

THE REDEMPTION
OF EGYPT



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CHAPTER III

THE DELTA AND THE COTTON INDUSTRY

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COTTON is to Egypt what coal is to England or wool to Australia. If we had forgotten—or not yet completely realized—that modern Egypt draws its income not from corn but from cotton, we were soon reminded of the fact. On the wharfs of Alexandria the bales of cotton, piled into vast oblong masses, were as prominent an object as the loose-robed Arabs; and in the town cotton prices and the cotton crop were in the mouths of every one, for the Delta is the chief seat of the cotton culture, and cotton provides three-fourths of the total exports of Egypt. When, therefore, Mr. Carver, whose acquaintance we had made on the *Thames*, suggested that we should pay a visit to his cotton-mill before we went on to Cairo, we gladly accepted the invitation; for I had come to Egypt not only to see mosques and pyramids, but also mills and plantations.

There was nothing to keep us in Alexandria. We had followed the *Rue de Rosette* to its eastern extremity, where, passing the handsome houses in which the wealthier Greeks and Italians live, we had found the remains of the Rosetta Gate, which is said

to occupy the site of the famous Canopic Gate of antiquity. We had driven through the mean dwellings of the native quarter, past the wilderness of white tombs which forms the Mohammedan burial-place, and climbed thoughtfully over the excavated masses of masonry at the base of the Theodosian column, and seen all that remains of the *forum* of Alexandria. We had paid a brief visit to the museum of Græco-Roman antiquities, and we had paced the desolate shore of the great harbour, and noticed the crowd which poured daily from the Ramleh railway station into Alexandria, over the ground once covered by the palaces of the Ptolemaic kings. Apart from the dusty palms that struggled everywhere to resist the tide of stucco, the sayces, with their gay sashes and gold-embroidered jackets, who ran before the smart European carriages in the *Rue de Rosette*, and the flaming leaves of the *poinsettia* in the shaded garden of the hôtel, were the sole objects we had found to put the thought of the East in our minds.

We left Alexandria by the nine o'clock express for Cairo, by which we could travel as far as Tanta, where we had to change carriages for our destination—Mehallet el-Kebir. In the same compartment were an American gentleman and his wife. They had spent more than one winter in Egypt, and they were kind enough to give us our first lesson in colloquial Arabic. *Yalla!* "go on," was sufficient to check the undesired attentions of the Arab vendor—there was a crowd of them round the carriage window—and, if that proved ineffectual, we were to say *Imshi!* "go away"; and if this failed, we were to have recourse to the peremptory monosyllable *râhh!* with a fine roll of the "r." Notwithstanding our newly acquired knowledge, it was reassuring to hear the guard, who came to look at our tickets, address us in perfectly intelligible English. Punctually at the hour the train rolled out of the station, and when we had got free of the town and the waters of Lakes Mariût and Abukir, the landscape showed level with green patches of Indian corn and clover, and brown fields of cotton stubble—brown because the snowy harvest had been

gathered, and only the grey sticks and withered leaves remained in the fields. To the north of the railway ran the Maḥmūdiyyeh Canal, by means of which Alexandria was once more connected with the Nile, and the barren country around once more received supplies of fertilizing water. It was the first step in the restoration of the town, accomplished early in the century by Mohammed Ali; and until the construction of the railway this waterway was the sole means of communication with Cairo and the rest of Egypt. Even now we could see the curved yards of the Nile boats, and the heads and loads of the camels on the path below its high banks, showing how largely it was still used for the transport of merchandise and produce. Now and again we passed villages of brown, square huts, with roofs of loose stubble and sticks. Some of these primitive dwellings were circular in form, like the huts in the Kaffir kraals of South Africa, except that they were built of mud bricks instead of straw; and almost always there was the dome and square body of a little mosque, resplendent with whitewash, standing a little apart from the rest of the village, and often surrounded with a collection of grave-stones as white as itself. The only trees that we noticed at first were the palms; but afterwards, as we got away from the coast, there were tamarisks and thorns, and here and there lebbek trees with their solid roof of foliage. Everywhere irrigating canals and channels had been cut, and the fields were dotted with the blue shirts of the Arab men and the darker dresses of the women. We saw the primitive ox-plough, drawn laboriously by the patient oxen through the furrows of red earth, and the primitive water-wheel, the sâkiyeh, driven by the same patient beast, ceaselessly revolving over the water-pits, and emptying its clumsy jars into the water channels.

Several considerable towns and villages—notably Damanhûr, the ancient Horus, one hour from Alexandria—had been passed before we saw the Nile. It was the Rosetta branch, and we swept over it by the great iron bridge into Kafr ez-Zaiyât. Twenty minutes later—at eleven—we saw the dome and

minarets of the great mosque of Tanta, where in August of each year vast crowds of pilgrims assemble from the Levantine countries and the north coast of Africa to celebrate the nativity of the popular Mohammedan saint, Seiyid el-Bedawi. The town itself, by virtue of its 60,000 inhabitants, is the third in Egypt. It is the point where the Alexandria and Damietta lines converge for Cairo; and here we changed into the Damietta train, which



KAFR EZ-ZAIYÂT STATION.

deposited us within the hour at Mehallet el-Kebir. Before the train drew up we had caught the welcome of an English face, and we stepped down to shake hands with Mr. S——, the manager of the mill, who had come to meet us.

We were now in the very centre of the Delta, within a few miles of the most productive soil in Egypt; and the tall chimneys that broke the level of the landscape told us that the wealth of Egypt was being garnered by European skill and European energy.

It needs only a few figures to reveal the importance of the cotton industry to Egypt. Although the geographical area of Egypt covers some 400,000 square miles, its habitable area is expressed (in round numbers) by the diminutive total of 13,000 square miles; and of this area one-fourth is covered by the stream of the Nile and its attendant lakes, and one-sixth by the innumerable canals which fertilize the soil. In other words, the Delta and the Nile Valley afford together some five and a half million acres¹ of cultivable land, of which the larger half belongs to Lower Egypt—practically the Delta—and the best of this land is appropriated to the cultivation of the cotton plant, which is grown in the Fayûm as well as in the Delta. In the government plantations, that is to say, on the estates which are worked by the Domains Administration, and on those of the most enlightened private owners, the land is put under cotton crop only once in *three* years; but in no case is a crop taken from the land more often than once in *two* years. Yet the value of the cotton crop so far exceeds the value of all other crops, that of the £12,000,000² worth of exports which Egypt annually produces, £9,000,000 are due to this industry. The sugar industry, which ranks next in importance, provides an export of from half to three-quarters of a million pounds in value. The amount of cotton grown in Egypt has advanced from 2,792,184 kantars—the kantar is 99 lbs.—in 1881 to 5,879,479 kantars in 1896-7; but during the same period the average price of the kantar has fallen from rather more than three Egyptian pounds (£E3.143) to rather less than two (£E1.734). This fall in value has been met, in part at least, by the adoption of improved methods of cultivation and preparation. Thus in the Domains Administration,

¹ In 1897 land tax was paid on 5,328,601 *feddans*. The feddan is 1 acre 6 square perches, *i.e.* slightly larger than the English acre.—*Tableaux Statistiques, 1881-1897. Le Caire, 1898.*

² The exports of Egypt range from £E12,982,508 (the Egyptian pound equals £1 and 6d.) in 1881 to £E12,321,219 in 1897. The lowest year is 1886, with £E10,129,620; the highest was 1891, with £E13,878,638. All through this period the *quantity* of produce grown has steadily increased, but the fall in prices has reduced the *value*.—*Tab. Stat.*

where the best and most economic methods are employed, it has been found possible to increase the nett profit per feddan in spite of the adverse market. Taking the periods 1879 to 1887, and 1888 to 1897, as a basis for comparison, the Commissioners are able to report that a yield of 2.77 kantars of cotton, selling at £E2.53, in the former period has been replaced by a yield of 4.36 kantars. And although this increased yield sold at only £E2.06, owing to the fall in price, yet it gave a nett return per feddan which was £E1.69 in excess of the nett return of the previous period. Similarly increased yields of cotton seed and of cotton wood were secured; and thus, by economies and improvements, the total return per feddan on the Government estates was raised from £E8.61 in the former period to £E10.57 in the latter.¹

One important result of the steady expansion of the Egyptian cotton crop in the face of the decline in value must be noticed, because it touches the very foundation of Egyptian finance. The large increase in the supply has caused the margin of price between Egyptian and American cotton to contract. The Egyptian cotton is (with the exception of a small amount produced in the South Sea Islands) the finest in the market, and as such it is used for the finest cotton cloth and for cambric. It commands, therefore, a price in advance of the American cotton; but, on the other hand, the American cotton, by virtue of its vastly larger output, controls the market. Not only does a fall in the value of American cotton produce an equivalent fall in the value of the Egyptian, but the more expensive Egyptian article cheapens more rapidly from its largely increased production than the American. Nevertheless, the Egyptian industry is secure, in spite of falling prices, so long as its produce commands a larger price than that of its rival; but the extent of its security is measured by the margin of price which separates the produce of the respective countries. The nature of this margin, and the degree in which it affects Egypt, will appear from the fact that in January 1897

¹ *Domaines de l'État Égyptien . . . Compte Générale des Opérations, &c.* Paris, 1898.

American and Egyptian cotton were selling respectively at 4d. and 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ d. per pound, showing a difference of 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ d. in favour of Egypt; while at the end of the year the prices were 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ d. and 4 $\frac{1}{16}$ d. respectively, that is to say, the margin had contracted from 1 $\frac{3}{8}$ d. to $\frac{1}{16}$ d.¹

At the same time, the demand for Egyptian cotton at this reduced price has increased. Russia in particular has bought more freely since the fall in prices. And here, again, there is a significant fact to be noticed. In spite of the economies which have been noticed above, the main factor in the increased output is the extension of the area under cultivation, and this extension means in Egypt an increased supply of water. The improvements already effected in the irrigation of the Delta will be discussed in a subsequent chapter, and it is therefore unnecessary to say more in this place than that it is intended to increase the already largely increased water supply of the Delta by additional works which are already in course of construction. Both in this vital matter, and in the encouragement which is being given to the construction of agricultural railways, due provision is being made by the Public Works Department for that further extension of the cultivated area which is necessary for the continued prosperity of the cotton industry under its present conditions. But in considering the future of the cotton industry, it is useful to recall the past. Cotton cultivation was introduced by Mohammed Ali as early as 1821, but it only assumed importance under the stimulus of the civil war in America, which for the time being deprived the Lancashire mills of their American supplies. The abnormal prosperity which this event brought to Egypt was of course short-lived, but it served, nevertheless, as an excuse for the fatal extravagances of Ismâîl. The present prosperity of the industry has been secured by genuine and permanent improvements in the condition of the area available for such cultivation, and by economies in preparation. Nevertheless, during the whole period that these improvements have been in operation—that is

¹ "Annual Report of British Chamber of Commerce." Alexandria, 1897.

to say, from the time when, in 1886, English influence became predominant in the government of the Khedive—the industry has been confronted with a fall in prices so considerable, that while its output has been doubled, the value of that output has remained practically stationary. While, on the one hand, not to have lost ground under circumstances so unfavourable is evidence of the successful co-operation of the Government with private enterprise, yet the fact itself serves to show how economic conditions entirely beyond the control of an administration may hinder, or even completely obstruct, the best directed efforts. “The value of the exports [of Egypt] in 1898,” says Lord Cromer in his last report,¹ “was £E11,805,000, as compared to £E12,321,000 in 1897. The decrease, amounting to £E516,000, was almost wholly due to the fall in the price of cotton. The quantity of cotton exported in 1898 was 270,000 kantars greater than in the previous year, but this was accompanied by a diminution in the value to the extent of £E464,000.

“Sugar fell off both in quantity and value. There was also some decrease in the exports of rice, beans, wool, molasses, and hides. On the other hand, onions, wheat, flour, and henna showed a fair increase.”

But to return to Mehallet.

While we were engaged in depositing our luggage under the care of an official, Mr. S—— left us for a moment in quest of trucks. The Egyptian railways had got into an unsatisfactory condition. It was not the fault of the Railway Administration, but that of the *Caisse de la Dette*. In their jealous regard for the interest of the bondholders, the Public Debt Commissioners have again and again refused to sanction the expenditure of funds, which would otherwise have been available for works of public utility. It is a short-sighted policy, for these works would have yielded a return many times as great as the value of the interest on the capital which has been thus locked up. And so, in plain words, the railways had been starved. Their earnings to

¹ “Egypt,” No. 3 (1899).

the utmost penny had been eagerly seized by the Commissioners to pay the interest on the Privileged Debt, and no adequate provision had been made for maintenance and expansion. The result had been that, in spite of an increased traffic and increased earnings, the permanent way and buildings had been neglected, and the rolling-stock had become hopelessly dilapidated and insufficient. Here was a case in point. Mr. S—— wanted to send off his bales of cotton, but there were no trucks to take them, and before a fresh supply could be obtained from Alexandria the steamer might, or might not, have left the docks.¹

But Mr. S—— was, I suppose, accustomed by this time to such incidents. At any rate he showed no signs of discomposure when he joined us again. The mill was close to the station, and a few steps brought us into an ample yard, through which he led us among mountains of great sacks, with the whirl and rush of machinery in our ears, past panting Arabs and lumbering camels, to a deep veranda upon which his office opened. It appeared that our chief business, which was to go through the mill, was to be postponed until after luncheon; and so while J—— went into the house to make the acquaintance of Mrs. S—— I remained seated on the veranda by the office door to gather such information as would enable me to understand what I should afterwards see.

The mill, Mr. S—— told me, had been acquired by Messrs. Carver & Co., its present owners, in 1869; but it had been built then for some years. An old Arab, whom Mr. S—— called up and questioned, said that he remembered the big chimney being unfinished in 1861. It was not, of course, a cotton mill in the Lancashire sense. They received the cotton as it came from the fields, and prepared it for exportation. More exactly it was a “ginning” or “cotton-cleaning” mill; their business was to

¹ The Commissioners have since made considerable grants to the Railway Board for the purchase of rolling-stock and rails; but the same principle of “penny-wise and pound-foolish” still characterizes their action in other respects (*e.g.* in the case of the Nile Reservoir now under construction at Assuán). See also chapter xiii. p. 239.

separate the cotton from the seed, and to clean these products and forward them in sacks and bales to Alexandria, for shipping to England, or to some other country, where the cotton-spinning and cotton-weaving were done. No, he said, with a smile, he was not new to the work; he had been connected with the place for a long time, as his father had been manager before him. There were five ginning mills in the place, but this did more work than any of the others. The first thing, he continued, is to get a supply of good cotton from the growers. The cotton crop is sown in February or March, and it is harvested in the following September or October. It is sown generally in the Delta once in two years, though it is better to grow it every third year. During the intervening time the land is sown with beans, or clover, or some cereal. Thus half of each estate is under cotton every year, with the exception of those belonging to wealthy proprietors, where only one-third is laid down with cotton, and from these, of course, a better yield is obtained. We have our agents in the various districts, who keep us informed of the prospects of their respective crops from year to year. We see samples of the several crops on the various estates, and we then examine those crops which we think most likely to suit our purpose, as they lie in the stores. When we have made our selection, we send our own bags for the grower to fill; and we make our own arrangements for conveying the bags to the factory. Sometimes they come in the canal-boats, sometimes, but not often, by rail, and when the stores are close to the mill they are brought by cart. Yes, he said, as he caught my inquiring glance, they often come that way too.

In the middle of our talk a line of camels had swung through the factory gate, and they were proceeding with that indescribable mixture of pride and clumsiness, which only a well-laden camel can assume, into the centre of the yard. We left the veranda and went to see them being unloaded. At a sign from their drivers they had lumbered—there is no other word for it—on to the ground; and there they lay round the weighing machine waiting patiently while the two huge sacks, which formed their respective

loads, were uncorded and wheeled off to increase the size of the mountains of cotton through which they had threaded their way.

Yes, said Mr. S——, the camel will carry these two bags, which weigh from four to five kantars each—roughly from four to five hundred pounds—for thirty miles a day. These camels are making three journeys a day of ten miles there and back; the shêkh gets five piastres—about a shilling—for each journey, and he pays the drivers four piastres—tenpence—a day.



CAMELS WITH COTTON.

These men are Bedouins, as you see; they live for the greater part of the year in the desert, and only come to the Delta in the autumn to do this carrying work. The cotton crop, as it comes from the fields in these bags, is on an average one-third cotton and two-thirds seed—that is, by weight.

As we turned away from the camels and walked back to the house for lunch, Mr. S—— added, “As the work of the factory is, roughly, to prepare the cotton crop for exportation, we are only

busy for half the year, that is, from the end of September to the end of March or the beginning of April. During the rest of the year all that we have to do is to put the machinery and the factory buildings into repair, and to handle any small deposits of cotton that are occasionally held over in the growers' stores. And now," he said, as we reached the foot of a flight of steps leading to a balcony above, "you will be glad to think of something else for a little while."

I suppose it is that the background of rude or semi-barbarous surroundings throws into relief the moral and physical advantages of the Anglo-Saxon; but whether or not this be the explanation, I am at least certain that I have few pleasanter reminiscences than those which are afforded by the occasions on which I have enjoyed the hospitality of the Englishman abroad. I have met him on an African farm, on a New Zealand sheep station, and on a Javan coffee plantation; and I have found him always alike, the kindest of hosts and the most competent of cicerones; and I have rarely left his house without feeling a sense of satisfaction in the thought of the enormous part which was played by my countrymen in the work of civilisation throughout the world. To-day our luncheon party consisted of Mr. S—— and his assistant, Mr. H. C——, Mrs. S—— and her sister, and our two selves. Although Mehallet is a town of over 30,000 inhabitants the S——s were the only English, and almost the only Europeans in the place; and this made the little refinements of the table equipage, the sense of home—so grateful after weeks of hotel life—the more surprising. The only strange viand that the table afforded was the chalk-white buffalo butter. It differed more in appearance than in taste from the ordinary butter of the cow; but it was many weeks before we met with it again, during our visit to the Fayûm.

When lunch was over we threaded our way once more through the masses of cotton bags across the yard to the mill. The first process is the separation of the cotton from the seed. This process is called "ginning," and in the gin-room at Messrs.

Carver & Co.'s mill there were sixty-four gins, driven by steam-power, ranged in two rows on either side, and between them rails were laid the length of the room on which ran an ordinary railway truck. The machines were served by Arab boys or girls, and they each turned out from 900 to 920 kantars of cotton in a day of twelve and a half hours. The gross amount of stuff handled in the gin-room per day was about 2700 to 2760 kantars—in round numbers 2360 cwts. or 120 tons. And in the whole season, on an average a gross weight of 360,000 kantars, yielding about 120,000 kantars—or 5200 tons—of cotton, passes through the gins. The Arabs who bring the supplies of cotton from the fields and handle it at the factory, are paid at the rate of four piastres¹ a day. The cotton thus separated from the seed is carried in truck loads to the press-room adjoining the gin-room. Here it is made up into bales by means of hydraulic presses.

The seed which has been separated by the gins is "garbled." The object of this process is to gather the cotton which still adheres to the seeds after they have been collected from the gins. For this purpose the seed is passed through a perforated cylinder, revolving by steam-power, from which the seed itself drops through the perforations into collecting boxes, while the cotton thus freed from the seed passes out at the end of the cylinder.

Any seed to which cotton fibre still remains after garbling, is submitted to a further and final process of cleaning. This final cleaning is accomplished by an American saw gin, called the Scarto gin. The seed is finally made up into sacks ready for exportation.

By these repeated processes the cotton fibre and the cotton seed are separated without any loss of either. They are all

¹ The piastre (strictly the piastre tarif in distinction from the piastre current, which is now used only in transactions between natives) is one-hundredth part of the Egyptian pound. It is worth 2½d. ; and 97½ piastres are equivalent to the English pound sterling. The Egyptian pound, as already noticed, is worth £1, os. 6d. of English money.

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closely watched to avoid waste; and even the sweepings from the floors of the sheds are made up into sacks and sold to native buyers. The value of the Egyptian cotton, as being the finest in the market, has already been noticed. The cotton seed, all of which is exported, with the exception of a small quantity which is kept for sowing purposes, yields a pure oil which is especially valuable because it can be flavoured and so used for table purposes. Most of this oil is, however, sold for lubricating machinery. A further product which the Egyptian cotton seed yields is the seed cake which is used by the English farmer for feeding his cattle.

As to the destination of the Egyptian cotton export; if we take a ten years' survey we find that about half of the cotton bales which leave the wharfs of Alexandria find their way to English ports. About one-sixth of them go to Russia, and one-eighth to Marseilles and Spain; while the rest, with the exception of small quantities which reach America and Bombay, are sent to Trieste and Italy. Almost all the seed is taken by England—Hull in particular takes one-half of the whole Egyptian export, and the balance is sent to Marseilles and other Continental ports.¹

¹ The following shows the exact figures for the year 1896-97. It is fairly typical (except for a rapid increase of the American purchase) :—

Cotton Exports (in Bales).

1st Sept. to 31st Aug.	United Kingdom	Marseilles and Spain	Trieste	Italy	Russia	America	Bombay	Total
1886-97	343,822	88,445	80,674	51,522	130,958	51,056	4,179	750,656

Cotton Seed (in Ardebs = 5 bushels, 1 peck, 1½ gallons).

1st Sept. to 31st Aug.	Hull	London	Sundry Ports Direct	Liverpool	Marseilles	Other Continental Ports	Total
1896-97	1,678,920	521,223	806,899	159,696	276,858	107,285	3,550,881

—From "Report of British Chamber of Commerce," 1897.

When the busy time is over, all the employés, with the exception of the one or two European mechanics, are dismissed. The manager of the mill and his assistant, and the chief engineer, take the opportunity of paying a visit to Alexandria or Ramleh, or they run over to Europe for a holiday.

After we had left the mill and returned to the house, J—— went with Mrs. S—— and her sister for a walk into the town, while I stayed behind to sketch and write notes on the veranda. They were accompanied on their expedition by an Arab servant, an escort which was required not so much to protect them from annoyance, as to pilot them through the narrow and devious streets. One of the first places they visited was the kuttâb, or village school. In the dim light, J—— descried the schoolmaster sitting cross-legged upon a mat, with two rows of tiny children, ranged sideways in front of him, in the same attitude on the ground. The master himself was weaving a mat, and the boys and girls were plaiting straw, an occupation which both parties were able to combine with the business of education. This consisted, so far as the children were concerned, in the recital of passages from the Kurân, in which they were repeatedly prompted by the master, accompanied by a more or less energetic swaying of their bodies from the hips backwards and forwards. From the school they passed on to inspect some of the native industries of the town. The chief of these, the weaving of shawls and handkerchiefs by hand from silk thread, J—— was unable to see, as on this occasion these workshops were closed; but the cotton-weaving—towels, counterpanes, curtains, &c.—was going forwards busily. The looms were driven by foot-power, and one man worked both treadle and bobbins with the help of a boy who was seated by his side.

A more curious sight was afforded by the manufacture of linseed cakes. In a dark and dirty chamber, half stable and half factory, a buffalo was walking patiently round and round, turning a round stone over a square one, and thus crushing the seed into a pasty mass. In an adjacent room brown Arabs were

filling wooden vats with this paste, from which the oil was drained off into a well sunk in the floor. Others filled the primitive presses of wicker-work with the solid substance that remained in the vats, and finally ranged the round cakes from the presses on the floor to dry. Between the two chambers there was a place of prayer, and the voice of a devout Mohammedan mingled with the sound of the grinding-stones.

The streets were about eight feet wide, and innocent of any pavement other than was afforded by the trodden earth. The houses, with their projecting *mushrebîyeh* windows, and the mosques—of which there were 300 in the town—were alike in a dilapidated and often ruinous condition; for, as Mrs. S—— explained, the Egyptians do not repair their buildings. They let them fall to pieces from decay, and then build new ones. On their way to the market, which they next visited, Mrs. S—— pointed to the gaudy paintings which appeared here and there on the front of a house. These paintings, she said, which consisted of rude imitations of foliage, showed that the inhabitant had accomplished a pilgrimage to Mecca. Other objects which attracted J——'s attention were some gaudily painted wooden boxes outside a shop. "Gaudily" is scarcely sufficient, for these boxes, which were about as large as a cabin trunk, were streaked or spotted with all the colours of the rainbow. They were "bride boxes," and Mrs. S—— added that no native girl could be married in Egypt unless she possessed one of these hideous cases in which to bestow her trousseau. In the market there were men and women sitting cross-legged on the ground, with their wares—coloured jars, silk and cotton shawls and handkerchiefs, fruit, and sweetmeats—in front of them. Unlike the itinerant vendors of Cairo and Alexandria, they took no pains to attract the attention of the European visitors, although they showed no reluctance in displaying their goods when they were asked to do so.

As they returned to the factory, Mrs. S—— discussed the question of provisions from the point of view of European

housekeeping. The price of meat, she said, was low, and poultry was thrown in with it, almost as a bakshîsh. Vegetables were very scarce, but on the other hand fruit was plentiful, and very cheap when it was in season. There was plenty of game, that is to say, snipe and quail, to be had; milk and bread were cheap, but groceries were procured direct from England, since it was cheaper to pay both carriage and duty than to buy them at Alexandria.

A pleasant cup of tea preceded our return to the station. It was the more acceptable because of the heat, which, without being oppressive, was equivalent to a warm day in the English summer. Then, when we had said our adieux to our kind hosts, we took our seats in the train for Tanta, where we were to join the evening express to Cairo.