

ments, the saddles covered with embroidered velvet and plates of gilt and embossed silver, and the bridles, headstalls, and other trappings ornamented in a similar manner and with rows of gold coins suspended to them, presented a strikingly picturesque and pompous spectacle. Sights of this description are no longer witnessed in the Egyptian metropolis. Even the Báshà, when he occasionally rides through the streets, is followed by only three or four attendants, and is not more distinguished by the habits than by the number of his retinue. As dark colours, and particularly black, are now fashionable among the Turks, and their dresses are generally embroidered with silk, instead of gold lace, there is much less contrast and variety observable in the costumes of the passengers in the crowded streets; but at present there is a little more variety and bustle than is usual, from the number of Turkish pilgrims resting here on their way to Mekkeh.

My old acquaintance the sheykh Ahmad (or *seyd* Ahmad, for he is a *shereef*) called on me as soon as he had heard of my arrival. He has resumed his old habit of visiting me almost every day; both for the sake of getting his dinner or supper, or at least tobacco and coffee, and to profit in his trade of bookseller. I wish I could make a portrait which would do justice to his singular physiognomy. For many years he has been nearly blind: one of his eyes is quite closed: the other is ornamented on particular occasions, as the two great festivals, &c., with a border of kohl; though he is a shocking sloven at all times. He tells me that he has taken a second wife, and a second house for her; but that he is as poor as ever; and that my usual yearly present of a dress will be very acceptable.* He has a talent for intrigue and cheating, which he exercises on every opportunity; being lax in morals, and rather so in his religious tenets. Notwithstanding these defects, and sometimes in consequence of his having the latter defect, I find him very useful. Much of the information that I have obtained respecting the manners and customs of his countrymen has been derived from him, or through his assistance; as he scruples not to be communicative to me on subjects respecting which a bigoted Muslim would be silent. He has just brought me a *mushaf* (or copy of the *Qur-án*), which he wishes me to purchase; but he thinks it necessary, as he did on former similar occasions, to offer some excuse for his doing so. He remarks that by my following or conforming with many of the ceremonies of the Muslims I tacitly profess myself to be one of them; and it is incumbent on him to regard me in the most favourable light. "You give me," says he, "the salutation of 'Peace be on you!' and it would be impious in me, and directly forbidden by my religion, to pronounce you an unbeliever; for He whose name be exalted hath said in the Excellent Book,—'Say not unto him who greeteth thee with peace, Thou art not a believer' (ch. iv., v. 96)—therefore," he adds, "it is no sin in me to put into your hands the noble *Qur-án*: but there are some of your countrymen who will take it in unclean hands, and even put it under them and sit upon it! I beg God's forgiveness for talking of such a thing: far be it from you to do so: you, praise be to God, know and observe the command 'None shall touch it but those who are clean.'" (ch. lvi., v. 78: these words are often stamped upon the cover.) He once sold a *mushaf* on my application to a countryman of mine, who, being disturbed just as the bargain was concluded by some person entering the room, hastily

put the sacred book on the *deewán* and under a part of his dress, to conceal it: the bookseller was much scandalized by this action; thinking that my friend was sitting upon the book, and doing so to show his contempt of it. There was only one thing that I had much difficulty in persuading him to do, during my former visit to this country; which was to go with me to the mosque of the *Hasaneyn*, the burial-place of the head of the Prophet's grandson, *El-Hoseyn*, and the most sacred of the mosques of *Maşr*. On passing with him before one of the entrances of this building, one afternoon in *Ramađán*, when it was crowded with Turks, and many of the principal people of the metropolis were among the congregation, I thought it a good opportunity to see it to the greatest advantage, and asked my companion to go in with me. He positively refused, in the fear of my being discovered to be an Englishman, which might so rouse the fanatic anger of some of the Turks there as to expose me to some act of violence. I therefore entered alone. He remained at the door; following me with his eye only (or his only eye), and wondering at my audacity; but as soon as he saw me acquit myself in the usual manner, by walking round the bronze screen which surrounds the monument over the spot where the martyr's head is buried and then going through the regular attitudes of prayer, he came in and said his prayers by my side.—The principal subjects of the conversations which my other *Masree* acquaintances have held with me since my return to their country have been the oppression which they suffer under the present government, the monopolies of the *Báshà*, and the consequent dulness of trade and dearness of provisions, &c. The sheykh Ahmad is less querulous: he praises the *Báshà* for including booksellers among persons of literary and religious professions, from whom no *firdeh* is exacted. He and another bookseller, who is his superior, are agents for the sale of the books printed at the *Báshà's* press, at *Boolák*. They have a shop in the principal street of the city (nearly opposite the entrance to *Khán El-Khaleelee*), which will be a convenient place for me to repair to on the occasions of public processions.

Friday, 10th of January.—Last day (29th) of *Shaabán*.—In the afternoon of this day I went to the booksellers' shop to see the procession of the *Leylet er-Rooyeh*, or Night of the Observation of the new moon of *Ramađán*, the month of abstinence. Soon after the '*asr*', the shops were mostly shut, and the *mastabahs* occupied by spectators, old and young. The foremost persons in the procession, a company of *Nizám* infantry, passed the place where I was sitting (within ten minutes' walk of the *Kádee's* house, whither they were destined) about an hour and a quarter before sunset. The whole procession consisted of nothing more than several companies of *Nizám* troops, each company preceded and followed by bearers of *mesh'als*, to light them on their return, together with small parties of members of those trades which furnish the metropolis with provisions: a group of millers following one party of soldiers; a group of bakers, another: after all of whom came the *Mohtesib*, with attendants. The soldiers were accompanied by drummers and fifers, and one band. The members of trades who took part in the procession, with several fakeers, shouted as they passed along—"O! *Es-saláh! Es-saláh! Salloo 'ala-n-Nebee! 'aleyhi-s-selám!*" (O! Blessing! Blessing! Bless ye the Prophet! On him be peace!). After every two or three companies there was an interval of many minutes: so that about an hour elapsed before the procession had passed the place where I sat. After waiting some time at the *Kádee's*, the information that the new moon had been seen was brought there; and the

* Here follows the story of Sheykh Ahmad's mother, told in the preface to *The Modern Egyptians*, p. xviii. (5th Ed.)