

1835—1842.

*"The Modern Egyptians."*

*"The Thousand and One Nights."*—*"Selections from the Kur-án."*

THE first thing that occupied Lane's attention on his return to England was naturally to put the final touches to his book and to see it through the press. What with the ordinary delays of printers, and the time needed for the preparation of the wood-cuts, which he drew with his own hand on the blocks, the work was not published till December, 1836, by Mr. Charles Knight, who had bought the first edition from the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.

Those who had advised the Society in the matter had no cause for disappointment in the success of the book. The first edition, in two volumes, was wholly bought up by the booksellers within a fortnight of its publication. The second, the Society's, was to be much cheaper, and was therefore held back until the market was entirely cleared of the first. In 1837, however, it was brought out and stereotyped, with a first impression of four thousand copies, which were speedily disposed of. Two thousand five hundred copies in addition were struck off from the plates, and continued to be sold long after other and better editions had been issued. A third and revised edition, also in two volumes, was published by Mr. Knight in 1842. In 1846 the book was added to the series of "Knight's Weekly Volumes." Five thousand copies were printed, and half this large issue was sold by 1847. In 1860 my father, E. Stanley Poole, edited the work again, in a single volume, for Mr. Murray, with some important additions; and from this, which must be regarded as the standard edition, a reprint in two small volumes was produced by Mr. Murray in 1871, and is now almost exhausted. Altogether, nearly seventeen thousand copies of the "Modern Egyptians" have been sold, a sufficient evidence of its popularity in England. If it is added, that a German translation was almost immediately produced, with the author's sanction, and that editions have been published in America, some idea will be formed of the European and trans-Atlantic repute of the book.

The reviewers, who do not always echo the popular sentiment, were in this case singularly unanimous in their praise. A feeble but well-meant critique in the "Quarterly Review" could find no fault except with Lane's way of spelling Oriental names, which the reviewer travestied and then pronounced pedantic: the substance of the book met with his unqualified admiration. So it was with, I think, all the criticisms that appeared on the work. It was universally pronounced to be a masterpiece of faithful description.

Oriental scholars, it need hardly be said, received it with acclamation. The distinguished Arabist, Fresnel, after a long residence in Egypt, wrote to Lane from Cairo in 1837: "I have read with a great deal of interest some of your chapters on the Modern Egyptians and felt immensely indebted to you for making me acquainted with so many things of which I should have remained eternally ignorant, had it not been for your *Thesaurus*." The following extract from my father's preface to the fifth edition explains very clearly in what the value of the work lies. If they are the words of a near kinsman, they are also those of an accomplished Arabic scholar and one who had lived long in Egypt.

"Of the Modern Egyptians, as the work of an Uncle and Master, it would be difficult for me to speak, were its merits less known and recognised than they are. At once the most remarkable description of a