
A table of contents for *The Churchman* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_churchman_os.php

to declare war against France—a war which resulted in Spanish aggrandisement and in the loss of Calais to England.

The remainder of the Envoy's report does not call for particular comment. It is of great interest to the foreign State for which it was written, but it does not contain any novel matter for Englishmen. It is a treatise on our laws and forms of government, not from an Italian, but from an English point of view, and therefore familiar to us all. Soranzo describes our system of trial by jury, our courts of appeal, the power of the Lord Chancellor, and the jurisdiction of the Houses of Parliament. Trial by jury does not appear to meet with his approbation, as it seems to him a system dependent not so much upon the sense of justice in the individual as upon his powers of physical endurance. "To say," he comments, "how defective and reprehensible this mode of trial is, seems to me unnecessary, so I will merely observe that one of these twelve judges being better able than his fellows to withstand hunger and other inconveniences, has been the cause of the death of a person under trial, although the others wished to acquit him."

We have but seized upon the most salient points in this despatch, which appears to have been oddly enough overlooked by the more recent historians of this period, but to all interested in the reign of Mary the document, though of course partial and from a Roman Catholic point of view, is well deserving of attention.

ALEX. CHARLES EWALD.

ART. V.—AN EGYPTIAN FARM.

IF we are going to visit a farm in Egypt, we must abandon, of course, our English notions of farmhouse life; but these are so deeply rooted in most English minds, that though we do not exactly expect to see labourers in smock-frocks and hats, or rosy dairy-maids in pattens, red-brick walls with creepers over them, and trim vegetable gardens flanked by well-stocked rick-yards, still a vague sense of disappointment and amazement is apt to come over us unless well prepared for something very different indeed from the farms of our early recollections. But in its own way an Egyptian farm has much to please the eye, especially if it be an *artistic* eye, and to interest it in many ways. Let the reader accompany me to one, and try to see at least as much as, by pen and ink, he can of the farms in the Nile valley. The specimen chosen is like many others, the differences being trivial.

A wide plain of varied green is before us, for it is January, and the young corn is already in blade, and the clover has that emerald hue for which Egyptian clover is famed; the bean crops are in blossom, and the sugar canes, though nearly over in many places, are yet to be seen waving their sword-like leaves in others; clumps of trees, and little villages with palm groves around them, break the uniformity of the flat; and the bright, clear atmosphere of Egyptian winter makes everything look its best. Every shadow is purple, every ray of sun golden; in the far distance are the pale yellow tints of the desert, and the range of ochre and white cliffs faintly showing beyond them. In front is a cluster of huts grouped irregularly together and all of sun-dried mud, with rather a small window, or, yet more frequently, none at all in the huts of the poorer peasants. The door is low, frequently obliging people to stoop to enter, and the roof consists only of a number of reeds kept down by stones, or else bundles of maize straw, or palm branches.

The accommodation is far below the humblest stable or cow-house of English farms, yet here are families dwelling year after year. It must, however, be borne in mind that the people are almost always out of doors, so the discomfort of such abodes is far less than would be the case in our climate. These huts belong to labourers employed on the farm; the yard is enclosed by a wall of the same material as the huts, but tolerably high, and entered by an arched doorway with a massive wooden door, which stands open by day generally. On entering we find ourselves in a wide space shaded by two or three fine trees, either mulberry or *Lebich* trees,[1] or sometimes a sycamore fig. A deep well, with the wheel turned by oxen, which is called a *sacchea*, is very frequently found in this yard and takes up great part of it; if not here it must be elsewhere on the premises, and if a large farm, there must be several, as the crops depend greatly for irrigation upon the saccheas. The overflow of the Nile is sufficient in some places, but even there the three crops cannot be secured without artificial irrigation.

Buffaloes are often used to turn the wheel; but whatever animal it be must be blindfolded during the work, or its sight would be injured. The wheel turns a second furnished with rude pitchers attached to it by ropes, and communicating with a trough, from which little channels convey the water to the fields. On one side of the yard is the house, a rustic concern, generally built of mud brick, but often large, containing various rooms opening into a corridor, and sometimes a story with an outside flight of steps is found which is occupied by the owner and his family when they reside in "the peasant's land,"

[1] A kind of acacia, imported from India originally.

as the Egyptians term what we speak of familiarly as "the country." Instead of the animals being in separate divisions, the cows in their stalls, the horses in theirs, and so forth, they are seen lying down in a friendly way all together or wandering about as they like when in the yard; the huge buffaloes are almost always gentle and quiet, and the cows and calves likewise, the goats with their many little kids are mostly out by day with their keeper, but two or three are frequently to be seen skipping about the premises to pick up any stray leaves, or lying on the housetops to enjoy the sun; these belong to some of the labourers, but are kept out of the garden by the wall, or very few plants would be left uninjured. The fowls and geese, dogs, and ragged children, congregate in the yard and play together in the dust or dabble in the little water channels, according to their taste. A stout labourer's wife is probably washing clothes in the said channel while the wheels are at work; she does not spare trouble as she squats on the edge of the stone trough, her dark blue cotton mantle tucked around her, and the loose sleeves of her scanty dress of the same hue, rolled up from her brown, well-shaped arms; she wrings and scrubs heartily, but in washing coloured things rarely uses any soap and never *heats* any water, so that her clothes are never properly clean after all.

"*Malesh* (never mind), we are peasants," she replies, in answer to a remark on this deficiency; and laughing, she displays a set of milk-white and even teeth which many a fine lady might envy. But is there no dairy? What becomes of the milk? we ask. "Oh, we make butter out of doors," is the reply; and one of the women shows a goat-skin suspended by a rope to a nail in the wall, and half full of slightly-turned milk; she pulls a string fastened to this so as to jerk the contents of the bag to and fro, and thus the butter is made. They never salt or even wash it, so that it soon becomes sour, but is very good when quite fresh if washed properly. The people melt it down into clarified butter for cookery, and then it will keep through summer, when none can be made. The cheese is also prepared out of doors; this is made not only from buffaloes' milk, but from goats and sheep (the latter is extremely good when cleanly made). It is drained by means of a mat of fine reeds, and then salted, but not pressed at all, and is, in fact, only salted lard.

The ragged clothing of the women and children might lead one to suppose the farm labourers all wretchedly poor. But though there is much distress occasionally, it is caused either by a "bad Nile," when the water has been much under the mark; or by extra taxation administered by petty officials, who too often illtreat and fleece the peasants, to fill their private purses. Many peasant women, however, look poorer than they are, from

being quite indifferent to rags and dirt, and they keep a better veil and mantle for feast days or going to the weekly market at some country town. The men are usually better clad, though of course many are poorly off, but most peasants and farm labourers have a felt cap surmounted by a turban of stout muslin, cotton underclothing, and a great brown cloak or loose coat called a zabout, made of wool spun by their own hands from the brown fleeces of their sheep, or from goats' or camels' hair. While resting from hard work the countryman often spins (the women hardly ever do this work), a rude distaff and spindle being carried easily about with him; a shepherd always has these implements, as well as a reed pipe, on which very primitive and monotonous, but not unpleasant, tunes are played by him as he watches his flock.

They are a cheerful, contented people, and seem to enjoy life heartily, and to be patient under its ordinary troubles, though if excited they will be extremely passionate, and on the loss of relatives or other serious griefs give way to their feelings with the unrestrained vehemence of all Southern natures.

But what of man's higher part? Does no man care for their souls? Do they live and die like the cattle they tend? As far as the owner of the land is concerned they certainly might do so in general, and most of them are very ignorant even of the distorted religion they profess to believe. There is in most villages a small, rude mosque, and always a burial-place outside the dwellings, but there is no one answering to a parish minister or priest. The most influential person in the village is generally the *Sheikh*, or chief man; the Government Sheikhs are distinct from those appointed for religious purposes, and such an one exercises functions somewhat like a mayor or a French *Préfet*. He is responsible to Government for the quota of men furnished for conscription in the army and for other secular matters, but at the same time has a power, not very clearly defined but strongly felt, over the people's consciences. It is difficult to distribute portions of Scripture or speak a work of Gospel truth if the Sheikh of the village is a bigoted, obstinate man; if, on the other hand, he is sensible and kindly, it is comparatively easy to collect together a band of listeners.

In my yearly Nile boat mission journeys, I and my helpers in the work have found the people generally ready to listen to Gospel histories and conversations. Had we means we would gladly do much more, but very few among the numbers who toil in the cotton and corn fields year after year have any one to ask them, "Where is your soul going after death?"

The women are more profoundly ignorant than the men. They do not even go to the little mosque to pray on Fridays, nor, with very rare exceptions, pray at all, and many of them know

nothing but a few silly legends handed from one to another by oral tradition and the formula of their faith. "There is but one God, and Mahomet is the apostle of God." But it will not do to imagine they are the less bigoted because they are ignorant. Quite the contrary; but still there are many who are willing to listen to the reading of the Gospel. In these out of the way spots many will listen, no doubt, from mere curiosity, and because it is a novelty to see a lady in "frank" dress sitting among them. But some are really, as it seems, glad to hear the good tidings, to them so new, that God loves even them. Great is the joy and earnest the prayers of the teacher when she can see the poor peasant woman's eye fixed with an expression of real thoughtfulness, and hear her say "Truly this is good," or repeat the words "Lord be merciful to me a sinner"!

I once met a poor widow in the little cluster of huts belonging to a farm where I had formerly spent a few days, and heard her say, striking the sunbaked earth on which we were seated—"What is a poor woman to do whose heart is like this ground? How can she pray?" I replied, "Oh! my sister, hear the words of God on this; 'I will take away the stony heart and will give you an heart of flesh,'" and then I tried to show how in Jesus we find all we need: very imperfectly, no doubt, for it was many years ago, and I did not speak very fluently, though able to read and explain some simple texts; but she seemed to take it in, and be comforted, and promised to pray for light from above. This is only one instance of many among Moslim villagers, both men and women, who by my missionary friends and myself have heard something of the truth. The seed is cast on the waters. We go forth in the name of our Master in faith and in hope that one day He will cause the earth to bring forth fruit for His glory.

M. L. WHATELY.