

and a final visit in the spring to the Pyramids of El-Geezeh and Sakkarah, in company with Hay, he returned to England in the autumn of the year.

These three years of the first visit to Egypt had not been years of idleness. Lane was not the typical traveller, who travels for amusement, and perhaps writes a book to record his sensations for the gratification of an admiring public. Lane's object was a far different one. He travelled, so to say, to map the country. And his was a propitious time. Egypt had but recently been opened up to explorers, and no one had yet fully taken stock of her treasures. Hamilton, indeed, and Niebuhr had broken the ground with their books; but no systematic account of the country, its natural characteristics, its people, and its monuments, had yet been attempted. Successfully to perform such a work demanded long and unceasing labour and considerable abilities. Lane never shrank from toil of any kind, and he possessed just those natural gifts which were needed by one who should do this work. Lord Brougham once said, "I wonder if that man knows what his *forte* is?—Description:" and Brougham was right. Very few men have possessed in an equal degree the power of minutely describing a scene or a monument, so that the pencil might almost restore it without a fault after the lapse of years. This power is eminently shown in the "Description of Egypt." Every temple or tomb, every village, every natural feature of the country, is described in a manner that permits no improving. The objects stand before you as you read, and this not by the use of imaginative language, but by the plain simple description. Lane had a vehement hatred of "fine writing," and often expressed his dislike to those authors who are credited with the habit of sacrificing the truth of their statements to the fall of the sentence. He always maintained that the first thing was to find the right word to express your meaning, and then to let the sentence fall as it pleased. It is possible that in his earliest work he carried this principle a little too far; and in his most finished production, the notes to "The Thousand and One Nights," considerable care may be detected in the composition. But in every thing he wrote, the prominent characteristic was perfect clearness, and nowhere is this more conspicuous than in the "Description of Egypt." But further, to prevent the scant possibility of mistaking the words, the work was illustrated by 101 sepia drawings, made with the camera lucida, (the invention of his friend Dr. Wollaston,) and therefore as exact as photography could make them, and far more pleasing to the eye. Those whose function it is to criticise artistic productions have unanimously expressed their admiration of these drawings. And though Lane would always say that the credit belonged to his instrument and not to himself, it is easy to see that they are the work of a fine pencil-hand, and could not have been done by any one who chose to look through a camera lucida. Altogether, both in drawings and descriptions, the book is unique of its kind.

It has never been published. And the reason is easily seen in the expense of reproducing the drawings. Lane himself was never a rich man, and could not have issued the book at his own expense, and no publisher was found sufficiently enterprising to risk the first outlay. An eminent firm, indeed, accepted the work with enthusiasm, but subsequently retracted from its engagement in consequence of the paralysis of trade which accompanied the excitement of the Reform agitation. It is needless, however, to refer to affairs that happened nearly fifty years ago, although they were a cause of much annoyance and disappointment to the author of the "Description of Egypt"; who naturally was ill-disposed to see the work of several years wasted, and who could not forget the high praises that had been passed upon the book and the drawings by all who were competent to form an opinion. There can be no doubt in the mind of any one who has studied the manuscript and the drawings, that travellers in Egypt have sustained in this work a loss which has not yet been filled up, and is not likely to be, unless the "Description of Egypt" should yet be published.