regret. We lament, that to construct a useless sepulchre, a whole nation should have been rendered miserable for twenty years: we groan over the numberless acts of injustice and oppression these tiresome labours must have cost, in conveying, preparing, and piling up such an immense mass of stones; and we are inflamed with indignation at the tyranny of the despots who enforced these barbarous works, a sentiment indeed which too frequently recurs on viewing the different monuments of Egypt. Those labyrinths, temples, and pyramids, by their huge and heavy structure, attest much less the genius of a nation, opulent and friendly to the arts, than the servitude of a people who were slaves to the caprices of their monarchs; and we are even inclined to pardon that avarice, which, by  
violating



violating their tombs, has frustrated their idle hopes : we bestow less pity on these ruins ; and while the lover of the arts beholds with indignation, at Alexandria, the columns of her palaces sawed into *mill-stones*, the philosopher, after the first emotion, occasioned by the destruction of every fine work, cannot suppress a smile at the secret justice of that destiny, which restores to the people what cost them so much fruitless toil, and which renders the pride of unprofitable luxury subservient to the meanest of necessities.

The happiness of the people, rather than the preservation of the ancient monuments of Egypt, should certainly dictate the wish of seeing that country under the government of another nation ; but were it only in the latter point of view, such a revolution would still be very desirable. Were Egypt possessed by a nation friendly to the fine arts, discoveries might be made there, which would make us better acquainted with antiquity than any thing the rest of the world can afford us. Perhaps even books might be found. It is not above three years ago, that upwards of one hundred volumes, written in an unknown language,



language, were dug up near Damietta (*i*), but immediately committed to the flames, by command of the Shaiks of Cairo. Indeed the Delta no longer affords any very interesting ruins, as they have been all destroyed by the wants, or the superstition of the inhabitants. But the Said, which is less inhabited, and the edge of the desert, still less peopled, possess several yet untouched. We may hope to find them still more certainly in the Oases, those islands separated from the world by an ocean of sand, where no traveller we know of, has ever penetrated since the time of Alexander. These countries, in which formerly were cities and temples, having never been subject to the devastations of the Barbarians, must have preserved their monuments, and the rather as it is probable they are but thinly inhabited, or perhaps entirely deserted; and these monuments, buried in the sands, must be preserved there, as a deposit for future generations. To a period less remote, possibly than we imagine, we must defer the gratification of our wishes and our

(*i*) I have this fact from some merchants of Acre, who told it me on the credit of a Marseilles Captain, who, at that time was taking in a cargo of rice at Damietta.

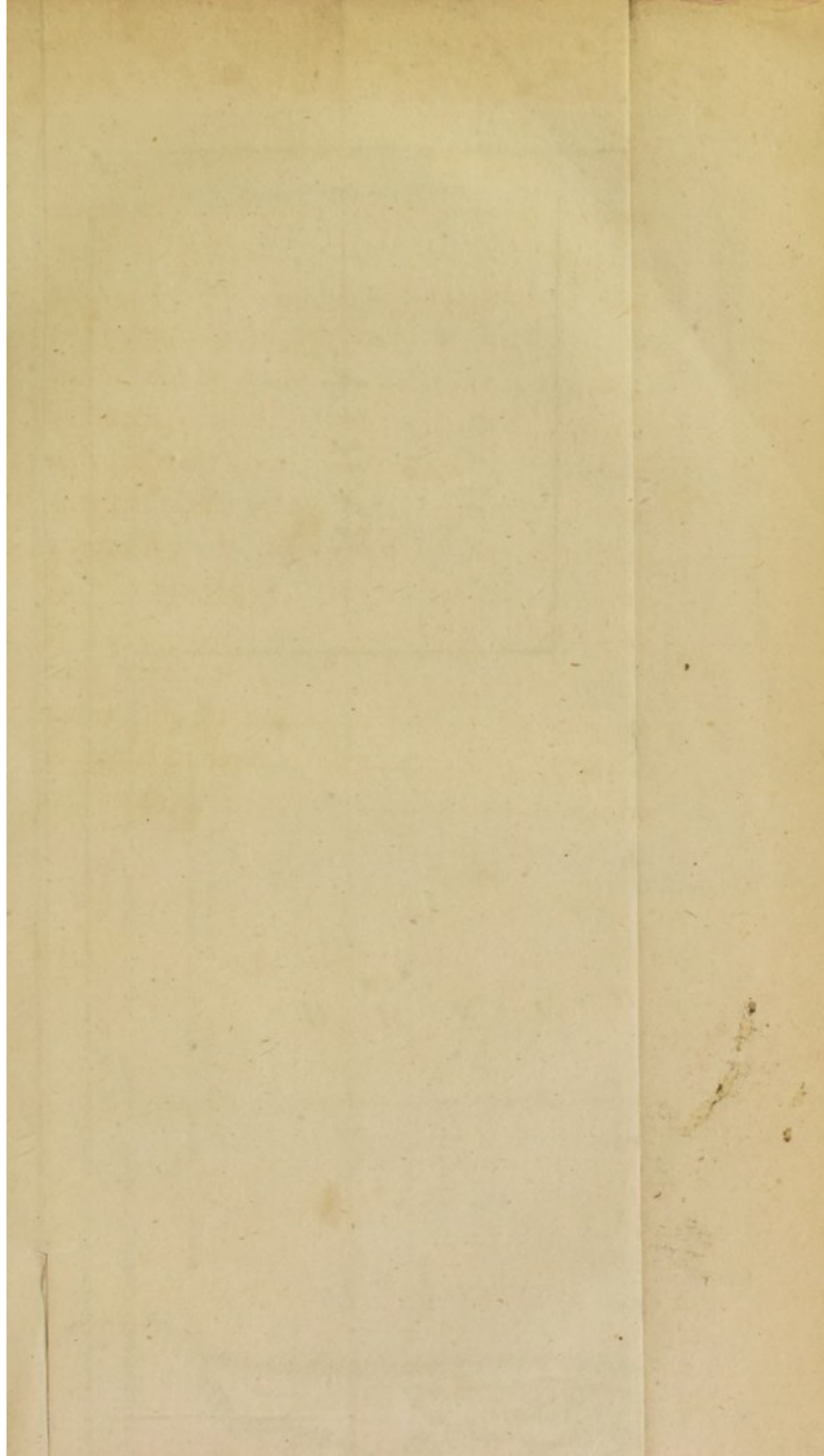
hopes.



hopes. We may then be allowed to search every part of the country, the banks of the Nile, and the sands of Lybia. We may then be permitted to open the small pyramid of Djiza, the total demolition of which would not cost fifty thousand livres (two thousand pounds). It is probable too, that till that period, we must remain ignorant of the signification of the hieroglyphics; though, in my opinion, the means we at present possess might be sufficient to explain them.

But enough of conjectures. It is now time to proceed to the examination of another country, the ancient and modern state of which is not less interesting even than that of Egypt.











T R A V E L S  
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E G Y P T   A N D   S Y R I A.

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S T A T E   O F   S Y R I A.

C H A P.   XX.

*Geography and Natural History of Syria.*

LEAVING Egypt by the Isthmus which separates Africa from Asia, and following the coast of the Mediterranean, we enter a second province of Turkey, known to us by the name of Syria. This name which, like so many others, has been transmitted to us by the Greeks, is an abridgment of *Assyria*, which was first adopted by the Ionians who frequented those coasts, after the Assyrians of Niniveh had reduced that country to be a province of their empire (a). The name of

(a) That is about the year 750 before Christ. This is the reason why Homer, who wrote a little before that time, nowhere uses this name, though he speaks of the inhabitants of the country, but employs the oriental word *aram*, changed into *arimean* and *erembos*.



Syria had not therefore so extensive a signification as it has since obtained. It comprehended neither Phœnicia nor Palestine. The present inhabitants, who, according to the constant practice of the Arabs, have not adopted the Greek names, are ignorant of the name of *Syria* (*b*); instead of which they call it *Barr-el-Sham* (*c*), which signifies country of the left; and is given to the whole space contained between two lines drawn, the one from Alexandretta to the Euphrates, and the other from Gaza in the desert of Arabia, bounded on the east by this desert, and on the west by the Mediterranean. This name of country of the *left*, from its contrast with that of the *Yamin*, or country of the *right*, indicates some intermediate place as a common point, which must be Mecca; and from its allusion to the worship of the sun (*d*)  
proves

(*b*) Geographers, however, sometimes write it *Souria*, from the constant change of the Greek upsilon into the Arabic waw.

(*c*) *El-sham* also is the name of the city of Damascus, the reputed capital of Syria. I am at a loss to discover why M. Savary has made it *el Shams*, or the *City of the Sun*.

(*d*) The ancient nations, who worshipped the sun, paid their homage at the moment of his rising; their  
faces



proves at once, an origin anterior to Mahomet, and the existence, which is already certain, of this worship, in the temple of the Caaba.

### SECT. I.

#### *General appearance of the country.*

If we examine a map of Syria, we may observe that this country is in some measure only a chain of mountains, which distribute themselves in various directions from one leading branch ; and such, in fact, is the appearance it presents, whether we approach it from the side of the sea, or by the immense plains of the desert. We first discover, at a great distance, a clouded ridge, which runs north and south, as far as the sight extends ; and, as we advance, distinguish the summits of mountains, which, sometimes detached, and sometimes united in

faces were therefore turned towards the east. The north was on their *left*, the south on their *right*, and the west behind them, called in the oriental languages, *acheron* and *akaron*.



chains, uniformly terminate in one principal line which overtops them all; we may follow this line, without interruption, from its entry by the north, quite into Arabia. It first runs close to the sea, between Alexandria and the Orontes, and, after opening a passage to that river, continues its course to the southward, quitting, for a short distance, the shore, and, in a chain of continued summits, stretches as far as the sources of the Jordan, where it separates into two branches, to enclose, as it were, in a basin, this river and its three lakes. In its course, it detaches from this line, as from a main trunk, an infinity of ramifications, some of which lose themselves in the desert, where they form various enclosed hollows, such as those of Damascus and Hauran, while others advance toward the sea, where they frequently end in steep declivities, as at Carmel, Nakoura, Cape Blanco, and in almost the whole country between Bairout (*e*) and Tripoli of Syria; but in general gently they terminate in plains, such as those of Antioch, Tripoli, Tyre, and Acre.

(*e*) The ancient Berytus.



## S E C T. II.

*Of the mountains.*

These mountains, as they vary their levels and situations, are also greatly changed in their form and appearance. Between Alexandretta and the Orontes, the firs, larches, oaks, box-trees, laurels, yews, and myrtles, with which they abound, give them an air of liveliness, which delights the traveller, wearied with the melancholy nakedness of the isle of Cyprus (*f*). On some declivities he even meets with cottages, environed with fig-trees, and vineyards; and the sight of these repays the fatigue he has endured on a road which, by rugged paths, leads him from the bottom of valleys to the tops of hills, and from the tops of hills to the bottoms of valleys. The inferior branches, which extend to the northward of Aleppo, on the contrary, present nothing but bare

(*f*) All vessels which go to Alexandretta touch at Cyprus, the southern part of which is a naked and desolate plain.



rocks, without verdure or earth. To the south of Antioch, and on the sea-coast, the hill-sides are proper for the cultivation of tobacco, olives, and vines (*g*); but, on the side of the desert, the summits and declivities of this chain are almost one continued series of white rocks. Towards Lebanon, the mountains are lofty, but are covered, in many places, with as much earth as fits them for cultivation by industry and labour. There, amid the crags of the rocks, may be seen the no very magnificent remains of the boasted cedars (*b*); but a much greater number of firs, oaks, brambles, mulberry-trees, figs, and vines. As we leave the country of the Druzes, the mountains are no longer so high, nor so rugged, but become fitter for tillage. They rise again to the south-east of mount Carmel, are covered with woods, and afford very pleasant prof-

(*g*) Mount Casius must be excepted, which rises above Antioch to a prodigious height. But Pliny surpasses hyperbole, when he says that, from its summit, we may discover at once both the morning's dawn and the evening twilight.

(*b*) There are now but four or five of these trees which deserve any notice.

pects;



pects; but as we advance toward Judea, they lose their verdure, their valleys grow narrower, they become dry and stoney, and terminate at the Dead Sea in a pile of desolate rocks, full of precipices and caverns (*i*); while to the west of Jordan and the lake, another chain of rocks, still higher, and more rugged, presents a still more gloomy prospect, and announces, afar off, the entrance of the desert, and the end of the habitable lands.

A view of the country will convince us that the most elevated point of all Syria is Lebanon, on the south-east of Tripoli. Scarcely do we depart from Larneca, in Cyprus, which is thirty leagues distance, before we discover its summit, capped with clouds. This is also distinctly perceivable on the map, from the course of the rivers. The Orontes, which flows from the mountains of Damascus, and loses itself below Antioch; the Kasnia, which, from the north of Balbek, takes its course towards Tyre; the Jordan,

(*i*) This is the place called the *Grottoes of Engaddi*, which have been a refuge for vagabonds in all ages. Some of them are capable of containing fifteen hundred men.



forced by the declivities toward the south, prove that this is the highest point. Next to Lebanon, the most elevated part of the country is Mount Akkar, which becomes visible as soon as we leave Marra in the desert. It appears like an enormous flattened cone, and is constantly in view for two days journey. No one has yet had an opportunity to ascertain the height of these mountains by the barometer; but we may deduce it from another consideration. In winter their tops are entirely covered with snow, from Alexandretta to Jerusalem; but after the month of March it melts, except on Mount Lebanon, where, however, it does not remain the whole year, unless in the highest cavities, and toward the north-east, where it is sheltered from the sea winds, and the action of the sun. In such a situation I saw it still remaining, in 1784, at the very time I was almost suffocated with heat in the valley of Balbek. Now, since it is well known that snow, in this latitude, requires an elevation of fifteen or sixteen hundred fathom, we may conclude that to be the height of Lebanon, and that it is consequently much lower



lower than the Alps, or even the Pyrenees (*k*).

Lebanon, which gives its name to the whole extensive chain of the Kefraouan, and the country of the Druzes, presents us every where with majestic mountains. At every step we meet with scenes in which nature displays either beauty or grandeur, sometimes singularity, but always variety. When we land on the coast, the loftiness and steep ascent of this mountainous ridge, which seems to enclose the country, those gigantic masses which shoot into the clouds, inspire astonishment and respect. Should the curious traveller then climb these summits which bounded his view, the immensity of space which he discovers becomes a fresh subject of admiration; but completely to enjoy this majestic scene, he must ascend the very point of Lebanon, or the *Sannin*. There, on every side, he will view an horizon without bounds; while, in clear weather, the sight is lost over the desert, which extends to the Persian

(*k*) Mount Blanc, the loftiest of the Alps, is estimated at two thousand four hundred fathom above the level of the sea; and the Peak of Ossian, in the Pyrenees, at nineteen hundred.



Gulph, and over the sea which bathes the coasts of Europe. He seems to command the whole world, while the wandering eye, now surveying the successive chains of mountains, transports the imagination in an instant from Antioch to Jerusalem; and now approaching the surrounding objects, observes the distant profundity of the coast, till the attention, at length, fixed by distinct objects, more minutely examines the rocks, woods, torrents, hill-sides, villages, and towns; and the mind secretly exults at the diminution of things, which before appeared so great. The spectator contemplates the valley obscured by stormy clouds, with a novel delight, and smiles at hearing the thunder, which had so often burst over his head, growling under his feet; while the threatening summits of the mountains are diminished till they appear only like the furrows of a ploughed field, or the steps of an amphitheatre; and the mind is flattered by an elevation above so many great objects, on which pride makes it look down with a secret satisfaction.

When the traveller visits the interior of these mountains, the ruggedness of the roads,



roads, the steepness of the descents, the height of the precipices strike him at first with terror; but the sagacity of his mule soon relieves him, and he examines at his ease those picturesque scenes which succeed each other to entertain him. There, as in the Alps, he travels whole days, to reach a place which is in sight at his departure; he winds, he descends, he skirts the hills, he climbs; and in this perpetual change of position it seems as if some magic power varied for him at every step the decorations of the scenery. Sometimes he sees villages ready to glide from the rapid declivities on which they are built, and so disposed that the terraces of one row of houses serve as a street to the row above them. Sometimes he sees a convent standing on a solitary eminence, like Mar-Shaya, in the valley of the Tigris. Here is a rock perforated by a torrent, and become a natural arch, like that of Nahr-el-Leben (1). There another rock, worn perpendicular, resembles a lofty wall. Frequent-

(1) The river of milk, which falls into Nahr-el-Salib, called also the river of Bairout; this arch is upwards of one hundred and sixty feet long, eighty-five wide, and near two hundred high above the torrent.



ly on the sides of hills he sees beds of stones stripped and detached by the waters, rising up like ruins disposed by art. In many places, the waters, meeting with inclined beds, have undermined the intermediate earth, and formed caverns, as at Nahr-el-kelb, near Antoura: in others are formed subterranean channels, through which flow rivulets for a part of the year, as at Mar-Elias-el-Roum, and Mar-Hanna (*m*); but these picturesque

(*m*) These subterraneous rivulets are common throughout Syria; there are some near Damascus, at the sources of the Orontes, and at those of Jordan. That of Mar-Hanna, a Greek convent, near the village of Shouair, opens by a gulph called *El-baloua*, or the Swallower. It is an aperture of about ten feet wide, situated at the bottom of a tunnel: at the depth of fifteen feet is a sort of first bottom; but it only hides a very profound lateral opening. Some years ago it was shut, as it had served to conceal a murder. The winter rains coming on, the waters collected, and formed a pretty deep lake; but some small streams penetrating among the stones, they were soon stripped of the earth which fastened them, and the pressure of the mass of water prevailing on, the whole obstacle was removed with an explosion like thunder; and the re-action of the compressed air was so violent, that a column of water spouted up, and fell upon a house at the distance of at least two hundred paces. The current this occasioned formed a whirlpool, which swallowed



picturesque situations sometimes become tragical. From thaws and earthquakes rocks have been known to lose their equilibrium, roll down upon the adjacent houses, and bury the inhabitants: such an accident happened about twenty years ago, and overwhelmed a whole village near Mar-djordjos, without leaving a single trace to discover where it formerly stood. Still more lately, and near the same spot, a whole hill side, covered with mulberries and vines, was detached by a sudden thaw, and sliding on the declivity of the rock, was launched altogether, like a ship from the stocks, into the valley. Hence arose a whimsical, but reasonable, litigation, between the proprietor of the original ground and the owner of the emigrated land; the cause was carried before the tribunal of the Emir Youssef, who indemnified both parties for their mutual losses. It might be expected such accidents would disgust the inhabitants of those mountains; but besides that they are rare, they are compensated by an advantage which makes them

lowed up the trees and vines planted in the tunnel, and threw them out by the second aperture.

prefer



prefer their habitations to the most fertile plains, I mean the security they enjoy from the oppressions of the Turks. This security is esteemed so valuable a blessing by the inhabitants, that they have displayed an industry on these rocks which we may elsewhere look for in vain. By dint of art and labour they have compelled a rocky soil to become fertile. Sometimes, to profit by the water, they conduct it by a thousand windings along the declivities, or stop it by forming dams in the valleys, while in other places, they prop up ground, ready to crumble away, by walls and terraces. Almost all these mountains, thus laboured, present the appearance of a flight of stairs, or an amphitheatre, each step of which is a row of vines or mulberry-trees. I have reckoned from a hundred to a hundred and twenty of these gradations on the same declivity, from the bottom of the valley to the top of the eminence. While amid these mountains, I forgot I was in Turkey, or, if I recollected it, only felt more sensibly the powerful influence of even the feeblest ray of liberty.



## S E C T. III.

*Structure of the mountains.*

If we examine the substance of these mountains, we shall find they consist of a hard calcareous stone, of a whitish colour, sonorous like free-stone, and disposed in strata variously inclined. This stone has almost the same appearance through the whole extent of Syria; sometimes it is bare, and looks like the peeled rocks on the coast of Provence: such, for instance, is the chain of hills on the north-side of the road from Antioch to Aleppo, and which serves as a bed to the upper part of the rivulet which passes by the latter city. Near Ermenaz, a village situated between Serkin and Kaftin, is a defile where they perfectly resemble those we pass in going from Marseilles to Toulon. In travelling from Aleppo to Hama, veins of the same rock are continually to be met with in the plain, while the mountains on the right present huge piles, which look like the ruins of towns and castles. The same stone, under a more regular form, likewise composes



poses the greater part of Lebanon, Anti-Lebanon, the mountains of the Druzes, Galilee, and Mount Carmel, and stretches to the south of the Lake Asphaltites. The inhabitants every where build their houses, and make lime with it. I have never seen, nor heard it said, that these stones contained any petrified shells in the upper regions of Lebanon; but we find, between Batroun and Djebail, in the Kefraouan, at a little distance from the sea, a quarry of schistous stones, the flakes of which bear the impressions of plants, fish, shells, and especially the sea onion. The bed of the torrent of Azkalan, in Palestine, is also lined with a heavy stone, porous and salt, which contains a great number of small volutes and bivalves of the Mediterranean. Pocock found a large quantity of them in the rocks which border on the Dead Sea. Iron is the only mineral which abounds here; the mountains of the Kefraouan, and of the Druzes, are full of it. Every summer the inhabitants work those mines, which are simply ochreous. Judea cannot be without it, since Moses observed, above three thousand years ago, that its stones were of iron. There is a vague report, that there was anciently



ciently a copper mine near Aleppo, but it must have been long since abandoned : I have been told likewise among the Druzes, that in the declivity of the hill I have mentioned, a mineral was discovered which produced both lead and silver ; but as such a discovery would have ruined the whole district, by attracting the attention of the Turks, they made haste to destroy every vestige of it.

#### S E C T. IV.

##### *Volcanos and earthquakes.*

The south of Syria, that is, the hollow through which the Jordan flows, is a country of volcanos ; the bituminous and sulphureous sources of the Lake Asphaltites, the lava, the pumice-stones thrown upon its banks, and the hot bath of Tabaria, demonstrate that this valley has been the seat of a subterraneous fire which is not yet extinguished. Clouds of smoke are often observed to issue from the lake, and new crevices to be formed upon its banks. If conjectures in such cases were not too liable to error, we might suspect



pect that the whole valley has been formed only by a violent sinking of a country which formerly poured the Jordan into the Mediterranean. It appears certain, at least, that the catastrophe of five cities, destroyed by fire, must have been occasioned by the eruption of a volcano, then burning. Strabo expressly says (*a*), “ that the tradition of the inhabitants of the country, (that is, of the Jews themselves), was, that formerly the valley of the Lake was peopled by thirteen flourishing cities, and that they were swallowed up by a volcano.” This account seems to be confirmed by the quantities of ruins still found by travellers on the western border. These eruptions have ceased long since, but earthquakes, which usually succeed them, still continue to be felt at intervals in this country. The coast in general is subject to them, and history gives us many examples of earthquakes, which have changed the face of Antioch, Laodicea, Tripoli, Berytus, Tyre, Sidon, &c. In our time, in the year 1759, there happened one which caused the greatest

(*n*) Lib. 16, p. 764.

ravages.



ravages. It is said to have destroyed, in the valley of Balbek, upwards of twenty thousand persons, a loss which has never been repaired. For three months, the shocks of it terrified the inhabitants of Lebanon so much as to make them abandon their houses, and dwell under tents. Very lately (the 14th of December, 1783,) when I was at Aleppo, so violent a shock was felt, as to ring the bell in the house of the French Consul. It is remarked in Syria, that earthquakes seldom happen but in winter, after the autumnal rains; and this observation, conformable to that made by Doctor Shaw in Barbary, seems to prove that the action of water on the dried earth has some share in these convulsive motions. It may not be improper to remark, that the whole of Asia Minor is subject to them in like manner.

## S E C T. V.

*Of the Locusts.*

Syria, as well as Egypt, Persia, and almost all the south of Asia, is subject to



another calamity no less dreadful, I mean those clouds of locusts, so often mentioned by travellers. The quantity of these insects is incredible to all who have not themselves witnessed their astonishing numbers; the whole earth is covered with them for the space of several leagues. The noise they make in browsing on the trees and herbage, may be heard at a great distance, and resembles that of an army foraging in secret. The Tartars themselves are a less destructive enemy than these little animals; one would imagine, that fire had followed their progress. Wherever their myriads spread, the verdure of the country disappears, as if a curtain had been removed; trees and plants, stripped of their leaves, and reduced to their naked boughs and stems, cause the dreary image of winter to succeed in an instant, to the rich scenery of the spring. When these clouds of locusts take their flight, to surmount any obstacle, or to traverse more rapidly a desert soil, the heavens may literally be said to be obscured with them. Happily this calamity is not frequently repeated, for it is the inevitable forerunner of famine, and the maladies it occasions. The inhabitants of Syria have remarked, that

locusts



locusts are always bred by too mild winters, and that they constantly come from the desert of Arabia. From this observation, it is easy to conceive that, the cold not having been rigorous enough to destroy their eggs, they multiply suddenly, and, the herbage failing them in the immense plains of the desert, innumerable legions issue forth. When they make their first appearance on the frontiers of the cultivated country, the inhabitants strive to drive them off, by raising large clouds of smoke, but frequently their herbs and wet straw fail them; they then dig trenches, where numbers of them are buried; but the two most efficacious destroyers of these insects, are the south and south-easterly winds, and the bird called the *samar*. These birds, which greatly resemble the woodpecker, follow them in numerous flocks, like starlings, and not only greedily devour them, but kill as many as they can; accordingly, they are respected by the peasants, and nobody is ever allowed to shoot them. As for the southerly and south-easterly winds, they drive with violence these clouds of locusts over the Mediterranean, where such quantities of them are drowned that, when



their carcases are thrown on the shore, they infect the air for several days, even to a great distance.

We may reasonably presume, that in so extensive a country as Syria, the quality of the soil is not every where the same. In general the land of the mountains is rude; that of the plains fat and loamy, and exhibits every sign of the greatest fecundity. In the territory of Aleppo, towards Antioch, it resembles very fine brick-dust, or Spanish Snuff. The waters of the Orontes, however, which traverses this district, are tinged with white, which proceeds from the nature of the lands towards its source. Almost every where else the earth is brown, and like fine garden mold. In the plains, such as those of Hauran, Gaza, and Balbek, it is often difficult even to find a pebble. The winter rains occasion deep quagmires, and on the return of summer, the heat produces, as in Egypt, large cracks in the earth several feet deep.



## S E C T. VI.

*Of the Rivers and Lakes.*

The exaggerated, or, if you will, the grand ideas which history and travellers usually give us of distant objects, have accustomed us to speak of the waters of Syria with a respect which amuses our imagination. We are fond of saying the *river Jordan*, the *river Orontes*, the *river Adonis*. If, however, we wish to preserve to words their proper signification, we shall hardly find in this country any other than *rivulets*. The channels of the Orontes and the Jordan, the two most considerable, are scarcely sixty paces wide at their mouths (*o*); the others do not merit to be mentioned. If the rains and melted snow give them some importance in the winter, their course is only to be discovered, during the remainder of the year, by the round stones and fragments of rocks with which their beds

(*o*) The Jordan, it must be owned, has considerable depth, but if the Orontes were not impeded by repeated obstacles, it would be quite dry during the summer.



are filled. They are nothing but torrents and cascades; and it may be conceived that, from the proximity of the mountains, among which they rise, to the sea, their waters have not time to collect in long valleys, so as to form rivers. The obstacles opposed by these mountains, in several places, at their issue, have formed considerable lakes, such as those of Antioch, Aleppo, Damascus, Houla, Tabaria, and that which is honoured with the name of the Dead Sea, or Lake Asphaltites. All these lakes, except the last, are of fresh water, and contain several species of fish, different from (*p*) those we are acquainted with.

Lake Asphaltites, alone, contains neither animal nor vegetable life. We see no verdure on its banks, nor are fish to be found within its waters; but it is not true that its exhalations are pestiferous, so as to destroy birds flying over it. It is very common to

(*p*) The lake of Antioch abounds particularly with eels, and a sort of red fish of an indifferent quality. The Greeks, who keep a perpetual Lent, consume great quantities of them. Lake Tabaria is still richer; crabs, especially, are very numerous, but, as its environs are inhabited only by Mahometans, it is but little fished.

see



see swallows skimming its surface, and dipping for the water necessary to build their nests. The real cause which deprives it of vegetables and animals is the extreme saltiness of the water, which is infinitely stronger than that of the sea. The soil around it, equally impregnated with this salt, produces no plants, and the air itself, which becomes loaded with it from evaporation, and which receives also the sulphureous and bituminous vapours, cannot be favourable to vegetation: hence the deadly aspect which reigns around this lake. In other respects, the ground about it, however, is not marshy, and its waters are limpid and incorruptible, as must be the case with a dissolution of salt. The origin of this mineral is easy to be discovered; for on the south-west shore, are mines of fossil salt, of which I have brought away several specimens. They are situated in the side of the mountains which extend along that border, and, for time immemorial, have supplied the neighbouring Arabs, and even the city of Jerusalem. We find also on this shore fragments of sulphur and bitumen, which the Arabs convert into a trifling article of commerce; as also hot fountains, and deep



crevices, which are discovered at a distance, by little pyramids built on the brink of them. We likewise find a sort of stone, which, on rubbing, emits a noxious smell, burns like bitumen, receives a polish like white alabaster, and is used for the paving of courtyards. At intervals, we also meet with unshapen blocks, which prejudiced eyes mistake for mutilated statues, and which pass with ignorant and superstitious pilgrims, for monuments of the adventure of *Lot's wife*, though it is no where said she was metamorphosed into stone, like Niobe, but into salt, which must have melted the ensuing winter.

Some naturalists have been greatly embarrassed to find a discharge for the waters which the Jordan is continually pouring into the lake, and have therefore been inclined to suspect it had a communication with the Mediterranean; but, besides that we know of no gulph to corroborate this supposition, it has been demonstrated, by accurate calculations, that evaporation is more than sufficient to carry off the waters brought by the river. It is, in fact, very considerable, and frequently becomes sensible



sible to the eye, by the fogs with which the lake is covered, at the rising of the sun, and which are afterwards dispersed by the heat.

## S E C T. VII.

### *Of the Climate.*

It is an opinion pretty generally received, that Syria is a very hot country; but it will be necessary to make several distinctions: first, on account of the difference of latitude, which, from one extremity to the other, is not less than six degrees: secondly, from the natural division of the country into low and flat, and high and mountainous, which division occasions a still more sensible difference; for while Reaumur's thermometer stands at twenty-five and twenty-six degrees upon the coast, it hardly rises to twenty or twenty-one among the mountains (*q*). In

(*q*) Along the coast of Syria, and at Tripoli, in particular, the lowest degrees to which the thermometer falls in winter, are eight and nine degrees above the freezing point; in summer, in close apartments, it rises from  $25\frac{1}{2}$  to  $26^{\circ}$ . As for the barometer, it is remarkable that at the latter end of May, it fixes at 28 inches, and never varies till October.

winter,



winter, therefore, the whole chain of mountains is covered with snow, while the lower country is always free from it, or at least it lies only for an instant. We must first then establish two general climates; the one very hot, which is that of the coast, and the interior plains, such as those of Balbek, Antioch, Tripoli, Acre, Gaza, Hauran, &c. the other temperate, and almost like our own, which is the climate of the mountains, at least at a certain height. The summer of 1784 was reckoned, among the Druzes, one of the hottest they remembered, yet I never found the heat to be compared to that I had felt at Saide or Bairout.

In this climate, the order of the seasons is nearly the same as in the middle provinces of France; the winter, which lasts from November to March, is sharp and rigorous. Not a year passes without snow, and the earth is frequently covered several feet deep with it for months together; the spring and autumn are mild, and the summer heat is absolutely insupportable. In the plains, on the contrary, as soon as the sun returns to the equator, the transition is rapid to oppressive heats, which continue to the end of October. But then  
the



the winter is so moderate, that the orange, date, banana, and other delicate trees, flourish in the open air; and it appears equally extraordinary and picturesque to an European at Tripoli, to behold, under his windows, in the month of January, orange-trees loaded with flowers and fruit, while the lofty head of Lebanon is covered with ice and snow. It must nevertheless be observed that, in the northern parts, and to the east of the mountains, the winter is more rigorous, without the summer being less hot. At Antioch, Aleppo, and Damascus, there are several weeks of frost and snow every winter; which arises from the situation of the country still more than the difference of latitude. For, in fact, all the plain to the east of the mountains is very high above the level of the sea, exposed to all the parching winds of the north and north-east, and screened from the humid winds of the south and south-west. Besides, Antioch and Aleppo receive from the mountains of Alexandretta, which are within sight, an air which the snow, that covers them so long, must necessarily render very sharp.

Syria,



Syria, therefore, unites different climates under the same sky, and collects, within a narrow compass, pleasures and productions which nature has elsewhere dispersed at great distances of times and places. With us, for instance, seasons are separated by months; there we may say they are only separated by hours. If in Saïde or Tripoli, we are incommoded by the heats of July, in six hours we are in the neighbouring mountains, in the temperature of March; or, on the other hand, if chilled by the frosts of December, at Besharrai, a day's journey brings us back to the coast, amid the flowers of May (*r*). The Arabian poets have therefore said, that “ the  
 “ Sannin bears winter on his head, spring  
 “ upon his shoulders, and autumn in his  
 “ bosom, while summer lies sleeping at his  
 “ feet.” I have myself experienced the truth of this figurative observation, during the eight months I resided at the monastery of Mar-Hanna (*s*), seven leagues from Bairout. At  
 the

(*r*) This is the practice of several of the inhabitants of this district, who pass the winter near Tripoli, while their houses are buried under the snow.

(*s*) Mar-Hanna el Shouair; i. e. St. John, near the village of Shouair. This monastery is situated in a stony valley,



the end of February, I left at Tripoli a variety of vegetables which were in perfection, and many flowers in full bloom. On my arrival at Antoura (*t*), I found the plants only beginning to shoot; and, at Mar-Hanna, every thing was covered with snow. It had not entirely left the Sannin till the end of April, and, already, in the valley it overlooks, roses had begun to bud. The early figs were past at Bairout, when they were first gathered with us, and the silk-worms were in cod, before our mulberry-trees were half stripped.

To this advantage, which perpetuates enjoyments by their succession, Syria adds another, that of multiplying them by the variety of her productions. Were nature assisted by art, those of the most distant countries might be produced within the space of twenty leagues. At present, in spite of the barbarism of a government which is an enemy to all industry and improvement, we are asto-

valley, which joins to that of *Nahr el Kelb*, or Torrent of the Dog: The religious are Greek Catholics, of the order of Saint Basil: I shall have occasion to speak of it more amply.

(*t*) A house formerly belonging to the Jesuits, but occupied at present by the Lazarists,

nished



nished at the variety this province affords. Besides wheat, rye, barley, beans, and the cotton plant, which is cultivated every where, we find a multitude of useful and agreeable productions, appropriated to different situations. Palestine abounds in sesamum, from which oil is procured, and doura (*u*) as good as that of Egypt (*x*). Maize thrives in the light soil of Balbek, and even rice is cultivated, with success, on the borders of the marshy country of Havula. They have lately begun to plant sugar-canes in the gardens of Saide and of Bairout, and they find them equal those of the Delta. Indigo grows without cultivating, on the banks of the Jordan, in the country of Bisan, and only requires care to make it of an excellent quality. The hill-sides of Latakia produce tobacco, which is the principal article of its commerce with Damietta and Cairo. This is now cultivated throughout all the mountains. As for trees, the olive-tree of Provence

(*u*) A sort of pulse, something like lentils, which grows in clusters, on a stalk six or seven feet high. It is the *holcus arundinaceus* of Linnæus.

(*x*) I never saw any buck-wheat in Syria, and oats are very rare. Rye and straw are given to the horses.

grows,



grows at Antioch, and at Ramla, to the height of the beech. The white mulberry-tree constitutes the wealth of the whole country of the Druzes, by the beautiful silks which are produced on it, while the vine, supported on poles, or winding round the oaks, supplies grapes which afford red and white wines that might rival those of Bordeaux. Before the ravages occasioned by the late troubles, there were, in the gardens of Yaffa, two plants of the Indian cotton-tree, which grew rapidly, nor has this town lost its lemons, its enormous citrons (*y*,) or its water-melons, which are preferable even to those of Broulos (*z*). Gaza produces dates like Mecca, and pomegranates like Algiers; Tripoli affords oranges equal to those of Malta; Bairout figs like those of Marseilles, and bananas not inferior to those of St. Domingo; Aleppo enjoys the exclusive advantage of producing pistachios; and Damascus justly boasts of possessing all the fruits known in our provinces. Its stony soil suits equally the ap-

(*y*) I have seen some which weighed eighteen pounds.

(*z*) Broulos on the coast of Egypt, produces better water-mellons than are found in the rest of the Delta, where the fruits in general are too watery.

ples



ples of Normandy, the plumbs of Touraine, and the peaches of Paris. Twenty sorts of apricots are reckoned there, the stone of one of which contains a kernel highly valued through all Turkey. In short, the cochineal plant, which grows on all that coast, contains, perhaps, that precious insect in as high perfection as it is found in Mexico and St. Domingo (*a*); and if we consider that the mountains of the Yemen, which produce such excellent coffee, are only a continuation of those of Syria, and that their soil and climate are almost the same (*b*), we shall be induced to believe that Judea, especially, might easily cultivate this valuable production of Arabia. With these numerous advantages of climate and of soil, it is not astonishing that Syria should

(*a*) It was long imagined that the insect of the cochineal was peculiar to Mexico; and the Spaniards, to secure the exclusive possession of it, have prohibited the exportation of the living cochineal, under pain of death; but M. Thierri, who succeeded in bringing it away, in 1771, and carried it to Saint Domingo, found the nopals of that island contained it before his arrival. It seems as if nature scarcely ever separated insects from the plants appropriated to them.

(*b*) The situation of the country of Yemen and Tahama is very similar to that of Syria. See M. Niebuhr *Voyage en Arabie*.

always



always have been esteemed a most delicious country, and that the Greeks and Romans ranked it among the most beautiful of their provinces, and even thought it not inferior to Egypt. In more modern times, also, a Pacha, who was acquainted with both these provinces, being asked to which he gave the preference, replied, "Egypt, without doubt, is a most beautiful farm, but Syria is a charming country-house" (c).

## S E C T.

(c) To complete the Natural History of Syria, it is proper to add that it produces all our domestic animals, and, besides them, the buffalo and the camel, whose utility is so well known. We also find gazelles (antelopes) in the plains, which supply the place of our roebucks; in the mountains are numbers of wild-boars, not so large nor so fierce as ours. The stag and the deer are unknown there; the wolf and the real fox are very rare; but there is a prodigious quantity of the middle species, named *Shacal* (jackall) which in Syria is called *wauwee*, in imitation of its howl; and in Egypt *dib*, or wolf. These jackalls go in droves, and frequent the environs of the towns, where they feed on what carrion they can find. They never attack any body, but are always ready to save themselves by flight. Every evening they seem to give each other the watch-word, to begin howling, and their cries, which are very doleful, sometimes last a quarter of an hour. In unfrequented places there are also hyenas, in Arabic named *daba*, and ounces, im-



## S E C T. VIII.

*Qualities of the Air.*

I must not forget to speak of the qualities of the air and waters. These elements present in Syria very remarkable phænomena. On the mountains, and in all the elevated plain which stretches to the eastward, the air is light, pure and dry ; while on the coast, and especially from Alexandretta to Yafa, it is

properly called tygers (in Arabic *nema*). Lebanon, the country of the Druzes, Nablous, Mount Carmel, and the environs of Alexandretta, are their principal haunts. But, in return, the country is exempt from lions and bears. Water fowl are very plentiful ; land game is not so abundant, except in particular districts. The hare and the large red partridge are the most common ; rabbits, if there are any, are extremely scarce. The francolin, or attagen, is more numerous at Tripoli, and in the neighbourhood of Yafa. Nor ought we to omit observing that a species of the colibri (or humming-bird) still exists in the territory of Saide. M. J. B. Adanson, formerly interpreter in that city, who cultivates natural history with equal taste and success, met with one, which he made a present of to his brother the Academician. This, and the pelican are the only remarkable birds in Syria.

moist



moist and heavy ; thus Syria is divided lengthways into two different districts, separated by the chain of mountains which also cause their diversity ; for these preventing, by their height, the free passage of the westerly winds, force the vapours which they bring from the sea to collect in the valleys ; and as air is light only in proportion to its purity, these are unable to rise above the summits of this rampart. The consequence is, that the air of the desert and the mountains, though sufficiently wholesome for such as are in no danger of pulmonary complaints, is hurtful to those who are, and it is necessary to send such from Aleppo to Latakia or Saide. This good property of the air on the coast is, however, outweighed by more serious bad ones, and it may in general be pronounced unhealthy, as it causes intermittent and putrid fevers, and those defluxions of the eyes, of which I have spoken in treating of Egypt. The evening dews, and sleeping on the terraces, are found much less hurtful in the mountainous and interior parts of the country, as the distance from the sea is greater, which confirms what I have already observed upon that subject.



## SECT. IX.

*Qualities of the Waters.*

The waters of this country have also a remarkable difference. In the mountains, that of the springs is light, and of a very good quality; but in the plain, whether to the east or west, if it has no natural or artificial communication with the springs, we find nothing but brackish water, which becomes still more so the nearer we approach the desert, where there is not a drop of any other. This inconvenience has rendered rain so precious to the inhabitants of the frontiers, that they have in all ages taken care to collect it in wells and caverns carefully closed: hence, among all ruins, cisterns are the first things we discover.

The face of the heavens, in Syria, particularly on the coast, and in the desert, is in general more constant and regular than in our climates; rarely is the sun obscured for two successive days. In the course of a whole summer we see few clouds, and still less rain; which only begins about the end of  
October,



October, and then is neither long nor plentiful. The husbandmen wish for it to sow what they call their *winter* crop, that is, their wheat and barley (*d*). In December and January, the rain becomes more frequent and heavier, and snow often falls in the higher country. It sometimes rains also in March and April; and the husbandman avails himself of it to sow his *summer* crop of sesamum, doura, tobacco, cotton, beans, and water-melons. The remainder of the year is uniform, and drought is more frequently complained of than too much wet.

(*d*) The seed-time of the winter crop, called *Shetawia*, takes place, throughout Syria, only at the time of the autumnal rains, or toward the end of October. The time of reaping this crop varies according to the difference of situation. In Palestine, and in the Hauran, they reap their wheat and barley from the end of April through the whole month of May. But as we advance toward the north, or ascend the mountains, the harvest does not begin till June and July.

The seed-time of the summer crop, or *Saifia*, begins with the spring rains, that is, in March and April; and their harvest is in the months of September and October.

The time of vintage, in the mountains, is about the end of September; the silk-worms hatch there in April and May, and begin to spin in July.



## S E C T. X.

*Of the Winds.*

The winds in Syria, as in Egypt, are in some degree periodical, and governed by the seasons. About the autumnal equinox, the north-west wind begins to blow more frequently and stronger. It renders the air dry, clear, and sharp; and it is remarkable that, on the sea-coast, it causes the head-ach, like the north-east wind in Egypt; and this more in the northern than in the southern parts, but never in the mountains. We may further remark, that it usually blows three days successively, like the south and south-east at the other equinox. It continues to prevail till November, that is, about fifty days, and its variations are generally toward the east. These winds are followed by the north-west, the west, and south-west, which prevail from November to February. The two latter are, to use the expression of the Arabs, *the fathers of the rains*. In March arise the pernicious winds from the southern quarter, with the same circumstances as in Egypt;



Egypt; but they become feebler as we advance toward the north, and are much more supportable in the mountains than in the flat country. Their duration, at each return, is usually of four-and-twenty hours, or three days. The easterly winds, which follow, continue till June, when a north wind succeeds, with which vessels may go and return along all the coast. At the same season too, the wind varies through all the points, every day, passing with the sun from the east to the south, and from the south to the west, to return by the north, and recommence the same circuit. At this time also a local wind, called the land-breeze, prevails along the coast, during the night; it springs up after sun-set, lasts till sun-rising, and reaches only two or three leagues out at sea.

The causes of all these phænomena are problems well deserving the attention of natural philosophers. No country is better adapted to observations of this kind than Syria. It seems as if nature had there prepared whatever is necessary to the study of her operations. We, in our foggy climates, in the depth of vast continents, are unable to pursue the great changes which happen in



the atmosphere : the confined horizon which bounds our view, circumscribes also our ideas. The field of our observation is very limited ; and a thousand circumstances combine to vary the effects of natural causes. There, on the contrary, an immense scene opens before us, and the great agents of nature are collected in a space which renders it easy to watch their various operations. To the west is the vast liquid plain of the Mediterranean ; to the east the plain of the desert, no less vast, but absolutely dry ; in the midst of these two level surfaces, rise the mountains, whose summits are so many observatories, from whence the sight may discern full thirty leagues. Four observers might command the whole extent of Syria ; and from the tops of Casius, Lebanon, and Tabor, let nothing escape them within that boundless horizon. They might observe how the region of the sea, at first unclouded, veils itself with vapours ; in what manner these vapours form into groupes, and separate, and by a constant mechanism, ascend and rise above the mountains ; while, on the other hand, the desert, invariably clear, never produces clouds, and has only those it has received



received from the sea. They might reply to the question of M. Michaelis (*e*), “Whether the desert produces dews?” that the desert, containing no water, except in winter, after the rains, can only furnish vapours at that period. On viewing the valley of Balbeck, burnt up with heat, whilst the head of Lebanon is hoary with ice and snow, they would be sensible of the truth of an axiom, which ought no longer to be disputed, *that the heat is greater in proportion as we approach the surface of the earth, and diminishes as we remove from it*; so that it seems to proceed only from the action of the rays of the sun upon the earth. In short, they might successfully attempt the solution of the greatest part of meteorological problems.

(*e*) See the *questions* proposed by M. Michaelis to the travellers for the king of Denmark.



## C H A P. XXI.

*Observations on the winds, clouds, rains, fogs,  
and thunder.*

UNTIL this shall be undertaken by persons capable of undertaking such experiments, and making them with all the accuracy so important a discussion merits, I shall submit, in a few words, some general ideas suggested by my own observations. I have already mentioned the relation there is between the winds and the seasons; and have hinted that the sun, from the connection between his annual progress, and their varieties, appears to be the principal agent. His action on the atmosphere which surrounds our globe, seems to be the primary cause of all the various motions in the upper regions of the air. To conceive clearly how this is effected, we must trace back these ideas to their origin, and consider the properties of the element put in action.

First, the air, we know, is a fluid, all the particles of which, naturally equal and move-  
able,



able, tend, like water, invariably to a level; so that if we suppose a chamber six feet square, every way, the air introduced into it will fill it equally. Secondly, another property of air is to be capable of dilatation or compression; that is, the same quantity of it may occupy a greater or a less space. Thus, in the case of the chamber, were we to draw off two thirds of the air it contains, the remainder would replace it by expansion, and still continue to fill its whole capacity; if instead of drawing off the air, the quantity of it be doubled or tripled, the chamber will equally contain it; which is not the case with water.

This property of expansion is more especially called into action by the presence of fire; and as then the heated air contains in an equal space fewer particles than cold air, it becomes lighter, and rises. If, for example, in the supposed chamber, you introduce a grate full of fire, the air affected by it will rise instantly to the ceiling, and that which was near it will take its place. When this air is heated it will follow the first, and a constant current upwards, supplied by the  
influx



influx of the lateral air, be produced (*a*); so that the hottest air will diffuse itself in the upper part of the room, and the less heated in the lower, each of them continuing to seek an equilibrium, agreeable to the general laws of fluidity (*b*).

Let us now apply these observations to what passes in the elements, on a larger scale, and we shall find they explain the greater part of the phænomena of the winds.

The atmosphere which surrounds the earth may be considered as an ocean formed by a peculiar fluid, the bottom of which we occupy, and whose surface is at an unknown height. From its primary law, that is, from its fluidity, this ocean has a constant tendency to an equilibrium, and to remain stagnant; but the sun, calling into action the law of expansion, excites an agitation in it which keeps all its component parts in a state of perpetual fluctuation. His rays, applied

(*a*) This is the mechanism of chimneys and stove-baths.

(*b*) There is besides this a continual effort of the rarefied air against the obstacles by which it is confined; but this is of no consequence in the present case.



to the surface of the earth, have precisely the same effect as the fire in the supposed chamber; they produce a degree of heat which dilates the contiguous air, and causes it to rise towards the upper region. Were this heat equal throughout, the general process would be uniform; but it varies from an infinity of circumstances, which become the efficient causes of the varieties we continually observe.

First, it is certain that the earth is heated in proportion as it is exposed to the perpendicular rays of the sun. The heat is nothing at the poles, but excessive under the line. For this reason our climates are colder in winter and hotter in summer; and for the same reason, likewise, the temperature may be very different in the same place, and under the same latitude, according as the country, inclining towards the north or south, presents its surface more or less obliquely to the solar rays (*c*).

(*c*) This is the reason why, as Montesquieu has well observed, Tartary, which is under the same parallel as France and England, is infinitely colder than these countries.

Secondly,



Secondly, it is equally true that the surface of the water is less retentive of heat than that of the earth: the air over the sea, lakes, and rivers, therefore, will be less hot than that over the land in the same latitude; humidity is every where a principle of coolness, and hence a country covered with forests, and abounding in morasses, is colder than when those marshy grounds are drained, and the forests felled (*d*).

A third consideration, not less important, is, that the heat diminishes as we rise above the general plane of the earth. This is demonstrated by the observation, that the summits of high mountains, even under the line, are covered with eternal snows, and demonstrate the constant coldness of the upper region of the air.

If we now consider the combined effects of these different circumstances, we shall find they account for the greatest part of the phænomena we are attempting to explain.

First, the air of the polar regions being colder and more dense than that of the coun-

+ (*d*) This explains why ancient Gaul was much colder than modern France.



tries near the equinoctial, its endeavour to preserve an equilibrium, incessantly forces it from the poles towards the equator. And this reasoning is supported by facts, since the uniform observation of all navigators proves that the winds most common in both hemispheres proceed from that quarter of the horizon of which the pole occupies the center; that is to say, from between the north-west and north-east. What passes on the Mediterranean, in particular, is perfectly analogous to this remark.

I have observed, in speaking of Egypt, that the northerly winds are most frequent in that sea, where they prevail nine months out of twelve. A very plausible solution of this phenomenon may be given from the consideration that, the coast of Barbary, struck powerfully by the rays of the sun, heats the surrounding air, the rarefaction of which causes it to rise, and pass into the interior part of the country, while that of the sea, meeting with less resistance on that side, immediately rushes into its place; but being itself heated, follows the former current, till, by degrees, the Mediterranean loses a great quantity of air. By this process, the air which covers  
Europe,



Europe, having no longer any support, diffuses itself on that side; and thus a general current is established. This will be the stronger, in proportion as the air of the north is colder; and hence the greater impetuosity of the winds in winter than in summer; and it will be more feeble as the air of the different countries approaches nearer to an equilibrium; and hence these winds are more moderate in the fine season, and in July and August terminate in a sort of general calm, because the sun then heats almost equally the whole hemisphere, even to the pole. The uniform and constant course that the north-west wind takes in June, is occasioned by the sun, which, advancing as far as the parallel of Asouan, which is almost that of the Canaries, occasions, behind mount Atlas, a constant and regular wind. The periodical return of the easterly winds, at the time of each equinox, has also doubtless a geographical reason; but, in order to discover this, it would be necessary to have a general table of what passes in other parts of the continent; and here, I confess, my system seems to fail me. I am ignorant, likewise, of the cause of that constant duration  
of



of *three days*, which the southerly and northerly winds affect to observe, whenever they blow at the time of the equinoxes.

Varieties are sometimes observable in the same wind, which arise from the nature of the country. Thus, if a wind meets with a valley, it follows that direction, like the currents of the sea. And hence, doubtless, it happens, that in the Adriatic Gulph scarce any but north-west and south-easterly winds are known; such being the direction of this arm of the sea. From a similar cause, the wind in the Red-sea blows constantly from the north or south; and the frequency of the north-west, or *Mistral*, in Provence, must arise from the currents of air, occasioned by the Cevennes and the Alps, and which are forced to follow the direction of the valley of the Rhone.

But what becomes of the air thus attracted by the coast of Africa and the torrid zone? This may be disposed of in two different ways.

First, the air, arrived under these latitudes, forms there a great current, known by the name of the Eastern Trade-wind, which



extends, as is well known, from the Canaries to America (*e*), which, when it has reached, it seems to be broken by the mountains of the continent : and thus diverted from its original direction, it returns in an opposite one, whence that westerly wind which prevails under the parallel of Canada, and which, by this means, repairs the losses of the polar regions.

Secondly, The air which rushes from the Mediterranean upon Africa, rarefied there by the heat, rises into the superior region; but as it cools at a certain height, the space it occupies

(*e*) Dr. Franklin has thought, that the cause of the Eastern Trade-wind has a connection with the diurnal motion of the earth; but were it so, why is not this wind perpetual? Besides, how shall we explain, on this hypothesis, the two Monsoons of India, the shiftings of which constantly follow the passage of the sun over the equinoctial line; that is, the westerly and southerly winds prevail during the six months the sun is in the northern signs; and the easterly and northerly winds, during the six months he is in the southern. Does not this prove, that all the varieties of the winds depend solely on the action of the sun upon the atmosphere? The moon too, which has so great an effect upon the ocean, may also produce some on the winds; but the influence of the other planets seems a chimæra suited only to the astrology of the ancients.

is



is infinitely reduced by condensation. It may be alleged, that having recovered its weight, it should descend; but besides that, on returning towards the earth, it becomes again heated, and consequently expands, it experiences a powerful and continued effort of the inferior air which supports it. These two *strata*, of the superior air refrigerated, and the inferior air dilated, maintain a perpetual struggle with each other. If the equilibrium be lost, the superior, obeying the law of gravity, may rush into the inferior region, even to the earth. To accidents of this nature we must ascribe those sudden torrents of frozen air, known by the name of hurricanes and squalls, which seem to fall from heaven, and produce, in the warmest seasons, and the hottest regions of the earth, the cold of the polar circles. If the surrounding air resists, their duration is limited to a short time; but when they fall in with currents already established, they encrease their violence, and become tempests, which last several hours. These tempests are dry when the air is pure; but when it is loaded with clouds, they are attended with a deluge of rain and hail, which the cold air conden-



ses in its fall. It may also happen that a continued fall of water shall accompany the rupture, increased by the surrounding clouds, attracted to the same vortex ; and hence will result those columns of water, known by the name of *Typhons* and *water-spouts* (*f*). These water-spouts are not unusual on the coast of Syria, towards Cape Wedjh and Mount Carmel ; and it is observed that they are most frequent at the equinoxes, and in a stormy sky, obscured by clouds.

Mountains of a certain height often afford examples of this descent of refrigerated air from the upper region. When their summits are covering with snow, at the approach of winter, impetuous torrents of wind, called by mariners *snow winds*, rush down from them. They then say, *the mountains are defending themselves*, because these winds blow on you, in whatever direction you approach them. The gulphs of Lyons and Alexandretta are remarked frequently to furnish instances of this kind of winds.

On the same principles we may explain the phænomena of those winds of the coast, vul-

(*f*) Dr. Franklin has explained them in the same manner.



garly called *land breezes*. It is observed by mariners, that, in the Mediterranean, they blow from the land during the night, and in the day from the sea; the cause of which is, that the air, rarefied by the heat of the day, and condensed by the coldness of the night, rushes alternately from the land to the sea, and the sea to the land. Thus, in Syria, the side of Lebanon which faces the sea, being heated by the sun during the day, and especially towards noon, the air, on its declivity, being rarefied, and losing its relative equilibrium with that of the sea, is forced upwards; but the new air, which takes its place, becoming heated, likewise, soon follows it, until, by this succession, a current is formed similar to that we observe in the funnels of a stove or chimney (*g*). When the sun sets, this action ceases, the mountain cools, the air condenses, and, condensing, becomes heavier, and falls down again, thus forming a torrent which rushes along the declivity to the sea. The current ceases in the morning, on the sun's return, and the same round

(*g*) This is often sensible to the eye; but it is rendered still more evident by approaching a silk thread or a piece of down to the funnels.



is repeated. This wind does not advance above two or three leagues into the sea, because the impulse of its fall is gradually destroyed by the resistance of the mass of air into which it enters. It is in proportion to the height and rapidity of this descent, that the land breeze is extensive. It reaches further at the foot of Lebanon, and the northern chain of eminences, because the mountains in that quarter are loftier, steeper, and nearer to the sea. There are often violent and sudden squalls at the mouth of the Kasmia (*b*), the deep valley of Bekaa collecting the air in its narrow channel, propels it as from a funnel. These winds do not extend so far on the coast of Palestine, because the mountains there are lower, and between them and the sea there is a plain of four or five leagues; and at Gaza, and on the coast of Egypt, they are never known, because that country has no declivity proper to cause them. In short, they are every where stronger in summer, and feebler in winter, because in the latter season the heat and rarefaction are less considerable.

(*b*) These squalls are so violent, that they sometimes  
overfet boats; as I was once very near experiencing myself,

This



This comparative state of the air of the sea, and that of continents, is the cause of a phænomenon long since observed, viz. the general property of all land, and especially mountains, to attract clouds. Whoever has visited different sea coasts, cannot but have remarked that clouds continually arise at sea, and regularly direct their course towards the land, and especially the highest mountains. Some philosophers have ascribed this to an *attractive virtue*; but besides that, this *occult quality* is as unintelligible as the ancient *horror of a vacuum*, the mechanical cause of that phænomenon may be explained by material agents; I mean the law of the equilibrium of fluids, by which the heavier air forces the lighter upwards; for continents, when under the same parallel, and of like elevation, being always more heated than seas, a constant current of air must take place, and drive the clouds from the sea towards the land. This direction will be the more constant, the more the mountains are heated. If the vapours meet with a flat and level country, they will glide over it without stopping, because the land being equally heated, there is nothing to cause them to condense.



This is the reason why it never, or but very rarely, rains, in summer, in Egypt, or the deserts of Arabia and Africa. The air of these countries being heated and rarefied, repels the clouds, and, as it is the nature of all vapour to be elevated by hot air, they continue to float in the middle region, where the prevailing current carries them towards the higher parts of the continent, which perform, in some measure, as I have already said, the office of a chimney. Being then at a greater distance from the surface of the earth, which is the great receptacle of heat, they are refrigerated and condensed, till their particles resolve into rain or snow. In winter, the effects vary with circumstances. During that season, when the sun is remote from the countries we are speaking of, the earth being less heated, the air in general assumes a temperature more nearly approaching to that of the high mountains; it becomes colder and more dense; the vapours are no longer elevated to the same height; the clouds are formed lower down; and frequently fall quite to the earth, and are called fogs. At this period, accumulated by the westerly winds, and by the absence of the currents which  
carry



carry them off in summer, they are compelled to fall upon the plains, and hence the solution of the problem (*i*): “The  
 “ evaporation being more considerable in  
 “ summer than in winter, why are there  
 “ more clouds, fogs, and rains in winter  
 “ than in summer?” Hence also we are able to explain another appearance observable both in Egypt and Palestine (*k*), “that if  
 “ there be a continual and gentle rain, it will  
 “ fall rather in the night than in the day.” In these countries, it is generally observed that clouds and fogs approach the earth at night, and rise from it in the day, because the presence of the sun still excites a degree of heat sufficient to repel them; I have often experienced the truth of this at Cairo, in the months of July and August, 1783. At sunrise, we frequently had a fog, the thermometer being at seventeen degrees (*l*); two hours after, the thermometer being at twenty,

(*i*) See Chap. IV.

(*k*) I have observed this in Palestine, in the months of November, December, and January, 1784 and 1785. The temperature of the plain of Palestine, especially towards Gaza, is nearly the same with that of Egypt.

(*l*) By Reaumur's scale.



or, perhaps, twenty-four degrees, the sky was covered with scattered clouds driving to the south. On my return from Suez, about the same time, that is, between the 24th and 26th of July, we had no fog during the two nights we passed in the desert; but on arriving, at break of day, in sight of the valley of Egypt, I observed it covered with a body of vapours which had the appearance of a stagnant lake. As the day came on, they began to move and rise, and, before eight o'clock in the morning, they had left the ground, and the air only shewed some scattered clouds, which took their course along the valley. The following year, being among the Druzes, I observed nearly similar phænomena. First, about the end of June, there was formed a chain of clouds, to be attributed, no doubt, to the overflowing of Egypt by the Nile (*m*), and which, in fact, proceeded from that quarter, and were passing to the north-east (*n*). After this first

(*m*) It is not superfluous to observe that the Nile, at that period, causes a current along the whole coast of Syria, which extends from Gaza to Cyprus.

(*n*) This appears to me to be the column of clouds mentioned by Baron de Tott. I have also observed the mistiness of the horizon of Egypt, of which he speaks.

irruption,



irruption, towards the end of July, and in August, there was a second season of clouds. Every day, towards eleven o'clock, or about noon, the sky was overcast, the sun was often invisible the whole afternoon, the *sannin*, or summit of Lebanon, was capped with clouds, and many of them, ascending the declivities, remained among the vineyards and the pines, and I was frequently so enveloped in a white, humid, warm and opaque mist, as not to be able to see four paces before me. About ten or eleven at night, the sky grew clear, the stars appeared, and the remainder of the night was very fine; the sun rose shining, and, towards noon, the like appearances returned in the same circle. This repetition puzzled me the more, as I could not conceive what became of all this quantity of clouds. Part of them, it is true, passed the chain of the Sannin; these I might suppose had proceeded to Anti-Lebanon, or the desert; but what was to become of that portion which was passing along the declivity, at the moment the sun set, for there was neither dew nor rain in which they could be consumed? To discover the cause of this, I ascended



ascended several mornings successively, at day-break, a neighbouring eminence, and there, looking down upon the valley, and the sea, distant, in an oblique line, about five leagues, I examined attentively the state of the atmosphere. I at first perceived nothing but a body of vapours which veiled the waters; and the horizon, towards the sea, appeared to me very thick, while on the side of the mountains it was quite clear; as the sun enlightened that part, I discovered clouds by the reflection of his rays; these at first seemed to me very low; but, as the heat increased, they separated, and rose higher, and continually proceeding towards the mountain, continued there the remainder of the day, as I have described. From hence I concluded that the clouds I saw, thus mounting, formed a great part of those which were on the declivities in the evening, and which, not being able to rise sufficiently high, had been seized by the cold air, and thrown back on the sea, by the land breeze; I imagined that they were retained there the whole night, till the sea breeze, getting up, drove them back upon the mountain, and hurried



hurried part of them over the summit, to fall on the other side in dews, or to moisten the parched air of the desert.

I have said that these clouds conveyed no dews; and I have frequently remarked that there were fewer when the sky was clouded, than when the heavens were clear. But the dew is at all times less abundant on these mountains, than on the coast, and in Egypt, which may be easily explained, by supposing that the air is not able to elevate to that height the excess of humidity with which it is loaded; for the dew, as is well known, is the excess of humidity which the heated air raises in vapour during the day, and which, condensing by the coolness of the evening, falls down again in greater or less abundance, according to the vicinity of the country to the sea (*o*). Hence the excessive

(*o*) This resolves a question proposed to me at Yafa; viz. “Why one sweats more at Yafa, on the borders of the sea, than at Ramla, which is at three leagues distance up the country?” The reason is, that the air of Yafa, being saturated with humid particles, excites perspiration but slowly, while at Ramla, the air being more dry, causes it quicker. For this reason, also, the breath is visible in winter, in our climates, and not in summer.

dews



dews in the Delta, which are less considerable in the Thebais, and the desert, as I am well assured; and if the moisture does not fall when the heavens are obscured, it is from its assuming the form of clouds, or being intercepted by them.

In other cases, the sky being serene, we see the clouds sometimes disperse and dissolve, like smoke; at others, form in an instant, and from a small speck, become of a prodigious size. This is particularly observable at the summit of Lebanon, and mariners have experienced that, the appearance of a cloud, on this peak is an infallible presage of a westerly wind. At sun-set, I have often observed these smoky clouds adhering to the sides of the rocks of Nahr-el-Kelb, and augmenting so rapidly, that in an hour the valley was quite full of them. The inhabitants say, they are the vapours of the valley itself; but this valley being all stone, and without water, it is impossible that they should be exhalations from that; it is more natural to suppose them vapours of the atmosphere, which, condensed at the approach of night, fall in an imperceptible rain, and cause the mist which is then observed. Fogs  
are



are explicable on the same principles. There are none in the hot countries distant from the sea, nor during the summer droughts; for, in these cases, the air has no surplus of humidity. But they appear after the autumnal rains, and, even in summer, after heavy showers, because the earth has then imbibed matter for evaporation, and acquired a degree of coolness sufficient to cause a condensation of the vapours. In our climates, they always begin in the meadows, in preference to tilled ground. We frequently observe, at the setting of the sun, a sheet of smoke, forming on the grass, which soon increases in extent and height. The reason of this is, that humid and cool places condense the falling vapours sooner than those which are dry and dusty.

A variety of other observations might be made on the formation and nature of these vapours, which though, in reality, the same, are called fogs, when they rest on the ground, and clouds, when they rise into the air. By considering their various properties, we shall perceive they are governed by the laws of combination, dissolution, precipitation, and saturation; of which modern physics, under  
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the appellation of chemistry, is employed in developing the theory. But to treat of them, in this place, I should be under a necessity of entering into details which would lead me too far from my subject. I shall confine myself, therefore, to one concluding observation, relative to thunder.

Thunder is known in the Delta as well as in Syria; but with this difference, that in the Delta, and the plain of Palestine, it is extremely rare in summer, and more frequent in winter; while in the mountains, on the contrary, it is more common in summer, and very seldom heard in winter. In both these countries, it happens ofteneft in the rainy season, or about the time of the equinoxes, especially the autumnal one; it is further remarkable, that it never comes on from the land-side, but always from the sea. The storms which fall on the Delta and Syria constantly come from the Mediterranean (*p*).

These

(*p*) I do not know what passes in this respect in Upper Egypt: as for the Delta, it appears that it sometimes receives clouds and thunder from the Red Sea. On the day that I left Cairo, (26th September, 1783,) as night was coming on, a storm appeared in the south-east,



These storms, in general, happen either in the evening or morning, and rarely in the middle of the day (*q*); they are accompanied with violent showers, and sometimes with hail, which, in an hour's time, render the country full of little lakes. These circumstances, and, above all, this perpetual connection of clouds with thunder, may suggest the following remarks.

If thunder is constantly attended with clouds, and they are absolutely necessary to its existence, it must be caused by some of their elements. But in what manner are clouds formed? By the evaporation of water. How is this evaporation effected? By the presence of the element of fire. Water

east, which soon produced several claps of thunder, and ended by a violent fall of hail, as large as the largest sort of peas. It continued ten or twelve minutes; and my companions and I had time enough to collect a quantity of hail-stones, sufficient to fill two large glasses, and could say that we had drank iced water in Egypt. It is proper to add that it was at the time when the southerly monsoon begins to blow on the Red-Sea.

(*q*) M. Niebuhr has also observed, at Moka and Bombay, that storms always proceed from the sea.



of itself is not volatile ; some agent is necessary to raise it ; this agent is fire ; and hence, as has been already observed, “ evaporation “ is always in proportion to the heat applied “ to water.” Each particle of water is rendered volatile by a particle of fire, and, unquestionably, also, by a particle of air combined with it. This combination may be regarded as a neutral salt, and, comparing it with nitre, we may say the water in it represents the alkali, and the fire the nitrous acid. The clouds, thus composed, float in the atmosphere until they meet with something which separates their constituent parts. If, from any cause, these particles are suddenly disunited, a detonation is the consequence, accompanied, as in nitre, with explosion and light. The igneous matter, and the air, being instantly dissipated by the shock, the water which was combined with them, restored to its natural gravity, falls precipitately from the height to which it had been elevated ; and hence the violent showers which follow loud claps of thunder, and which happen, generally, at the end of storms, the igneous matter being then expended. Sometimes



times the particles of fire being combined with the air only, it melts like nitre; and this it is, doubtless, which produces those lightnings, when no thunder is heard, called fires of the horizon (*feux d'horizon*) (r). But is this igneous matter distinct from the electric? Does it observe peculiar laws and affinities in its combinations and detonations? This is what I shall not take upon me to examine. These researches are not suited to a narrative of travels: I ought to confine myself to facts; and the few explanatory remarks I have added, though they were naturally suggested by them, have already led me too far from my subject.

(r) Shooting stars seem also to be a particular combination of igneous matter. The Maronites of Mar-Elias assured me that one of these stars falling, three years ago, on two mules of the convent, killed them both, making an explosion like the report of a pistol, and leaving no more traces than thunder.



## C H A P. XXII.

*Of the Inhabitants of Syria.*

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SYRIA, as well as Egypt, has undergone revolutions which have confounded the different races of its inhabitants. Within two thousand five hundred years, we may reckon ten invasions, which have introduced into that country a succession of foreign nations. First, the Assyrians of Nineveh, who, passing the Euphrates, about the year 750 before the Christian æra, within sixty years, obtained possession of almost the whole country lying to the north of Judea. Next the Chaldeans, of Babylon, who, having destroyed the power on which they were dependent, succeeded, as by hereditary right, to its possessions, and completed the conquest of Syria, except only the Isle of Tyre. The Chaldeans were followed by the Persians, under Cyrus, and the Persians, by the Macedonians, under Alexander. It then seemed as if Syria was about to cease being a vassal to foreign powers, and to obtain a distinct and independent government,



ment, according to the natural right of every country ; but the people, who found in the Seleucidæ only cruel despots and oppressors, seeing themselves reduced to the necessity of bearing some yoke, preferred the lightest ; and Syria, yielding to the arms of Pompey, became a province of the Roman empire.

Five centuries after, when the sons of Theodosius divided their immense patrimony, this country changed the capital to which it was to appertain, without changing its masters, and was annexed to the empire of Constantinople. Such was its situation when, in the year 622, the Arabian tribes, collected under the banners of Mahomet, seized, or rather laid it waste. Since that period, torn to pieces by the civil wars of the Fatmites, and the Ommiades, wrested from the Califs by their rebellious governors, taken from them by the Turkmen soldiery, invaded by the European crusaders, retaken by the Mamlouks of Egypt, and ravaged by Tamerlane and his Tartars, it has at length fallen into the hands of the Ottoman Turks, who have been its



masters for two hundred and sixty-eight years.

These vicissitudes have introduced into the country distinct tribes of inhabitants, as various as the revolutions it has undergone, so that the people of Syria must not be considered as one single nation, but rather as a mixture of different nations.

They may be divided into three principal classes.

First, The posterity of the people conquered by the Arabs, that is, the Greeks of the Lower Empire.

Secondly, The posterity of the Arabian conquerors.

Thirdly, The present ruling people, the Ottoman Turks.

Of these three classes, the former must be again subdivided, in consequence of several distinctions which have taken place among them. The Greeks then must be divided into,

First, Greeks proper, vulgarly called *Schismatics*, or separated from the Romish communion.

Secondly, Latin Greeks, re-united to that communion.

Thirdly,



Thirdly, Maronites, or Greeks of the sect of the Monk Maron, formerly independent of the two communions, but at present united to the latter.

The Arabs must be divided into,

First, The proper descendents of the conquerors, who have greatly intermixed their blood, and are considerably the most numerous.

Secondly, The Motoualis, distinguished from these by their religious opinions.

Thirdly, The Druzes, distinct likewise, from the same reason.

Fourthly, The Ansarians, who are also descended from the Arabs.

To these people, who are the cultivators and settled inhabitants of Syria, must still be added three other wandering tribes, or pastors, viz. the Turkmen, the Curds, and the Bedouin Arabs.

Such are the different races dispersed over the country, between the sea and the desert, from Gaza to Alexandretta.

In this enumeration, it is remarkable that the ancient inhabitants have no remaining representative; their distinguishing character is lost and confounded in that of the Greeks,

A a 4 who,



who, in fact, by a continued residence from the days of Alexander, have had sufficient time entirely to take place of the ancient people; the country alone, and a few traits of manners and customs, preserve the vestiges of distant ages.

Syria has not, like Egypt, refused to adopt the foreign races. They all become equally naturalized to the country. The features and complexion are governed by nearly the same laws there as in the south of Europe, with the differences only which naturally result from the nature of the climate. Thus the inhabitants of the southern plains are more swarthy than those of the northern, and these, more so than the inhabitants of the mountains. In Lebanon, and the country of the Druzes, the complexion does not differ from that in our provinces in the middle of France. The women of Damascus and Tripoli are greatly boasted for the fairness, and even the regularity of their features; but we must take this praise on trust, since the veil, which they perpetually wear, allows no person to make nice observations. In several districts, the women are less scrupulous, without being less chaste. In Palestine, for example, you  
may



may see married women almost uncovered ; but want and fatigue have robbed the countenance of all its charms ; their eyes alone are almost every where beautiful ; and the long drapery, which forms their general dress, permits the body freely to display its shape : it is sometimes without elegance, but its proportions at least are no way injured. I do not recollect having seen in Syria, nor even in Egypt, two persons crooked or deformed. It is true, they are strangers to those tight-laced waists, which are so much admired among us : they are in no estimation in the east ; and the young women, assisted by their mothers, very early study, even superstitious receipts, to acquire an *embonpoint* : happily, Nature, by resisting our caprices, has set bounds to our singularities, for we do not perceive in Syria, where the shape is not confined, that the body becomes any larger than in France, where it is so tightly laced.

The Syrians are, in general, of a middling stature, and are, as in all warm countries, less corpulent than the inhabitants of the north. We find, however, in the cities, some individuals whose amplitude of belly proves that the influence of diet is able, in  
a certain



a certain degree, to counterbalance that of climate.

In other respects, Syria has no disease peculiar to itself, but the pimple of Aleppo, which I shall notice when I come to speak of that city. Other disorders are dysenteries, inflammatory and intermittent fevers, which are the consequences of the bad fruit which the people greedily devour. The small-pox is sometimes very fatal; but the general and most frequent illness is the cholic, the causes of which are very evident, when we consider that every body eats to excess of unripe fruit, raw vegetables, honey, cheese, olives, strong oil, sour milk, and ill-fermented bread. These are the usual food of all the inhabitants; and the acid juices they contain produce crudities, nausea, and even frequent vomitings of bile. Accordingly, the first prescription in almost all disorders is an emetic, which method of treatment, however, is only known to the European physicians. Bleeding, as I have already said, is neither necessary, nor very useful. In imminent cases, cream of tartar and tamarinds have the most certain success.

The general language of Syria is the  
Arabic



Arabic tongue. M. Niebuhr reports, upon hearsay, that the Syriac is still used in some villages of the mountains ; but, though I interrogated, on this subject, several monks, who are perfectly well acquainted with the country, I have not been able to learn any thing like it. I have been told only that, in the towns of Maloula and Sidnaia, near Damascus, they speak a dialect so corrupted, that it is difficult to be understood. But this difficulty proves nothing, since, in Syria, as in all the Arabian countries, the dialects vary at every place. The Syriac may be, therefore, regarded as a dead language ; for the Maronites, who have preserved it in their liturgy, and in their mass, understand very little of it, while they recite them. We may assert the same of the Greek. Among the monks and schismatic priests, there are very few who have any knowledge of it, unless they have made it their particular study in the islands of the Archipelago : besides, we know that the modern Greek is so corrupted, that it would no more enable a man to understand Demosthenes, than the Italian to read Cicero. The Turkish language is only used, in Syria, by the military, persons  
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in office, and the Turkman hordes (*a*). Some of the natives learn it, as the Turks learn Arabic, to facilitate their dealings with strangers: but the pronunciation and accent of these two languages have so little analogy that they always continue foreign to each other. The Turks, habituated to a nasal and pompous prosody, are rarely able to imitate the harsh sounds and strong aspirations of the Arabic. This tongue makes such repeated use of vowels and guttural consonants that, on hearing it spoken for the first time, you would imagine they were gargling their throats. On this account it is disagreeable and difficult to all Europeans; but such is the power of habit that, when we complain to the Arabs of its asperity, they accuse us of a want of ear, and retort the charge upon our languages. Of these the Italian is that which they prefer; and they compare, with some reason, the French to the Turkish, and the English to the Persian. In the dialects of their own we find

(*a*) At Alexandretta, and Beilam, which is contiguous, they speak Turkish; but they must be regarded as frontiers of Caramania, where Turkish is the vulgar tongue.

almost



almost the same difference. The Arabic of Syria is much harsher than that of Egypt; the pronunciation of the professors of the law at Cairo is esteemed a model of facility and elegance. But, according to the observation of M. Niebuhr, that of the inhabitants of the Yemen, and the southern coast, is infinitely softer, and gives a fluency to the Arabic, of which he could not have thought it susceptible. Attempts have been made to establish an analogy between the climates and the pronunciation of languages; it has been said, for instance, that the inhabitants of the north speak more with their lips and teeth than those of the south. This may be just when applied to some parts of our continent; but, to decide universally, we must make more circumstantial and extensive observations. We should not too hastily pronounce these general decisions concerning languages and their different characters; because we are always naturally led to judge from our own, and, consequently, from a prejudice of habit extremely inimical to just reasoning.

Among the different inhabitants of Syria I have mentioned, some are dispersed, indifferently



ferently, over every part of the country, others confine themselves to particular spots, which it will be necessary to determine.

The Greeks proper, the Turks, and the Arabian peasants, belong to the former class, with this difference, that the Turks reside only in the towns where they are in possession of the military employments, and the offices of the magistracy, and where they exercise the arts. The Arabs and the Greeks inhabit the villages, and form the class of husbandmen in the country, and the inferior people in the towns. The part of the country which contains the most Greek villages is the Pachalic of Damascus.

The Greeks of the Romish communion, who are much less numerous than the schismatics, are all retired within the towns, where they cultivate the arts and commerce. The protection of the Franks, procured them, in the late war, a decided superiority in trade, wherever there are European settlements.

The Maronites form a national body, which occupies, almost exclusively, the whole country comprised between *Nabr-el-kelb* (the river of the Dog) and *Nabr-el-bared* (the



(the cold river), from the summit of the mountains on the east, to the Mediterranean on the west.

The Druzes border upon them, and extend from Nahr-el-kelb to the neighbourhood of Sour, (Tyre) between the valley of Bekaa and the sea.

The country of the Motoualis formerly included the valley of Bekaa, as far as Sour: but this people, of late years, have undergone a revolution which has reduced them almost to nothing.

As for the Ansarians, they are dispersed throughout the mountains, from Nahr-akkar as far as to Antakia; they are distinguished into different tribes, such as the Kelbia, the Kadmoufia, the Shamsia, &c.

The Turkmen, the Curds, and the Bedouins, have no fixed habitations, but keep perpetually wandering with their tents and herds, in limited districts, of which they look upon themselves as the proprietors. The Turkman hordes generally encamp on the plain of Antioch; the Curds in the mountains between Alexandretta and the Euphrates; and the Arabs spread over the whole



whole frontier of Syria, adjacent to their deserts, and even the plains of the interior part of the country, as those of Palestine, Bekaa, and Galilee.

To form more distinct ideas of these different classes, let us consider more circumstantially what is peculiar to each of them.



## C H A P. XXIII.

*Of the pastoral, or wandering Tribes of Syria.*

## S E C T. I.

*Of the Turkmen.*

THE Turkmen are of the number of those Tartar hordes, who, on the great revolutions of the empire of the Califs, emigrated from the eastward of the Caspian sea, and spread themselves over the vast plains of Armenia and Asia Minor. Their language is the same with that of the Turks, and their mode of life nearly similar to that of the Bedouin Arabs. Like them, they are pastors, and consequently obliged to travel over immense tracts of land to procure subsistence for their numerous herds. But there is this difference, that the countries frequented by the Turkmen being rich in pasturage, they can feed more cattle on them, and are therefore less dispersed than



the Arabs of the desert. Each of their *ordous*, or camps, acknowledges a Chief, whose power is not determined by fixed laws, but governed by custom and circumstances. It is rarely abused, because the society is compact, and the nature of their situation maintains sufficient equality among its members. Every man able to bear arms is anxious to carry them, since on his individual force depend both his personal safety, and the respect paid him by his companions. All their property consists in cattle, that is camels, buffaloes, goats, and especially sheep. They live on milk, butter, and meat, which are in great abundance among them, and the surplus of which they sell in the towns and the neighbouring country, for they are almost able alone to supply the butcheries. In return, they take arms, clothes, money, and corn. Their women spin wool, and make carpets, the use of which is immemorial in these countries, and consequently indicates their manner of living to have been always the same. As for the men, their whole occupation consists in smoking, and looking after their flocks. Perpetually on horse-back,



back, with their lances on their shoulders, their crooked sabres by their sides, and their pistols in their belts, they are expert horsemen and indefatigable soldiers. They have frequent differences with the Turks, who dread them; but as they are divided among themselves, and form separate camps, they do not assume that superiority which their combined forces would ensure them. The Pachalics of Aleppo and Damascus, which are the only parts of Syria they frequent, may be computed to contain about thirty thousand wandering Turkmen. A great number of these tribes pass, in summer, into Armenia and Caramania, where they find grass in greater abundance, and return to their former quarters in the winter. The Turkmen are reputed Musulmen, and generally bear the distinguishing mark, circumcision. But they trouble themselves very little about religion, and they have neither the ceremonies, nor the fanaticism of sedentary nations. As for their manners, to describe them accurately, it would be necessary to have lived among them. They have, however, the reputation of not being robbers, like the Arabs, though they are neither less generous, nor less hospitable than they;



and when we consider that they live in plenty, without being rich, and are inured to war, and hardened by fatigue and danger, we may presume they are equally removed from the ignorance and servility of the peasants, and the corruption and selfishness of the inhabitants of the towns.

## S E C T. II.

### *Of the Kurds.*

The Kurds are another national body, the divided tribes of which are equally dispersed over the Lower Asia, and have extended themselves pretty considerably, especially within the last hundred years. Their original country is the chain of mountains from whence issue the different branches of the Tigris, which, surrounding the upper part of the great Zab, passes to the southward, as far as the frontiers of the Irak-adjami, or Persian Irak (*a*). In modern geography, it

(*a*) *Adjami* is the Arabic name for the Persians. The Greeks were acquainted with it, and expressed it by *Achmenides*.



is known by the name of *Curd-estan*. This country is mentioned in the most ancient traditions and histories of the east, in which it is made the scene of several mythological events. The Chaldean Berosus, and the Armenian Maribas, cited by Moses Chorenensis, assert that it was in the mountains Gord-ouæis (*b*), that Xifuthrus landed after escaping from the deluge; and the local circumstances which they add, prove, what was otherwise sufficiently evident, that *Gord* and *Curd* are the same. Those were the same Curds who are mentioned by Xenophon under the denomination of *Card-uchi*, and who opposed the retreat of the Ten Thousand. This historian observes that, though shut in on all sides by the Persian empire, they had constantly braved the power of the *Great King*, and the arms of his *Satrap*s. They have changed but little in their modern state; and, though, in appearance, tributaries to the Porte, pay very little respect to the orders of the Grand Signior, or his Pachas. M. Niebuhr, who travelled in these countries in 1769, reports, that in their mountains they are subject to a

(*b*) Strabo, lib. 11. says, that the Niphates, and its chain of mountains, are called *Gordouæi*.



fort of feudal government, which appears to me similar to that we observe among the Druzes. Each village has its chief, and the whole nation is divided into different and independent factions. The disputes inseparable from this state of anarchy have detached from the nation a great number of tribes and families, which have adopted the wandering life of the Turkmen and Arabs.

These are dispersed in the Diarbekir, and over the plains of Arzroum, Erivan, Sivas, Aleppo and Damascus: all their tribes united are estimated to exceed one hundred and forty thousand *tents*, that is, one hundred and forty thousand armed men. Like the Turkmen, these Curds are pastors and wanderers; but differ from them in some particular customs. The Turkmen give their daughters a marriage dower: the Curds receive a premium for them. The Turkmen pay no respect to that antiquity of extraction which we call nobility: the Curds honour it above every thing. The Turkmen do not steal: the Curds are almost everywhere looked upon as plunderers; on which account, they are much dreaded in the neighbourhood of Aleppo, and of Antioch, where they



they occupy, under the name of Bagdashlia, the mountains to the east of Beilam, as far as near Kles. In this Pachalick, and in that of Damascus, their number exceeds twenty thousand tents and huts; for they have also fixed habitations. They are reputed Mahometans; but they never trouble themselves about religious rites or opinions. Several of them, distinguished by the name of Yazdia, worship *Shaitan*, or Satan, that is, the genius who is the *enemy* (of God). This notion, especially prevalent in the Diarbekir, and the frontiers of Persia, is a relic of the ancient system of the *good* and *evil principles*, which, varied according to the spirit of the Persian, Jewish, Christian, and Mahometan doctrines, has continually prevailed in these countries. Zoroaster is generally considered as its author; but, long before his time, Egypt acknowledged Orosmales and Arimanius, under the names of Osiris and Typhon. It is no less an error, likewise, to suppose, that this dogma was not propagated prior to the reign of Darius Hystaspes, since Zoroaster, who taught it, flourished in Media, and was cotemporary with Solomon.



Language is the principal indication of the consanguinity of nations. That of the Curds is divided into three dialects. It has neither the aspirations nor the gutturals of the Arabic; and I am assured that it does not resemble the Persian; so that it must be an original language. Now, if we consider the antiquity of the people who speak it; and that we know they are related to the Medes, Assyrians, Persians, and even the Parthians (*c*), we may be allowed to conjecture, that a knowledge of this tongue might throw some light on the ancient history of these countries. There is no known dictionary of it; but it would be no difficult matter to form one. If the government of France should think proper to offer encouragements to the Drogmen, or to the missionaries of Aleppo, the Diarbekir, or Bagdad, proper persons might soon be found to accomplish such an undertaking (*d*).

## S E C T.

(*c*) “ On the Tigris,” says Strabo, lib. 16, “ are many places belonging to the Parthians, whom the ancients called Carduchi.”

(*d*) The Empress of Russia has lately given orders to Doctor Pallas to make a collection of all the languages spoken



## S E C T. III.

*Of the Bedouin Arabs.*

A third wandering people in Syria, are the Bedouin Arabs, whom we have already found in Egypt. Of these I made but a slight mention in treating of that province, because, having only had a transient view of them, without knowing their language, their name suggested but few ideas to my mind; but having been better acquainted with them

spoken in the Russian empire; and these researches must extend even to the Cuban and Georgia; and, perhaps, to Curdestan. When this collection is completed, it will be necessary to reduce all the alphabet of these languages to one; for this diversity of Arabic, Armenian, Georgian, Iberian, and Tartarian alphabet is a great obstacle to the advancement of science. This will, perhaps, appear impossible to many persons; but, from some experiments of the same nature, which I have myself made, I think I may venture to pronounce it not only practicable, but easy. It is sufficient to be well acquainted with the elements of speech, to be able to class the vowels and consonants of all the alphabets. It is proper also to observe here, that the first book of every nation is the dictionary of its language,

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in Syria; having even made a journey to one of their camps, near Gaza, and lived several days among them, I am now able to treat of them with more minuteness and accuracy.

In general, when speaking of the Arabs, we should distinguish whether they are cultivators, or pastors; for this difference in their mode of life occasions so great a one in their manners, and genius, that they become almost foreign nations, with respect to each other. In the former case, leading a sedentary life, attached to the same soil, and subject to regular governments, the social state in which they live, very nearly resembles our own. Such are the inhabitants of the Yemen; and such, also, are the descendants of those ancient conquerors, who have either entirely, or in part, given inhabitants to Syria, Egypt, and the Barbary states. In the second instance, having only a transient interest in the soil, perpetually removing their tents from one place to another, and under subjection to no laws, their mode of existence is neither that of polished nations, nor of savages; and, therefore, more particularly merits our attention. Such are the Bedouins,



Bedouins, or inhabitants of the vast deserts which extend from the confines of Persia, to Morocco. Though divided into independent communities, or tribes, not unfrequently hostile to each other, they may still be considered as forming one nation. The resemblance of their language is a manifest token of this relationship. The only difference that exists between them is, that the African tribes are of a less ancient origin, being posterior to the conquest of these countries by the Califs, or successors of Mahomet; while the tribes of the desert of Arabia, properly so called, have descended by an uninterrupted succession from the remotest ages; and it is of these I mean more especially to treat, as being more immediately connected with my subject. To these the orientals are accustomed to appropriate the name of Arabs, as being the most ancient, and the purest race. The term *Bedaoui* is added as a synonymous expression, signifying, as I have observed, inhabitant of the *Desert*; and this term has the greater propriety, as the word *Arab*, in the ancient language of these countries, signifies a solitude or desert.

It



It is not without reason that the inhabitants of the desert boast of being the purest and the best preserved race of all the Arab tribes : for never have they been conquered, nor have they mixed with any other people, by making conquests ; for those by which the general name of Arabs has been rendered famous, really belong only to the tribes of the Hedjaz, and the Yemen ; those who dwelt in the interior of the country, never emigrated at the time of the revolution effected by Mahomet ; or if they did take any part in it, it was confined to a few individuals, detached by motives of ambition. Thus we find the prophet, in his Koran, continually styling the Arabs of the desert rebels, and infidels ; nor has so great a length of time produced any very considerable change. We may assert they have, in every respect, retained their primitive independence and simplicity. Every thing that ancient history has related of their customs, manners, language, and even their prejudices, is almost minutely true of them to this day ; and if we consider, besides, that this unity of character, preserved through such a number of ages, still subsists, even in the most distant situations,



tions, that is, that the tribes most remote from each other preserve an exact resemblance, it must be allowed, that the circumstances which accompany so peculiar a moral state, are a subject of most curious enquiry.

In Europe, and especially in its more civilized and improved countries, where we have no examples of wandering people, we can scarcely conceive what can induce men to adopt a mode of life so repugnant to our ideas. We even conceive with difficulty what a desert is, or how it is possible for a country to have inhabitants, if it be barren; or why it is not better peopled, if it be susceptible of cultivation. I have been perplexed, myself, with these difficulties, as well as others; for which reason, I shall dwell more circumstantially on the facts which will furnish us with their explanation.

The wandering and pastoral life led by several Asiatic nations, arises from two causes. The first is, the nature of the soil, which, being improper for cultivation, compels men to have recourse to animals, which content themselves with the wild herbage of the earth. Where this herbage is  
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but thin, a single animal will soon consume the produce of a great extent of ground, and it will be necessary to run over large tracts of land. Such is the case of the Arabs in the desert of Arabia, properly so called, and in that of Africa.

The second cause must be attributed to habit, since the soil is cultivable, and even fertile, in many places; such as the frontiers of Syria, the Diarbekir, Natolia, and the greatest part of the districts frequented by the Curds and Turkmen. But it appears to me that these habits are only the effect of the political state of the country, so that the primary cause of them must be referred to the government itself. This opinion is supported by daily facts; for as often as the different hordes and wandering tribes find peace and security, and a possibility of procuring sufficient provisions, in any district, they take up their residence in it, and adopt, insensibly, a settled life, and the arts of cultivation. But when, on the contrary, the tyranny of the government drives the inhabitants of a village to extremity, the peasants desert their houses, withdraw with their families into the mountains, or wander in  
the



the plains, taking care frequently to change their place of habitation, to avoid being surprised. It often happens even that individuals, turned robbers, in order to withdraw themselves from the laws, or from tyranny, unite and form little camps, which maintain themselves by arms, and, increasing, become new hordes, and new tribes. We may pronounce, therefore, that in cultivable countries, the wandering life originates in the injustice or want of policy of the government; and that the sedentary and cultivating state is that to which mankind is most naturally inclined.

With respect to the Arabs, they seem especially condemned to a wandering life, by the very nature of their deserts. To paint to himself these deserts, the reader must imagine a sky almost perpetually inflamed, and without clouds, immense and boundless plains, without houses, trees, rivulets, or hills, where the eye frequently meets nothing but an extensive and uniform horizon, like the sea, though in some places the ground is uneven and stoney. Almost invariably naked on every side, the earth presents nothing but a few wild plants, thinly scattered,



scattered, and thickets, whose solitude is rarely disturbed but by antelopes, hares, locusts, and rats. Such is the nature of nearly the whole country, which extends six hundred leagues in length, and three hundred in breadth, and stretches from Aleppo to the Arabian sea, and from Egypt to the Persian gulph.

It must not, however, be imagined that the soil in so great an extent is every where the same; it varies considerably in different places. On the frontiers of Syria, for example, the earth is in general fat and cultivable, nay, even fruitful. It is the same also on the banks of the Euphrates; but in the internal parts of the country, and towards the south, it becomes white and chalky, as in the parallel of Damascus; rocky, as in the Tih, and the Hedjaz; and a pure sand, as to the eastward of the Yemen. This variety in the qualities of the soil is productive of some minute differences in the condition of the Bedouins. For instance, in the more sterile countries, that is those which produce but few plants, the tribes are feeble, and very distant; which is the case in the desert of Suez, that of the Red Sea, and the interior  
of



of the Great Desert, called the Najd. When the soil is more fruitful, as between Damascus and the Euphrates, the tribes are more numerous, and less remote from each other; and, lastly, in the cultivable districts, such as the Pachalics of Aleppo, the Hauran, and the neighbourhood of Gaza, the camps are frequent and contiguous. In the former instances, the Bedouins are purely pastors, and subsist only on the produce of their herds, and on a few dates, and flesh meat, which they eat, either fresh, or dried in the sun, and reduced to a powder. In the latter, they sow some land, and add cheese, barley, and even rice, to their flesh and milk meats.

If we examine the causes of the sterility and uncultivated state of the Desert, we shall find it is principally to be attributed to the absence of fountains and rivers, and, in general, to the want of water. This want of water itself is occasioned by the nature of the country, which being flat, and destitute of mountains, the clouds glide over its heated surface, as I have already remarked is the case with Egypt. They never rest there but in winter, when the coldness of the atmosphere hinders them from rising, and dissolves



them into rain. The nakedness of this country is also another cause of drought, since the air is for that reason more easily heated, and compels the clouds to rise. It is probable that a change of climate might be effected, if the whole desert were planted with trees; as for example, with pine trees.

The consequence of the winter rains is, that in those parts where the soil is good, as on the frontiers of Syria, a cultivation takes place considerably similar to that of even the interior of the province; but as these rains neither produce springs, nor durable rivulets, the inhabitants are exposed to the inconvenience of wanting water the whole summer. To remedy this it is necessary to have recourse to art, and to form wells, reservoirs, and cisterns, in which they collect their annual supplies: such works require money and labour, and are, after all, exposed to a variety of accidents. War may destroy in one day, the labour of many months, and the resources of the year. A drought, which is but too common, may cause the failure of a crop, and reduce the inhabitants even to a total want of water. It is true, that by digging it is almost every where  
to



to be found, at from six to twenty feet depth, but this water is brackish, as in all the desert of Arabia and Africa *(e)*; it also frequently dries up, when thirst and famine succeed; and if the government does not lend its aid, the villages are deserted. It is evident that agriculture must be very precarious in such a country, and that under a government like that of the Turks, it is safer to lead a wandering life, than to chuse a settled habitation, and rely for subsistence on agriculture.

In those districts where the soil is stoney and sandy, as in the Tih, the Hedjaz, and the Najd, these rains make the seeds of the wild plants shoot, and revive the thickets, ranunculas, wormwood, and kali. They cause marshes in the lower grounds, which produce reeds and grass; and the plain assumes a tolerable degree of verdure. This is the season of abundance both for the herds and their masters; but on the return of the

*(e)* This saline quality is so inherent in the soil, that it impregnates even the plants. All those of the desert abound in alkali, and Glauber's salts; but it is remarkable that this salt diminishes as we approach the mountains, where it is scarcely sensible.



heats, every thing is parched up, and the earth, converted into a grey, and fine dust, presents nothing but dry stems, as hard as wood, on which neither horses, oxen, nor even goats can feed. In this state the Desert would become uninhabitable, and must be totally abandoned, had not nature formed an animal no less hardy and frugal than the soil is sterile and ungrateful; I mean the camel. No creature seems so peculiarly fitted to the climate in which it exists. We are tempted to affirm the nature of the one has been adapted to that of the other by some *disposing intelligence*. Designing the camel to dwell in a country where he can find little nourishment, Nature has been sparing of her materials in the whole of his formation. She has not bestowed on him the plump fleshiness of the ox, horse, or elephant; but, limiting herself to what is strictly necessary, she has given him a small head without ears, at the end of a long neck without flesh. She has taken from his legs and thighs every muscle not immediately requisite for motion; and, in short, has bestowed on his withered body only the vessels and tendons necessary to connect its frame together. She has furnished



nished him with a strong jaw, that he may grind the hardest aliments ; but lest he should consume too much, she has straitened his stomach, and obliged him to chew the cud. She has lined his foot with a lump of flesh, which, sliding in the mud, and being no way adapted to climbing, fits him only for a dry, level, and sandy soil, like that of Arabia : she has evidently destined him likewise to slavery, by refusing him every sort of defence against his enemies. Destitute of the horns of the bull, the hoof of the horse, the tooth of the elephant, and the swiftness of the stag, how can the camel resist or avoid the attacks of the lion, the tyger, or even the wolf ? To preserve the species, therefore, Nature has concealed him in the depth of the vast deserts, where the want of vegetables can attract no game, and whence the want of game repels every voracious animal. Tyranny must have expelled man from the habitable parts of the earth, before the camel could have lost his liberty. Become domestic, he has rendered habitable the most barren soil the world contains. He alone supplies all his master's wants. The milk of the camel nourishes the family of the Arab, under the varied forms



of curds, cheese, and butter ; and they often feed upon his flesh. Slippers and harness are made of his skin, tents and clothing of his hair. Heavy burthens are transported by his means ; and when the earth denies forage to the horse, so valuable to the Bedouin, the she camel supplies that deficiency by her milk, at no other cost, for so many advantages, than a few stalks of brambles or wormwood, and pounded date kernels. So great is the importance of the camel to the desert, that were it deprived of that useful animal, it must infallibly lose every inhabitant.

Such is the situation in which nature has placed the Bedouins, to make of them a race of men equally singular in their physical and moral character. This singularity is so striking, that even their neighbours, the Syrians, regard them as extraordinary beings ; especially those tribes which dwell in the depths of the deserts, such as the Anaza, Kaibar, Tai, and others, which never approach the towns. When, in the time of Shaik Daher, some of their horsemen came as far as Acre, they excited the same curiosity there, as a visit from the savages of America would among us. Every body viewed with surprize these men,  
who



who were more diminutive, meagre, and swarthy, than any of the known Bedouins. Their withered legs were only composed of tendons, and had no calves. Their bellies seemed to cling to their backs, and their hair was frizzled almost as much as that of the negroes. They, on the other hand, were no less astonished at every thing they saw; they could neither conceive how the houses and minarets could stand erect, nor how men ventured to dwell beneath them, and always in the same spot; but, above all, they were in an ecstasy on beholding the sea, nor could they comprehend what that *desert of water* could be. They were told of mosques, prayers, and ablutions; but they asked what those meant, and enquired who Moses, Jesus Christ, and Mahomet, were; and why, since the inhabitants were not of separate tribes, they followed different leaders?

We may imagine, that the Arabs of the frontiers are not such novices; there are even several small tribes of them, who, living in the midst of the country, as in the valley of Bekaa, that of the Jordan, and in Palestine, approach nearer to the condition of the peasants; but these are despised by the others,



who look upon them as bastard Arabs, and *Rayas*, or slaves of the Turks.

In general, the Bedouins are small, meagre, and tawny; more so, however, in the heart of the desert, than on the frontiers of the cultivated country; but they are always of a darker hue than the neighbouring peasants. They also differ among themselves in the same camp; and I have remarked, that the Shaiks, that is, the rich, and their attendants, were always taller, and more corpulent, than the common class. I have seen some of them above five feet five and six inches high; though, in general, they do not exceed five feet two inches. This difference can only be attributed to their food, with which the former are supplied more abundantly than the latter (*f*). It may, likewise, be affirmed, that the lower class of Bedouins live in a state of habitual wretchedness and famine. It will appear almost incredible to us, but it is an undoubted fact, that the quantity of food usually consumed by the

(*f*) The effects of this are equally evident in the Arabian and Turkmen camels; for these latter, dwelling in countries rich in forage, are become a species more robust and fleshy than the former.

greatest



greatest part of them, does not exceed six ounces a day. This abstinence is most remarkable among the tribes of the Najd, and the Hedjaz. Six or seven dates soaked in melted butter, a little sweet milk, or curds, serve a man a whole day; and he esteems himself happy, when he can add a small quantity of coarse flour, or a little ball of rice. Meat is reserved for the greatest festivals; and they never kill a kid but for a marriage or a funeral. A few wealthy and generous Shaiks alone can kill young camels, and eat baked rice with their victuals. In times of dearth, the vulgar, always half famished, do not disdain the most wretched kinds of food; and eat locusts, rats, lizards, and serpents broiled on briars. Hence are they such plunderers of the cultivated lands, and robbers on the high-roads: hence, also, their delicate constitution, and their diminutive and meagre bodies, which are rather active than vigorous. It may be worth while to remark, that their evacuations of every kind, even perspiration, are extremely small; their blood is so destitute of ferosity, that nothing but the greatest heat can preserve its fluidity. This, however,  
does



does not prevent them from being tolerably healthy, in other respects, for maladies are less frequent among them than among the inhabitants of the cultivated country.

From these facts, we are by no means justified in concluding, that the frugality of the Arabs is a virtue purely of choice, or even of climate. The extreme heat in which they live, unquestionably facilitates their abstinence, by destroying that activity which cold gives to the stomach. Their being habituated also to so sparing a diet, by hindering the dilatation of the stomach, becomes doubtless a means of their supporting such abstemiousness; but the chief and primary motive of this habit, is with them, as with the rest of mankind, the necessity of the circumstances in which they are placed, whether from the nature of the soil, as I have before explained, or that state of society in which they live, and which I shall now proceed to examine.

I have already said, that the Bedouin Arabs are divided into tribes, which constitute so many distinct nations. Each of these tribes appropriates to itself a tract of land forming its domain; in this they do not differ from cultivating nations, except that their territory  
requires



requires a greater extent, in order to furnish subsistence for their herds throughout the year. Each of these tribes is collected in one or more camps, which are dispersed through the country, and which make a successive progress over the whole, in proportion as it is exhausted by the cattle; hence it is, that within a great extent a few spots only are inhabited, which vary from one day to another; but as the entire space is necessary for the annual subsistence of the tribe, whoever encroaches on it is deemed a violator of property; this is with them the law of nations. If, therefore, a tribe, or any of its subjects, enter upon a foreign territory, they are treated as enemies, and robbers, and a war breaks out. Now, as all the tribes have affinities with each other by alliances of blood, or conventions, leagues are formed, which render these wars more or less general. The manner of proceeding, on such occasions, is very simple. The offence made known, they mount their horses, and seek the enemy; when they meet, they enter into a parley, and the matter is frequently made up; if not, they attack either in small bodies, or man to man. They encounter  
each



each other at full speed, with fixed lances, which they sometimes dart, notwithstanding their length, at the flying enemy; the victory is rarely contested; it is decided by the first shock, and the vanquished take to flight full gallop over the naked plain of the desert. Night generally favours their escape from the conqueror. The tribe which has lost the battle strikes its tents, removes to a distance, by forced marches, and seeks an asylum among its allies. The enemy, satisfied with their success, drive their herds farther on, and the fugitives soon after return to their former situation. But the slaughter made in these engagements frequently sows the seeds of hatreds which perpetuate these dissensions. The interest of the common safety has, for ages, established a law among them, which decrees that the blood of every man who is slain must be avenged by that of his murderer. This vengeance is called *Tar*, or retaliation; and the right of exacting it devolves on the nearest of kin to the deceased. So nice are the Arabs on this point of honour, that if any one neglects to seek his retaliation, he is disgraced for ever. He, therefore, watches every opportunity



opportunity of revenge : if his enemy perishes from any other cause, still he is not satisfied, and his vengeance is directed against the nearest relation. These animosities are transmitted, as an inheritance, from father to children, and never cease but by the extinction of one of the families, unless they agree to sacrifice the criminal, or *purchase the blood* for a stated price, in money or in flocks. Without this satisfaction, there is neither peace, nor truce, nor alliances between them, nor sometimes, even between whole tribes : *There is blood between us*, say they, on every occasion ; and this expression is an insurmountable barrier. Such accidents being necessarily numerous in a long course of time, the greater part of the tribes have ancient quarrels, and live in an habitual state of war ; which, added to their way of life, renders the Bedouins a military people, though they have made no great progress in war as an art.

Their camps are formed in a kind of irregular circle, composed of a single row of tents, with greater or less intervals. These tents, made of goat or camels hair, are black or brown, in which they differ from those  
of



of the Turkmen, which are white. They are stretched on three or four pickets, only five or six feet high, which gives them a very flat appearance; at a distance, one of these camps seems only like a number of black spots; but the piercing eye of the Bedouin is not to be deceived. Each tent, inhabited by a family, is divided, by a curtain, into two apartments, one of which is appropriated to the women. The empty space within the large circle serves to fold their cattle every evening. They never have any intrenchments; their only advanced guards and patrols are dogs; their horses remain saddled, and ready to mount on the first alarm; but, as there is neither order nor regularity, these camps, always easy to surprise, afford no defence in case of an attack: accidents, therefore, very frequently happen, and cattle are carried off every day; a species of marauding war in which the Arabs are very experienced.

The tribes which live in the vicinity of the Turks, are still more accustomed to attacks and alarms; for these strangers, arrogating to themselves, in right of conquest, the property of the whole country, treat the  
Arabs



Arabs as rebel vassals, or as turbulent and dangerous enemies. On this principle, they never cease to wage secret or open war against them. The Pachas study every occasion to harass them. Sometimes they contest with them a territory which they had let them, and at others demand a tribute which they never agreed to pay. Should a family of Shaiks be divided by interest or ambition, they alternately succour each party, and conclude by the destruction of both. Frequently too they poison or assassinate those chiefs whose courage or abilities they dread, though they should even be their allies. The Arabs, on their side, regarding the Turks as usurpers and treacherous enemies, watch every opportunity to do them injury. Unfortunately, their vengeance falls oftener on the innocent than the guilty. The harmless peasant generally suffers for the offences of the soldier. On the slightest alarm, the Arabs cut their harvests, carry off their flocks, and intercept their communication and commerce. The peasant calls them thieves, and with reason ; but the Bedouins claim the right of war, and perhaps they also are not in the wrong. However this may be, these depredations occasion a  
misunderstanding



misunderstanding between the Bedouins and the inhabitants of the cultivated country, which renders them mutual enemies.

Such is the external situation of the Arabs. It is subject to great vicissitudes, according to the good or bad conduct of their chiefs. Sometimes a feeble tribe raises and aggrandizes itself, whilst another, which was powerful, falls into decay, or perhaps is entirely annihilated ; not that all its members perish, but they incorporate themselves with some other ; and this is the consequence of the internal constitution of the tribes. Each tribe is composed of one or more principal families, the members of which bear the title of Shaiks, i. e. chiefs or lords. These families have a great resemblance to the Patricians of Rome, and the nobles of modern Europe. One of the Shaiks has the supreme command over the others. He is the general of their little army, and sometimes assumes the title of *Emir*, which signifies Commander and Prince. The more relations, children, and allies he has, the greater is his strength and power. To these he adds particular adherents, whom he studiously attaches to him, by supplying all their wants. But besides this, a number of small families,



families, who, not being strong enough to live independent, stand in need of protection and alliances, range themselves under the banners of this chief. Such an union is called *kabila*, or tribe. These tribes are distinguished from each other by the name of their respective chiefs, or by that of the ruling family; and when they speak of any of the individuals who compose them, they call them the *children* of such a chief, though they may not be all really of his blood, and he himself may have been long since dead. Thus they say, *Beni Temin*, *Oulad Tai*, the children of Temin and of Tai. This mode of expression is even applied, by metaphor, to the names of countries: the usual phrase for denoting its inhabitants, being to call them *the children of such a place*. Thus the Arabs say, *Oulad Masr*, the Egyptians; *Oulad Sham*, the Syrians: they would also say, *Oulad Fransa*, the French; *Oulad Moskou*, the Russians, a remark which is not unimportant to ancient history.

The government of this society is at once republican, aristocratical, and even despotic, without exactly corresponding with any of these forms. It is republican, inasmuch as



the people have a great influence in all affairs, and as nothing can be transacted without the consent of a majority. It is aristocratical, because the families of the Shaiks possess some of the prerogatives which every where accompany power; and, lastly, it is despotic, because the principal Shaik has an indefinite and almost absolute authority, which, when he happens to be a man of credit and influence, he may even abuse; but the state of these tribes confines even this abuse to very narrow limits; for, if a chief should commit an act of injustice, if, for example, he should kill an Arab, it would be almost impossible for him to escape punishment; the resentment of the offended party would pay no respect to his dignity; the law of *retaliation* would be put in force: and, should he not pay the blood, he would be infallibly assassinated, which, from the simple and private life the Shaiks lead in their camps, would be no difficult thing to effect. If he harasses his subjects by severity, they abandon him, and go over to another tribe. His own relations take advantage of his misconduct to depose him, and advance themselves to his station. He can have no resource



source in foreign troops; his subjects communicate too easily with each other to render it possible for him to divide their interests, and form a faction in his favour. Besides, how is he to pay them, since he receives no kind of taxes from the tribe; the wealth of the greater part of his subjects being limited to absolute necessaries, and his own confined to very moderate possessions, and those too loaded with great expences?

The principal Shaik in every tribe, in fact, defrays the charges of all who arrive at or leave the camp. He receives the visits of the allies, and of every person who has business with them. Adjoining to his tent is a large pavillion for the reception of all strangers and passengers. There are held frequent assemblies of the Shaiks and principal men, to determine on encampments and removals, on peace and war; on the differences with the Turkish governors and the villages; and the litigations and quarrels of individuals. To this crowd, which enters successively, he must give coffee, bread baked on the ashes, rice, and sometimes roasted kid or camel; in a word, he must keep open table; and it is the more important to him to be generous, as this generosity is closely connected with



matters of the greatest consequence. On the exercise of this depend his credit and his power. The famished Arab ranks the liberality which feeds him before every virtue, nor is this prejudice without foundation; for experience has proved that covetous chiefs never were men of enlarged views: hence the proverb, as just as it is brief, *A close fist, a narrow heart*. To provide for these expences, the Shaik has nothing but his herds, a few spots of cultivated ground, the profits of his plunder, and the tribute he levies on the high roads, the total of which is very inconsiderable. The Shaik, with whom I resided in the country of Gaza, about the end of 1784, passed for one of the most powerful of those districts; yet it did not appear to me that his expenditure was greater than that of an opulent farmer. His personal effects, consisting in a few pelisses, carpets, arms, horses, and camels, could not be estimated at more than fifty thousand livres (a little above two thousand pounds); and it must be observed that in this calculation, four mares of the breed of racers, are valued at six thousand livres (two hundred and fifty pounds), and each camel at ten pounds sterling. We must not therefore, when we speak  
of



of the Bedouins, affix to the words *Prince* and *Lord*, the ideas they usually convey; we should come nearer the truth by comparing them to substantial farmers, in mountainous countries, whose simplicity they resemble in their dress, as well as in their domestic life and manners. A Shaik, who has the command of five hundred horse, does not disdain to saddle and bridle his own, nor to give him barley and chopped straw. In his tent, his wife makes the coffee, kneads the dough, and superintends the dressing of the victuals. His daughters and kinswomen wash the linen, and go with pitchers on their head, and veils over their faces, to draw water from the fountain. These manners agree precisely with the descriptions in Homer, and the history of Abraham, in Genesis. But it must be owned that it is difficult to form a just idea of them without having ourselves been eye-witnesses.

The simplicity, or, perhaps, more properly, the poverty, of the lower class of the Bedouins, is proportionate to that of their chiefs. All the wealth of a family consists of moveables, of which the following is a pretty exact inventory. A few male and female camels, some goats and poultry; a mare, and her bridle and saddle; a tent, a lance sixteen feet long, a



crooked sabre, a rusty musket, with a flint, or matchlock; a pipe, a portable mill, a pot for cooking, a leathern bucket, a small coffee roaster, a mat, some clothes, a mantle of black wool, and a few glass or silver rings, which the women wear upon their legs and arms. If none of these are wanting, their furniture is complete. But what the poor man stands most in need of, and what he takes most pleasure in, is his mare; for this animal is his principal support. With his mare the Bedouin makes his excursions against hostile tribes, or seeks plunder in the country, and on the highways. The mare is preferred to the horse, because she does not neigh (\*), is more docile, and yields milk, which, on occasion, satisfies the thirst, and even the hunger of her master.

Thus confined to the most absolute necessities of life, the Arabs have as little industry as their wants are few; all their arts consist in weaving their clumsy tents, and in making mats, and butter. Their whole commerce

(\*) This strange assertion may be found in other authors. M. Chenier, in his *Recherches Historiques sur les Maures*, Vol. III. page 139, affirms mares do not neigh. Mares in Europe, however, certainly neigh, as every body knows, or may know.



only extends to the exchanging camels, kids, stallions, and milk; for arms, clothing, a little rice or corn, and money, which they bury. They are totally ignorant of all science; and have not even any idea of astronomy, geometry, or medicine. They have not a single book; and nothing is so uncommon, among the Shaiks, as to know how to read. All their literature consists in reciting tales and histories, in the manner of the Arabian Nights Entertainments. They have a peculiar passion for such stories; and employ in them almost all their leisure, of which they have a great deal. In the evening, they seat themselves on the ground, at the threshold of their tents, or under cover, if it be cold, and there, ranged in a circle round a little fire of dung, their pipes in their mouths, and their legs crossed, they sit a while in silent meditation, till, on a sudden, one of them breaks forth with, *Once upon a time*— and continues to recite the adventures of some young Shaik, and female Bedouin: he relates in what manner the youth first got a secret glimpse of his mistress; and how he became desperately enamoured of her; he minutely describes the



lovely fair, boasts her black eyes, as large and soft as those of the gazelle; her languid and empaffioned looks, her arched eye-brows, resembling two bows of ebony: her waist streight, and supple as a lance; he forgets not her steps, light as those of the *young filley*, nor her eye-lashes, blackened with *kobl*, nor her lips painted blue, nor her nails, tinged with the golden coloured *benna*, nor her breasts, resembling two pomegranates, nor her words, sweet as honey. He recounts the sufferings of the young lover, *so wasted with desire and passion, that his body no longer yields any shadow*. At length, after detailing his various attempts to see his mistress, the obstacles of the parents, the invasions of the enemy, the captivity of the two lovers, &c. he terminates, to the satisfaction of the audience, by restoring them, united and happy, to the paternal tent, and by receiving the tribute paid to his eloquence, in the *Ma cha allab* he has merited (*b*). The Bedouins have likewise their love songs, which have more sentiment and nature in them than

(*b*) An exclamation of praise, equivalent to *admirably well!*



those of the Turks, and inhabitants of the towns; doubtless, because the former, whose manners are chaste, know what love is; while the latter, abandoned to debauchery, are acquainted only with enjoyment.

When we consider how much the condition of the Bedouins, especially in the depths of the desert, resembles, in many respects, that of the savages of America, we shall be inclined to wonder why they have not the same ferocity; why, though they so often experience the extremity of hunger, the practice of devouring human flesh was never heard of among them; and why, in short, their manners are so much more sociable and mild. The following reasons appear to me the true solution of this difficulty.

It seems, at first view, that America, being rich in pasturage, lakes, and forests, is more adapted to the pastoral mode of life than to any other. But if we observe, that these forests, by affording an easy refuge to animals, protect them more surely from the power of man, we may conclude, that the savage has been induced to become a hunter, instead of a shepherd, by the nature of the country.



country. In this state, all his habits have concurred to give him a ferocity of character. The great fatigues of the chase have hardened his body; frequent and extreme hunger, followed by a sudden abundance of game, has rendered him voracious. The habit of shedding blood, and tearing his prey, has familiarized him to the sight of death and sufferings. Tormented by hunger, he has desired flesh; and finding it easy to obtain that of his fellow creature, he could not long hesitate to kill him to satisfy the cravings of his appetite. The first experiment made, this cruelty degenerates into a habit; he becomes a cannibal, sanguinary and atrocious; and his mind acquires all the insensibility of his body.

The situation of the Arab is very different. Amid his vast naked plains, without water, and without forests, he has not been able, for want of game, or fish, to become either a hunter or a fisherman. The camel has determined him to a pastoral life, the manners of which have influenced his whole character. Finding, at hand, a light, but constant and sufficient nourishment, he has acquired the habit of frugality. Content  
with



with his milk and his dates, he has not desired flesh; he has shed no blood: his hands are not accustomed to slaughter, nor his ears to the cries of suffering creatures, he has preserved a humane and sensible heart.

No sooner did the savage shepherd become acquainted with the use of the horse, than his manner of life must considerably change. The facility of passing rapidly over extensive tracts of country, rendered him a wanderer. He was greedy from want; and became a robber from greediness; and such is, in fact, his present character. A plunderer, rather than a warrior, the Arab possesses no sanguinary courage; he attacks only to despoil; and, if he meets with resistance, never thinks a small booty is to be put in competition with his life. To irritate him, you must shed his blood, in which case he is found to be as obstinate in his vengeance as he was cautious in avoiding danger.

The Arabs have often been reproached with this spirit of rapine; but, without wishing to defend it, we may observe, that one circumstance has not been sufficiently attended to, which is, that it only takes place towards reputed enemies, and is consequently

ly



ly founded on the acknowledged laws of almost all nations. Among themselves they are remarkable for a good faith, a disinterestedness, a generosity which would do honour to the most civilized people. What is there more noble than that right of asylum so respected among all the tribes? A stranger, nay, even an enemy, touches the tent of the Bedouin, and, from that instant, his person becomes inviolable. It would be reckoned a disgraceful meanness, an indelible shame, to satisfy even a just vengeance at the expence of hospitality. Has the Bedouin consented to eat bread and salt with his guest, nothing in the world can induce him to betray him. The power of the Sultan himself would not be able to force a refugee (*i*) from the protection of a tribe, but by its total extermination. The Bedouin, so rapacious without his camp, has no sooner set his foot within it, than he becomes liberal and generous. What little he possesses he is ever ready to divide. He has even the delicacy not to wait till it is

(*i*) The Arabs discriminate their guests, into guest *mostadjir*, or imploring protection; and into guest *matnoub*, who sets up his tent in a line with theirs; that is, who becomes naturalized.

asked:



asked: when he takes his repast, he affects to seat himself at the door of his tent, in order to invite the passengers; his generosity is so sincere, that he does not look upon it as a merit, but merely as a duty: and he, therefore, readily takes the same liberty with others. To observe the manner in which the Arabs conduct themselves towards each other, one would imagine that they possessed all their goods in common. Nevertheless, they are no strangers to property; but it has none of that selfishness which the increase of the imaginary wants of luxury has given it among polished nations. It may be alleged, that they owe this moderation to the impossibility of greatly multiplying their enjoyments; but, if it be acknowledged, that the virtues of the bulk of mankind are only to be ascribed to the necessity of circumstances, the Arabs, perhaps, are not for this less worthy our esteem. They are fortunate, at least, that this necessity should have established among them a state of things, which has appeared to the wisest legislators as the perfection of human policy: I mean, a kind of equality in the partition of property, and the variety of  
of



of conditions. Deprived of a multitude of enjoyments, which nature has lavished upon other countries, they are less exposed to temptations which might corrupt and debase them. It is more difficult for their Shaiks to form a faction to enslave and impoverish the body of the nation. Each individual, capable of supplying all his wants, is better able to preserve his character, and independence; and private poverty becomes at once the foundation and bulwark of public liberty.

This liberty extends even to matters of religion. We observe a remarkable difference between the Arabs of the towns and those of the desert; since, while the former crouch under the double yoke of political and religious despotism, the latter live in a state of perfect freedom from both: it is true that on the frontiers of the Turks, the Bedouins, from policy, preserve the appearance of Mahometanism; but so relaxed is their observance of its ceremonies, and so little fervor has their devotion, that they are generally considered as infidels, who have neither law nor prophets. They even make no difficulty in saying that the religion of Mahomet was  
not.



not made for them ; “ for,” add they, “ how  
 “ shall we make ablutions who have no  
 “ water ? How can we bestow alms, who  
 “ are not rich ? Why should we fast in the  
 “ Ramadan, since the whole year with us is one  
 “ continual fast ? and what necessity is there  
 “ for us to make the pilgrimage to Mecca,  
 “ if God be present every where ?” In short,  
 every man acts and thinks as he pleases, and  
 the most perfect toleration is established  
 among them. Nothing can better describe,  
 or be a more satisfactory proof of this than  
 a dialogue which one day passed between  
 myself and one of their Shaiks, named Ah-  
 med, son of Bahir, chief of the tribe of  
 Wahidia. “ Why,” said this Shaik to me,  
 “ do you wish to return among the Franks ?  
 “ Since you have no aversion to our manners ;  
 “ since you know how to use the lance,  
 “ and manage a horse like a Bedouin, stay  
 “ among us. We will give you pelisses, a  
 “ tent, a virtuous and young Bedouin  
 “ girl, and a good blood mare. You shall  
 “ live in our house.”—“ But do you not  
 “ know,” replied I, “ that, born among the  
 “ Franks, I have been educated in their re-  
 “ ligion ? In what light will the Arabs view  
 an



“ an infidel, or what will they think of an  
“ apostate?”—“ And do not you yourself  
“ perceive,” said he, “ that the Arabs live  
“ without troubling themselves either about  
“ the Prophet, or the *Book* (the Koran)?  
“ Every man with us follows the direction  
“ of his conscience. Men have a right to  
“ judge of actions, but religion must be left  
“ to God alone.”—Another Shaik, conver-  
sing with me, one day, addressed me, by mis-  
take, in the customary formulary, “ Listen,  
“ and pray for the Prophet.” Instead of the  
usual answer, *I have prayed*, I replied, with  
a smile, *I listen*. He recollected his error,  
and smiled in his turn. A Turk of Jeru-  
salem, who was present, took the matter up  
more seriously: “ O Shaik,” said he, “ how  
“ canst thou address the words of the true  
“ believers to an infidel?” “ The tongue is  
“ *light*,” replied the Shaik, “ let but the  
“ heart be *white* (pure); but you, who  
“ know the customs of the Arabs, how  
“ can you offend a stranger with whom  
“ we have eaten bread and salt?”—Then,  
turning to me, “ All those tribes of Frank-  
“ estan, of whom you told me that they  
“ follow not the law of the Prophet,  
“ are



“ are they more numerous than the mussul-  
 “ men ?” “ It is thought,” answered I, “ that  
 “ they are five or six times more numerous,  
 “ even including the Arabs.” — “ God is just,”  
 returned he, “ he will weigh them in his  
 “ balance (*k*).”

It

(*k*) M. Niebuhr relates in his *Description de l'Arabie*,  
 tome II. page 208, Paris edition, that, within the last  
 thirty years, a new religion has sprung up in the Najd,  
 the principles of which are analogous to the disposition  
 of mind I have been describing. “ These prin-  
 “ ciples,” says that traveller, “ are, that God alone  
 “ should be invoked and adored, as the author of all  
 “ things; that we should make no mention of any  
 “ prophet in praying, because that too nearly re-  
 “ sembles idolatry: that Moses, Jesus Christ, Maho-  
 “ met, &c. were in truth great men, whose actions  
 “ are edifying; but that no book was ever inspired by  
 “ the angel Gabriel, or any other celestial spirit. In  
 “ short, that vows made in the time of imminent  
 “ danger are neither meritorious nor obligatory. I  
 “ do not know,” adds M. Niebuhr, “ how far we  
 “ may trust the veracity of the Bedouin who told  
 “ me this. Perhaps it was his peculiar way of think-  
 “ ing; for the Bedouins, though they call themselves  
 “ Mahometans, in general, care very little about either  
 “ Mahomet or the Koran.”

The authors of this new sect were two Arabs, who,  
 having travelled, in consequence of some commercial  
 affairs, into Persia and Malabar, reasoned on the di-



It must be owned, that there are few polished nations whose morality is, in general, so much to be esteemed as that of the Bedouin Arabs; and it is worthy of remark that the same virtues are equally to be found in the Turkmen hordes, and the Curds. It is singular also, that it should be among these that religion is the freest from exterior forms, insomuch that no man has ever seen, among the Bedouins, the Turkmen, or Curds, either priests, temples, or regular worship. But it is time to continue the description of the other tribes of the inhabitants of Syria, and to direct our attention to a social state, very different from that we are now quitting, to the state of a cultivating and sedentary people.

versity of religions they had seen, and thence deduced this general toleration. One of them, named Abd-el-Waheb, in 1760, erected an independent state in the Najd; the other, called Mekrami, Shaik of Nadjeran, had adopted the same opinions; and, by his valour, raised himself to considerable power in those countries. These two examples render still more probable a conjecture I have already mentioned, That nothing is more easy than to effect a grand political and religious revolution in Asia.



