

In these circumstances there could be no question that a new translation was necessary; and there was no man better able to translate a work illustrative of Arab life than the author of "The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians." Cairo in Lane's time was still emphatically the Arab city. It had become the sovereign centre of Arab culture when the City of Peace was given up to the Tatar barbarians and Baghdad was no longer the home of the Khaleefehs. Under the Memlook Sultáns, Cairo, and with it Arab art, attained the acme of its splendour; and the kings who left behind them those wonderful monuments of their power and culture in the Mosques of El-Káhirah left also an established order of life, stereotyped habits of mind, and a ceremonious etiquette, which three centuries of Turkish rule had not yet effaced when Lane first visited Egypt. The manners, the dwellings, and the dress; the traditions and superstitions, the ideas about things in heaven above or in the earth beneath, of the actors in "The Thousand and One Nights" were those of the people of Cairo under the Memlook Sultáns: and Lane was fortunate enough to have seen them before the tide of European innovation had begun to sweep over the picturesque scene.*

Lane resolved to make his translation of "The Thousand and One Nights" a cyclopædia of Arab manners and customs. He added to each chapter a vast number of notes, which are in fact monographs on the various details of Arabian life. Never did he write better or bring together more happily the results of his wide oriental reading and of his long Eastern experience than in these Notes. The translation itself is distinguished by its singular accuracy and by the marvellous way in which the oriental tone and colour is retained. The measured and finished language Lane chose for his version is eminently fitted to represent the rhythmical tongue of the Arabs: and one cannot take up the book without being mysteriously carried into the eastern dream-land; where we converse gravely with wezeers and learned sheykhs, or join the drinking-bout of a godless sultán; uncork 'Efreets and seal them up again in their bottles with the seal of Suleymán, on whom be peace; follow Hároon-er-Rasheed and Jaáfar in their nightly excursions; or die for love of a beautiful wrist that has dropped us a kerchief from the latticed meshrebeeyeh of the harem. Those who would know what the Arabs were at their best time, what were their virtues and what their vices, may see them and live with them in Lane's "Thousand and One Nights."

The book came out in monthly parts in the years 1838 to 1840. It was illustrated profusely by W. Harvey, who succeeded in some slight degree in catching the oriental spirit of the tales; though his work is decidedly the least excellent part of the book. After the first edition, in three volumes, 1840, two others were produced in which the publishers sought to popularize the translation by restoring the old ignorant spelling of the heroes' names. All recognized the value of Lane's work, but they still had a prejudice in favour of their old acquaintances Sinbad and Giaffer, and could not immediately get used to the new comers Es-Sindibád and Jaáfar. Moreover they missed Aladdin, who even under his reformed name 'Alá-ed-deen was not to be found in Lane at all. To obviate these objections, the publishers produced an emasculated edition reviving all the old mistakes and adding the inauthentic tales. Lane, however, immediately made a strong protest and the edition was withdrawn from circulation. In 1859 my father brought out the second and standard edition of the work, and

* I do not wish this to be taken as a defence of oriental abuses. There always comes a time when picturesque rottenness must give way to enlightened ugliness. But surely it is possible to reform the Turkish misgovernment of Egypt without pulling down the mosques and the beautiful palaces of Memlook Beys which are still to be found in old corners of Cairo. Is it really a matter of necessity for a reforming Turk to wear a tightly-buttoned frock-coat? But Easterns seem to be able to copy only those peculiarities of Europeans which rightly make us a laughing stock to the judicious savage.