

Chapter I.¹

The Harbours and City of Alexandria.

General appearance of the coast of Egypt—Distant view of Alexandria—The Old Harbour—Arrival in the New Harbour—First visit to the town—Description of a crowded street—Fatal quarrel in a coffee-house—The Quarter of the Europeans—Description of the New Harbour and the Pharos—Short general account of the town—Climate, &c.

Egypt presents to the Mediterranean a low, sandy coast, bearing, through out its whole extent, a most desolate aspect; and in no part more so than in the neighbourhood of Alexandria. To the west of this town we see nothing but a tract of yellowish calcareous rock, and sand, with, here and there, a few stunted palm-trees, which but little diversify the dreary prospect.

The first land-mark that we perceived was the small ruined tower of Ab'oo Seer, situated between two inconsiderable eminences of rock, near the shore, about seven leagues from Alexandria. A pleasant breeze bore us rapidly along; and we soon lost sight of the "Arab Tower." My attention was next directed to an object which appeared like a tall, distant sail. This was the noble column named, by travellers, "Pompey's Pillar." It seemed as if it rose from the sea; for neither the city nor the hills in its neighbourhood could yet be discerned. Soon afterwards we saw the tops of two lofty hills of rubbish, each crowned with a fort; and next we distinguished the vessels in the Old Harbour, intercepting, almost entirely, the view of the town, which lies upon a low, flat site.

The Old, or Western, Harbour (anciently called Eunostus Portus) is deeper and more secure than the New Harbour (which was called Magnus Portus). The former, which was once exclusively appropriated to the vessels of the Moos'lims, is now open to ships of all nations; and the latter, which was "the harbour of the infidels," is almost deserted.² The entrance of the Old Harbour is rendered difficult by reefs of rocks, leaving three natural passages, of which, the central has the greatest depth of water. Frigates may enter with safety; but ships of the line cannot, unless lightened by the removal of their guns; though there is more than sufficient depth of water for them within the harbour. The west, and north-west, and north winds are most prevalent; and are favourable for vessels entering the harbour; but outward-bound vessels often remain

¹A map [fig. 2] to accompany this volume [i.e., chapters one through sixteen] is in the larger portfolio which I send.

²The permission for European vessels to anchor in the Old Harbour was obtained by Sir John Stuart, on the occasion of the peace of Amiens.

many days or weeks before the wind will permit them to leave the port: it is well, however, that the reverse is not the case.¹

To illustrate the descriptions which follow, I insert a small plan of the site and environs of Alexandria.²

As we approached the entrance of the Old Harbour, an Egyptian cruiser made towards us, and fired a gun, to bring us to. A boat was then dispatched from her, and our captain was ordered to take his papers to her commander. He soon returned, and informed us that we were to steer for the New Harbour. This was occasioned by an event which had happened shortly before our arrival. A Greek fire-ship had entered the Old Harbour, where many Egyptian men-of-war were lying among the European and other merchant-vessels. A timely discovery prevented the destruction which might otherwise have ensued; and, as it was feared that another attempt of the same kind might be made, an order was issued that no vessel should be admitted into this harbour until she had been searched.

After this short hindrance we quickly made sail again, passed before the entrance of the Old Harbour and the long, barren rock of Pharos and cast anchor in the New Harbour, not far from the fort and light-house which occupy the site of one of "the seven wonders of the world." Our vessel was almost the only one lying in this harbour, excepting some boats from Reshee'd.

The coast of Egypt had been within our view from sunrise; but three fourths of the day had passed before our vessel was safely moored, and the boat lowered to convey me to the landing-place, which was nearly three quarters of a mile distant. I approached the beach with feelings of intense interest, though of too anxious a nature to be entirely pleasing; for I was not visiting Egypt merely with the view of enjoying the

¹My view of the Old Harbour (plate 1, no. 1) [fig. 3] was taken from the shore of the Necropolis, on the south-west of the site of the ancient city. It requires a few words of description.—Under the letter *a* is seen the palace of the Ba'sha, upon the long ridge of rock which was the ancient island of Pharos; at the extremity of which, under the letter *b*, is a battery. To the right of the shipping is a part of the modern town of Alexandria, and a part of the white wall which surrounds the site of the old Arab city; beyond which is seen a lofty hill of rubbish, (one of those two before-mentioned,) with a fort upon its summit, under the letter *c*.—Behind the spot whence this view was taken a battery has lately been erected. This harbour and the other are now very well defended.

²Explanation of the plan.*—A, gate called Ba'b el-Bahhr—B, Ba'b el-Mahmoodee'yeh—C, Ba'b es-Sidr—D, Ba'b Reshee'd—E, the Obelisks—F, A Synagogue—G, Greek Convent—H, Roman Catholic Convent—I, Site of the Church of St. Athanasius—J, J, Two hills of rubbish; each having a fort upon its summit—K, The Pillar—L, Traces of a hippodrome—M, The great catacomb—N, The burial-ground of the Jews—O, Burial-ground of the Moos'lims—P, Palace of the Ba'sha—Q, A battery—R, The Frank Quarter—S, The New Weka'leh.

*See no. 1 of the subjects for wood-cuts [fig. 4].

examination of its pyramids and temples and subterranean wonders, and with the intention of quitting it as soon as I had satisfied my curiosity; but I was about to take up my abode there for a period of two or three years, chiefly for the purpose of studying the language and literature of its modern inhabitants, and of familiarizing myself with their manners and customs: it was requisite, therefore, that I should confine myself, almost exclusively, to the society of Moos'lims, assume their dress, and adopt their mode of life, with which I was not yet sufficiently acquainted to foresee whether it would be agreeable to me or the reverse.

It was the time of the afternoon-prayer when we reached the shore. The chant of the Moo-ed'din had just ceased, and several persons were performing the prescribed ablution with the water of the sea; while others, having finished that preparatory act were saying their prayers upon the beach. The sight of the Moos'lim engaged in his devotions never failed to impress me with some degree of veneration; but particularly when witnessed for the first time. The attitudes are peculiarly striking and expressive; and the solemn demeanour of the worshipper, who, even in the busy market-place, appears wholly abstracted from the concerns of the world, is very remarkable. The practice of praying in a public place is so general in the East, and attracts so little notice, that we cannot charge all who do so with hypocrisy or motives of ostentation.

Quitting the beach, I walked up a short lane, and immediately found myself in a narrow, crowded street. There I beheld, hemmed in between two rows of small and mean-looking shops, an assemblage of persons from almost every country bordering on the Mediterranean. Words can convey but a very imperfect idea of such a scene. The variety of costumes, and their motley appearance, owing to the contrast between the mean clothing of the barefooted poor and the gaudy or graceful habits of some of the superiors, produced an effect more remarkable and picturesque than can be imagined. While noticing the various peculiarities of dress, feature, and complexion which characterize the native of Africa and the East, I was particularly struck with the noble and hardy look of the Western Bed'awee, enveloped in his ample woollen sheet, or hooded cloak,—with the affecting spectacle of many persons nearly or totally blind,—with the sight of children in a state of perfect nudity, or clothed in rags,—and, above all, with the singular appearance of the veiled females, exhibiting, in their dull disguise, no other attraction than a degree of stateliness in their carriage, and a remarkable beauty in their large, dark eyes, which, besides being sufficiently distinguished by nature, are rendered more conspicuous by the black border of *kohhl*¹ round the lashes, and by the concealment of the rest of the features.—Most of the passengers were on foot; some, upon asses; and a few, on horses or mules. Long trains of camels, laden

¹The kind of *kohhl* most commonly used is chiefly composed of the smoke-black produced by burning a kind of *liba'n*, or frankincense.

with water-skins, or with bales of merchandise, were winding slowly and cautiously through the midst of the crowd; their conductors bawling to the passengers to take care of themselves, and move out of the way. The cries of *O'a! Sa'ckin!* and *Guarda!*¹ resounded every where and every moment.

The shops of Alexandria, like those of most other Turkish and Arabian cities, resemble *cupboards*, rather than *rooms*. A raised seat of brick or stone, about three feet high, and the same, or more, in width, extends along each side of the street; and upon this the tradesman generally sits, before his shop, either smoking or at work. A shed of wood, covered with plaster, of the same width as the seat, shelters him from the sun and rain. In the evening he shuts up his shop, and goes home.

Some streets through which I passed were covered over with matting supported by rafters of wood extending across from the tops of the houses, with small, square apertures, at intervals, for the admission of light. At corners of the streets, and wherever else there was sufficient space, were groups of men and women seated on the ground, with baskets before them containing bread and vegetables for sale.

I may here introduce a sketch (made on my return from the interior) which will convey an idea of several of the streets in Alexandria.²

The Frank street is wide; and the houses here have an appearance somewhat European. In passing through this street I observed a number of persons collected before the open front of a Frank coffee-house. Among the mixed company within, consisting of Turks, Alexandrians, and Franks, were two Turkish soldiers, whose violent conduct had attracted the notice of the passengers in the street. The cause of their quarrel I could not learn; the result I shall not soon forget. Both were excited by intoxication; but one of them was almost mad with rage. He sprang up from his seat, drew a pistol from his girdle, and thrust it forward so that the muzzle nearly touched the face of his adversary, who sat before him on the opposite side of a table. He fired; but the intended victim, by a dexterous blow, had turned aside the pistol, and another soldier, who stood by him, received the ball, and instantly fell, a bleeding corpse. The disappointed ruffian then drew his sword, and would have shed more blood, had he not been speedily disarmed by those around him.—In the Turkish Empire a summary punishment awaits the shedder of human blood, unless protected by his rank or wealth.—In a few minutes after the commission of the crime above-related, the body of the perpetrator lay exposed to public view, with the sever'd head under the arm.³

¹These words (which are Arabic, Turkish, and Italian) have the same meaning—"take care."

²Wood-cut no. 2 R.S.P. [fig. 5].

³After a Moos'lim is beheaded his head is placed under his arm: a Christian's is placed between his legs. A *Jew* is never *beheaded*: his blood would pollute the sword: and therefore he must be *hanged*.

The quarter occupied by the Europeans is the south-eastern part of the town; by the shore of the New Harbour. This situation appears to have been chosen for their residence because it was convenient for the landing and shipping of their merchandise: but now that the Old Harbour is open to their vessels the situation is not so advantageous for them. A large building, called the New Weka'leh¹ for the reception of merchants and others, has lately been erected on the shore of the New Harbour, quite at the extremity of the town. It surrounds a spacious square court; and the ground-floor of the building consists of magazines towards the court, and shops and the entrances of the dwellings towards the exterior. From a window of one of the apartments in this building occupied by the English Consul, Mr. Barker,² I made (on my return to Alexandria from the upper country) a view of the New Harbour.³

The modern Pharos is a poor successor of the ancient building erected by Sostratus Cnidius, from which it derives its name; but from a distance it has rather an imposing appearance.—Several Arab historians mention the telescopic mirror of metal which was placed at the summit of the ancient Pharos. In this mirror vessels might be discerned at sea at a very great distance. El-Muckree'zee⁴ informs us that the Greeks, being desirous of effecting the destruction of the Pharos, of obtaining possession of the wonderful mirror, employed a deep stratagem. One of their countrymen repaired to the Khalee'feh⁵ El-Welee'd Ibn 'Abd El-Mel'ik, and professed himself a convert to the faith of El-Isla'm; pretending that he had fled from his king, who would have put him to death. He informed the Khalee'feh that he had acquired, from certain books in his possession, the art of discovering where treasures were concealed in the earth, and had thus ascertained that there was a valuable treasure, consisting of money and jewels, deposited beneath the foundations of the Pharos of Alexandria. The Prince, deceived by this artful tale, sent a number of workmen with his crafty adviser to pull down the Pharos: and when more than half the building had been destroyed the Greek made his escape to his own country, and his artifice

¹Generally called by Europeans *occale*.

²Mr. Barker succeeded Mr. Salt, who died in October, 1827.

³[Fig. 6.] This view comprehends the whole of the western shore of the harbour. The houses in the foreground belong to European consuls and merchants. The great fort and light-house are seen in the distance (under the letter *a*), and the long causeway which connects the fort with the peninsula of Pharos.

⁴See, respecting this author, a note at the commencement of the 8th chapter of this volume.

⁵This is the title which the English generally write "Caliph."

thus became manifest.¹—It is related by Es-Sooyoo'tee² that the inhabitants of Alexandria likewise made use of the mirror above-mentioned to burn the vessels of their enemies, by directing it so as to reflect the concentrated rays of sun upon them.

The causeway of stone which connects the fort and light-house with the peninsula of Pharos is built upon a ridge of rock. Granite columns and other materials of ancient buildings have been employed in its construction.

The peninsula of Pharos is now called *Ro'dat et-Teen* (or the Garden of the Fig) on account of a few fig-trees growing there. Its south-western extremity is called *Ra's et-Teen* (or the Cape of the Fig). Upon this rocky peninsula are a palace of the Ba'sha,³ and some other building, and the burial-ground of the Moos'lims, adjacent to the town.

The New Harbour abounds with rocks and sand-banks, having little depth of water over them; and is exposed to the north and north-east winds, which are often very violent. The place of anchorage is near the causeway of the Pharos, where there is sufficient depth for corvettes and small frigates to lie.

I shall now give a brief, general account of the town: for as yet I have only described what I saw on the day of my arrival.

The modern name of Alexandria is *El-Iskenderee'yeh* الاسكندرية. It is built upon a narrow neck of land, which unites the Peninsula of Pharos to the continent and thus forms the double harbour, as did anciently the causeway which, from its length of seven stadia, was called the *Heptastadium*. The ground which is occupied by the modern town has been formed by a gradual deposit of sand on each side of the heptastadium; and the present situation is certainly more advantageous for a commercial city than the ancient site.

The houses are generally built of white calcareous stone, with a profusion of mortar and plaster. Some have the foundation-walls, only, of stone; and the superstructure, of brick. They have plain or projecting windows, of wooden lattice-work. The windows of the houses belonging

¹The same author relates that part of the Pharos was thrown down by an earthquake in the year of the flight 177 (A.D. 793-4);—that Ahh'mad Ibn Too'loo'n surmounted it with a dome of wood;—and that an inscription upon a plate of lead was found upon the northern side, buried in the earth, written in the Yoo'na'nee (or ancient Greek) characters; every letter of which was a cubit in height and a span in breadth. This was perhaps the inscription placed by the original architect, and which, according to Strabo, was to this effect—"Sostratus Cnidius, the son of Dexiphanes, to the protecting gods, for the sake of the mariners."

²A celebrated Arab theologian and historian, so called from his birth-place, Oosyoo't, or Sooyoo't (commonly pronounced Asyoo't), in Upper Egypt. He died in the year of the flight 911 (A.D. 1515-6).

³This title, in Arabic, is always pronounced *Ba'sha*: in Turkish, it is *Pa'sha*'. In writing upon Egypt I think it proper to spell words as the Egyptians pronounce them: though this is a Turkish title.

to Europeans, and those of the palaces of the Ba'sha and the governor of Alexandria, and a few others, are of glass. The roofs are flat, and covered with cement. There is little to admire in the interior architecture of the houses; and the town altogether has a very mean appearance. Many ancient columns of granite and marble have been used in the construction of the mosques and private dwellings. The inhabitants are supplied with water from the cisterns under the site of the ancient city, which are filled by subterranean aqueducts from the canal, during the time of the greatest height of the Nile; but in consequence of the saline nature of the soil through which it passes from the river the water is not good. Almost every house has also its cistern, which is filled by means of skins borne by camels or asses; and there are many wells of brackish water in the town.—The number of inhabitants is about 15, or 16,000.

As the emporium and key of Egypt,¹ Alexandria is a place of considerable importance; but otherwise it is, in no respect, a desirable residence. It is a poor, wretched town; its climate is unhealthy; and nothing but sea and desert meets the eye around it. Ancient writers have extolled the *salubrity* of the air of Alexandria. This quality of the air was attributed, according to Strabo, to the almost insular situation of the city: the sea being on one side, and the Lake Mareotis on the other. The *insalubrity* of the climate in later years has been regarded as the result of the conversion of the lake into a salt marsh. The English army, in 1801, made a cut by which the water of the sea was admitted, from the Lake of Ab'oo Ckeer, into the bed of the Lake Mareotis; and the operation was repeated by 'Al'ee Ba'sha, in 1803; and again by the English in 1807: on each occasion military policy dictated the measure; and as soon as the object in view had been attained the gap was closed, as it cut off the supply of fresh water from Alexandria by interrupting the course of the canal. But while the communication between the two lakes remained open, it was not found that the climate of Alexandria was at all improved; and the evaporation of the waters of the Lake Mareotis afterwards must have had a pernicious effect. The damp and rain during the winter at Alexandria, and the heavy dew at night throughout the year have a particularly baneful influence. I may add that this town is one of the places where the plague generally makes its appearance many days earlier than in the interior of Egypt. Yet I have met with persons who consider the climate of Alexandria as more agreeable than that of the valley of the Nile; as we find those in England who prefer winter to summer.

There is a series of telegraphs, lately constructed, from Alexandria to the metropolis; a distance of more than 120 British miles. The towers composing this series are nineteen in number: the first of them is on the peninsula of Pharos: and the last, in the citadel of Musr, or Cairo.

¹The northern coast of Egypt has no harbour excepting those of Alexandria.

Chapter II.

The Environs of Alexandria.

The walled site of the old Arab city—Antiquities, &c., within the wall; particularly the ancient cisterns, and the obelisks—Objects without the wall—Burial-ground of the Jews—Ancient remains along the shore of the New Harbour—Ruins of Nicopolis—The great pillar—Inquiry respecting the Serapéum, and the library which was burnt by command of 'Om'ar—The Necropolis—Dulness of a residence at Alexandria—Murder of a Frank.

The wall which surrounds the site of the old Arab city has lately been rebuilt in a plain but substantial manner. This work was commenced in 1811. Mohham'mad Ba'sha,¹ fearing another invasion of Egypt by the French, deemed it necessary to strengthen this place: for the wall above-mentioned defends the town on the land-side, and surrounds the cisterns from which the inhabitants derive their supply of fresh water. The wall has four gates: that by which the fortified enclosure is entered from the modern town is called *Ba'b el-Bahhr*, or the Sea-Gate. A scene of more complete desolation than that which is beheld on entering the enclosure can scarcely be conceived. Mounds of rubbish and drifted sand occupy nearly the whole site of the ancient city. Within the area surrounded by the present wall, besides some monuments of the ancient city, are two convents, and a synagogue, and several groups of houses, with a few walled gardens, which contain little else but palm-trees. There are also two lofty hills of rubbish, each with a fort upon its summit, which command an extensive view; but a stranger is not permitted to ascend these. The line of the principal street of the ancient city, extending in a straight direction from the shore of the Old Harbour to the *Ba'b Reshee'd* (or Gate of Reshee'd²), which is at the eastern extremity of the enclosure, is plainly observable: and the direction of the other great street, which crossed the former at right-angles, may also be traced; commencing near the present northern gate (*Ba'b el-Bahhr*), and terminating near the gate called *Ba'b es-Sidr*. The extent of the ancient Alexandria during its most flourishing period must have been considerably greater than that of the Arab city which succeeded it; but it is impossible to mark its precise limits. Within the area which was occupied by the latter, the most remarkable remains of antiquity are the cisterns and the obelisks.

¹Mohham'mad 'Al'ee Ba'sha is commonly called only by his first name with his title.

²Reshee'd is the name of the town which Europeans call Rosetta.