

people ever written, and one that cannot now be re-written, it will always live in the literature of England. With a thorough knowledge of the people and of their language, singular power of description, and minute accuracy, Mr. Lane wrote his account of the "Modern Egyptians," when they could, for the last time, be described. Twenty-five years of steam-communication with Egypt have more altered its inhabitants than had the preceding five centuries. They then retained the habits and manners of their remote ancestors: they now are yearly straying from old paths into the new ways of European civilization. Scholars will ever regard it as most fortunate that Mr. Lane seized his opportunity, and described so remarkable a people while yet they were unchanged.

"A residence of seven years in Egypt, principally in Cairo, while it enabled me to become familiar with the people, did not afford me any new fact that might be added to this work: and a distinguished English as well as Biblical scholar, the Author of 'Sinai and Palestine,' not long ago remarked to me, 'The Modern Egyptians is the most provoking book I ever read: whenever I thought I had discovered, in Cairo, something that must surely have been omitted, I invariably found my new fact already recorded.' I may add that a well-known German Orientalist [Dr. Sprenger] has lately visited Cairo with the express intention of correcting Mr. Lane's descriptions, and confessed that his search after mistakes was altogether vain."\*

After the "Modern Egyptians" had been published, and his time was once more his own, Lane employed himself in that favourite amusement of learned men, attending the meetings of societies. These bodies, however, had more life in them forty years ago than now, and their proceedings had not yet approached that debatable border line between learning and futility which has now been successfully crossed. The Asiatic Society, which still produces some good work, was then under the inspiring influence of the Earl of Munster, and the Oriental Text Committee and the Translation Fund were bringing out that long series of works of which many are still most valuable, although some have deservedly died the death. At the meetings of these societies Lane was a prominent figure. Lord Munster regarded him as his right hand and would have his advice on everything connected with the work of the Committee and the Asiatic Society; and any problem in Arabic literature, any inscription that defied Prof. Shakespear and the other Orientalists of the Society, was referred to Lane and generally decided on the spot. But he was not a man to remain long contented with a sort of learned kettledrum-tea existence. He was wishing to be at work again; and the opportunity came very quickly. In the "Modern Egyptians" he had referred to the "The Thousand and One Nights," or "Arabian Nights" as they are commonly called, as forming a faithful picture of Arab life: and the remark had drawn more attention to the work than when it was merely regarded as a collection of amusing and questionably moral tales to be given to children with due caution. Lane was asked to translate them afresh. In his prospectus he showed that the ordinary English version was taken from Galland's French translation, which abounds in perhaps every fault which the most ingenious editor could devise for the destruction of a hated author. It is thoroughly inaccurate in point of scholarship; it misunderstands the simplest Arab customs and turns them into customs of India or Persia; it puts the whole into a European dress which destroys the oriental glamour of the original; and it mixes with the true Arabian Nights others which do not belong to the collection at all. Our English versions, based upon this, only magnified each vice and extinguished the few merits the work possessed in the French.

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\* E. Stanley Poole, Editor's Preface to 5th [Standard] Ed. *Modern Egyptians*.