





ALEXANDRIA MEMORIES

by

Count Patrice de Zogheb

With a Preface

by

H.E. Moustapha Pasha Fahmy

Hon. Architect in Chief
of the Royal Palaces,

Director General of the Alexandria
Municipality.

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Sketches

by

Ladislav Balog

Architect.

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Illustrations

from

the Author's Collection



Alexandria
1949

By the same Author

"Our Home in Cairo"

With an Architectural Note
by Professor K. A. C. Creswell

B. S. A., HON. A. R. I. B. A.

"Red Cross and Red Crescent in Alexandria"

To my Grandfather's memory

— gratefully —

I dedicate
this book.

FOREWORD

by

H. E. Moustafa Pasha Fahmy

Hon. Architect in Chief of the Royal Palaces

A year ago, all real Alexandrians — and by that I mean all those who sincerely take to heart the interests of our Town — were much perturbed on suddenly learning that the Palais Zogheb had been purchased by people not connected with Alexandria.

Since seventy years, Alexandrians were accustomed to admire the dignified Renaissance façade of the last private palace to retain its original architectural splendour.

Dismay was unanimous! Nobody imagined that the house would be cleared of all the buildings surrounding it and that it would reacquire its former appearance. We are living, alas, in a century where two wars have annihilated conservative ideas. The cult of Beauty, like that of Art, does not bring in a penny. The Palais Zogheb, one of the last mementoes of prewar Alexandria will thus soon be no more....

The magnificent railings which are the work of a master-craftsman have already been removed and have — according to rumours — been carried to the country to be used in a stable. Tiny cigarette shops have made their appearance and, above them, have arisen offices which look like boxes of matches piled on top of one another. We will probably soon hear the sound of picaxes attacking this venerable building which

has weathered successfully seventy years of its existence without a stone moving; it could last two centuries more!

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I should like to record my deepest respect for Gouron, the architect who designed it. His talent is only equalled by his modesty for the building bears no trace of his name which might well have been forgotten.

This architect was — in truth — a conscientious master with a sense of beauty and vigour. He had the same breadth of vision as Charles Garnier — who, as late as 1874, finished the Paris Opera — and as David who built the largest theatre in France, the Châtelet.

On the other hand, at the foot of the monumental staircase with its base of Corinthian columns, between four lions, appear in golden characters the names of Vincenzo Bonani and Sons who produced the white marble from their Carrara quarries and of Andrea Ricci who, in 1877, built the staircase.

The French Renaissance style of the Palais Zogheb is based on the laws of perspective and Euclide's geometry; it obeys the laws of nature and is an example of the classical art of the period in which conventional antique lines blend with modern ones. We have thus a compromise which is neither a consequence nor a contradiction of *milieu* but of purely ideological causes.

Since that epoch new architectural elements have appeared with hitherto unknown forms inspired by the means at the builders' disposal: time has imposed itself as a fourth dimension and the Architect's task has been, therefore, that of organising space to satisfy human needs varying according to epoch and not as traditional doctrine would like them to be: the dualism of form and function, which predominated since the Renaissance, is doomed to disappear and has slowly evolved into organic architecture.

With the Palais Zogheb will disappear the only Alexandrian example of Second Empire Architecture where the minor arts — sculpture and painting — blend with the major art of architecture. With it will go the orderly lines of its frontage, its marble pilasters, its light Greco-Roman architraves, its cariatidae; all this was the architecture of our fathers, which though rather theatrical, tended nevertheless towards what was great and beautiful.

Its passing away brings to mind the marvels of ancient Alexandria which now lie buried under the sand already smothering the first two steps of the buildings. Of its shapely façade there will soon remain nothing so that the wayfarer will be confronted with the dull and uniform frontage of Sharia Fouad.

Let us therefore, throw a last glance on the remains of a great Alexandria epoch before it yields to the march of Time...

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I have been asked why the town of Alexandria does not purchase the building? It would, I admit, be an ideal setting for official receptions and the Governor's private residence, as a fine Arts Museum, for exhibitions, as a Municipal Library housing cultural societies. The acoustics of its large rooms with the musicians' gallery and the cupola would be the very thing for a Concert Hall of a School of Music. Even were this large palace to remain unoccupied, I cannot help thinking that its marble and oak decorations its *scagliola* walls, its spectacular columns, its wooden carvings, its *affreschi*, its bronze sculptures, its massive doors all of which contribute to the beauty of rooms — even empty of furniture — would retain for the Town a standard of beauty which our present mean and materialistic generation can never hope to attain.

As soon as I heard that the premises were for sale, I realized that — alas — we have in Egypt no legislative machinery enabling this residence to be classified as an historical monument. In America funds would have at once been found for its restoration. I, myself felt, howe-

ver, that I had not got the right to impose on the Town's meagre budget an expenditure of L.E. 142.000 which would have had to be trebled in order to demolish the buildings shutting in the palace to restore the gardens which once surrounded it and to pay for the annual upkeep.

May I appeal, therefore, to public opinion to prevent this crime of *lèse-edilité*? Why should certain Egyptian Clubs and Associations not get together to purchase in common what would then house the Royal Automobile Club, the Royal Fishing and Shooting Club, the Egyptian Touring Club, the Mohamed Aly and Syrian Clubs? My appeal may perhaps even be heard by some Maecenas who — like the late John Antoniadès and his late Majesty King Fouad — might repeat the *beau geste* of laying at H.M. King Farouk's feet the gift to the Town of this historical residence ?

Let us hope for such a miracle or let us, at any rate, treasure the illusion that some day it will take place...

“*Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume,
Labuntur anni*”

HORACE: *Odes*: Book II : XIV

In what is now rapidly changing society, large houses nobody can keep up are fast disappearing. They are, one by one, giving way to the builder and, on their site, are arising large blocks of flats. There, delightful young things will pursue the trend of modern life: cocktails, jazz, cards, living accommodation being limited — with rigid economy — to two roomed flats. Tony can thus afford a car and Baby a fur coat with a string of pearls for the Riviera where a film star, a politician, a *demi-castor*, a crook, a polo player and a banker congregate daily to soak in alcohol ...

Egypt is no exception to the rule and Alexandria must also bow to the inexorable law of change. That is why my brother and I have had to follow the example of others and to part with a family house which — even if we could have afforded to occupy it — would no longer have been adaptable to present circumstances.

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It was in the seventies that my grandfather, the late Michel Dimitri, Count de Zogheb, purchased a large plot of land in the quarter of Alexandria described, during the later centuries — in opposition to *la Ville Franque* — as *la Ville des Arabes*. Maps of the period show the residential part of Alexandria crowded into a strip of land starting at Ras el Tin and bounded, on the North West and North East respectively, by what was then called “The Great Harbour” (now the Western Harbour) and the “New Harbour” (now the Eastern Harbour).

The town then continued in a South Easterly direction *via* the “Great Square” (now Midan Mohamed Aly) as far as the intersection of what is now Cairo station street and Rue Rosetta (now Rue Fouad.) (Fig. 1)



Alexandria in 1855

by Charles Muller

(fig. 1)

Beyond that was a jumble of gardens, rubbish heaps, fields, ruins and *fellaheen* houses through which rue Rosette — the Ptolemaic Canopic street — led to the gate of that name; Rosetta is in Italian — formerly the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean — *Rashid*. The town was protected by fortifications modernised under Mohamed Aly by Gallice Bey, an officer of Louis Philippe’s army.

A good idea of the topography of Alexandria throughout the ages can be obtained by consulting the excellent *Atlas Historique de la Ville et des Ports d’Alexandrie* by Gaston Jondet, published in 1921 by the *Société Sultanienne de Géographie*.

The acumen of the founder of the city, Alexander the Great — or whoever advised him in choosing the site of the city of his name — is evident. The strategical, commercial and climatic advantages of the strip of land between the Mediterranean and lake Mareotis strike one at once. Dinocrates, of Rhodes, famous through his reconstruction of the temple of Ephesus, — burnt down by Erostratos — had been entrusted with the plans. His starting point was the old Egyptian village of Rhacotis, tradition being that the shape of the city was that of the Macedonian *Chlamida*, a sort of parallelogram drawn out at the four corners. As Diophorus puts it, “Alexandria had her streets laid out so as to receive the breezes of summer”. The town could be easily defended as it was reached by the narrow strip of land between the sea and the lake (Fig. 2).



Map of ancient Alexandria
by Mahmoud Bey El Falaky (1866) (fig. 2)

Alexandria which became the residence of the Ptolemies, and later of Roman Praetors, gradually acquired great importance owing to its geographical position and commercial intercourse with Syria, India and Arabia. In the time of Theodore, (50 B.C.) it had become one of the

first towns of the world as much through the wealth of its inhabitants as through their number.

Its luxury, learning and opulence was proverbial. The climate was temperate, one of the attractive features of the summer months being the possibility of excursions by road or boat on the canal between Alexandria and Canope, the modern Abukir.

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The chaos caused by the fall of the Roman and Byzantine Empires, the Crusades, Arabic warfare and Turkish misrule had become fatal for Alexandria. At one time it was reduced to a miserable fishing village of some 5000 souls eking out a meagre existence on the strip of land formed on what had once been the Heptastadion and, later, became rue Franque and rue Ras el Tin (Fig. 3)

A Danish naval Officer, Frédéric Louis Norden, who, in 1737, visited Egypt describes Alexandria as being in a ruinous state. This gentleman seems to have been in an acid mood when he wrote :

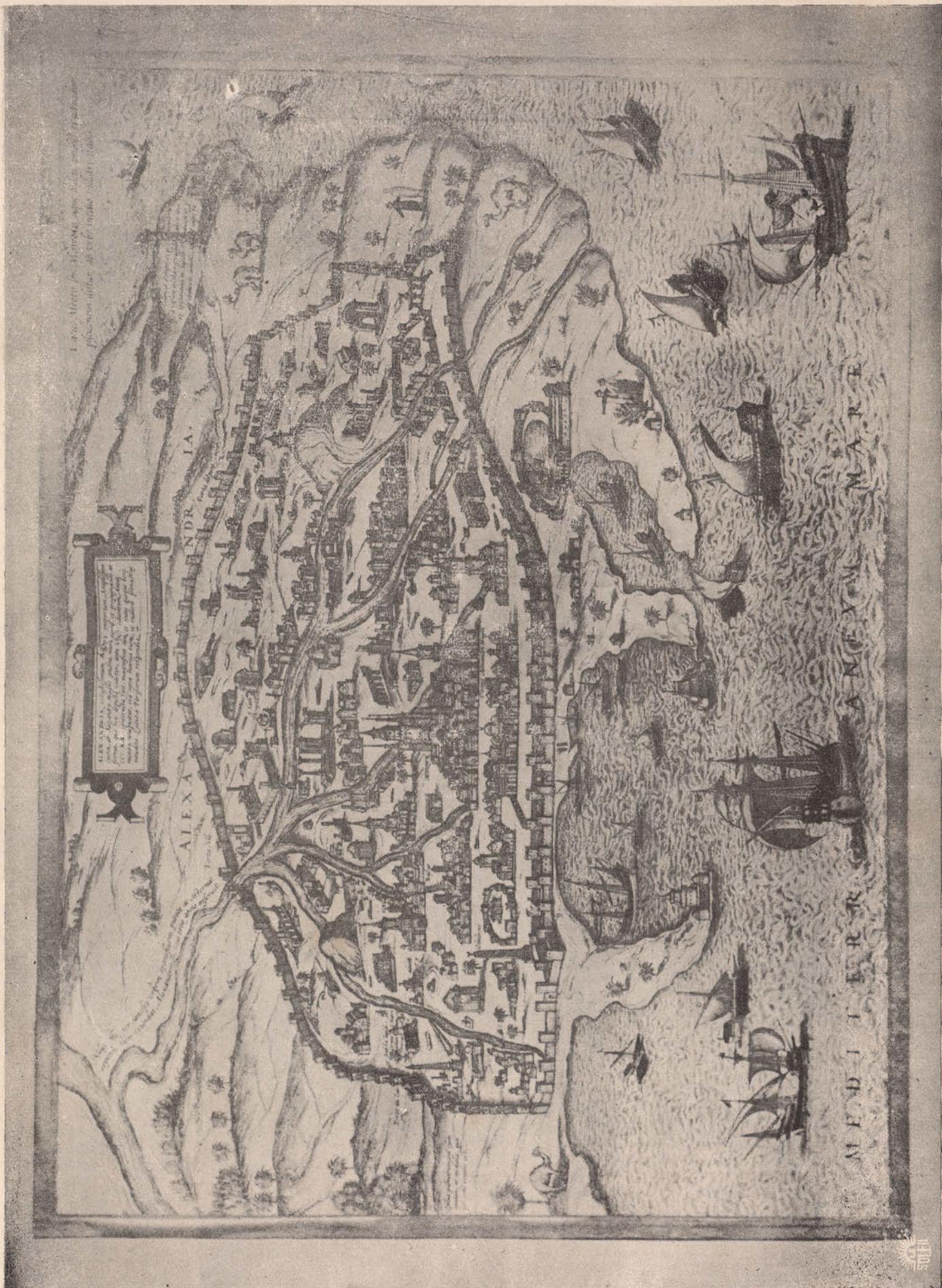
‘ Il est d’usage parmi les Français d’Alexandrie de témoigner
“ un respect extrême pour leur Consul afin de le faire d’autant plus
“ valoir dans l’esprit des Turcs et des autres nations.....

“ Les airs qu’il se donne parmi les siens ne lui permettent pas
“ trop de converser avec eux. Ainsi il paye sa grandeur par une vie
“ assez ennuyeuse pour un homme qui aimerait la société.

“ Les Anglais, eux aussi, se tiennent tranquilles et se conduisent
“ sans faire beaucoup de bruit.

“ S’il s’agit d’entreprendre quelque affaire délicate, ils se met-
“ tent à l’écart et laissent aux Français l’honneur d’aplanir les diffi-
“ cultés. Quand il en résulte du bénéfice, ils y ont leur part, et si les
“ affaires tournent mal, ils se garantissent du mieux qu’ils peuvent.
“ Voilà tout ce qu’on peut dire des nations établies à Alexandrie.»

Alexandria continued to vegetate until Bonaparte’s invasion came to disturb the lethargy of centuries. The first glimpse the French ar-



Map of Alexandria
by Jean Blaeu

(fig. 3)

my had of Alexandria was the Marabou lighthouse when the fleet anchored before Agami, several hours passing before boats could reach shores by moonlight. Without waiting for the arrival of his horses, Bonaparte hurriedly marched at the head of his army towards Alexandria and, by eight o'clock next morning, standing at the base of the Pompey pillar, he gave the order to attack. After some fighting, the defenders of the city withdrew in disorder and French soldiers were soon gazing on a vast town with narrow roads and flat terraced houses very different to the tiled roof dwellings of Europe. Stately minarets and domes with the glistening Crescent of Islam added their charm to the picture, while curly haired Arabs, in white and green *emmas* and long white *galabeyas* offered the French an unusual spectacle. By noon, Bonaparte made his triumphant march inside the town, luck being as ever with him for a bullet, fired by a Turk from the roof of a house, merely scratched his left boot. The man was caught and shot on the spot.

*Le 21 Brumaire de la guerre
et accordé.*
*Paris le 18 Fructidor
le 1^{er} complémentaire*

Provençal

Qu Premier Consul de la
République française

Citoyen Consul

Thomas Plantier (capitaine de
Grenadier à la 62^{ème} brigade).

Vous demande votre place comme Capitaine
d'une Comp^{agnie} de vétérans (différents blessures
qu'il a reçues pendant la guerre actuelle qu'il
a faite sans interruption, le mettrait hors d'état

*Envoyé au Bureau
des Vétérans en activité
pour transmettre à la
Commission afin de
régulariser les situations
du Pénitencier Consul
Le 21 Brumaire de la guerre
le 1^{er} complémentaire
+ Alliquon*

Autograph of Bonaparte

Bonaparte, on landing, took up his residence in Alexandria at the *Okelle* Dumreicher. The latter was a well known family of Danish descent -- resident since many years in Alexandria — to which Alfred de Dumreicher, whom my father succeeded as Danish Diplomatic Agent and Consul General for Denmark in Egypt, belonged. Dumreicher had, from an old Arab maid, — peeping through the keyhole — a first hand description of the arrival of Bonaparte on whom she had waited on as young girl. He strode up to his room, slammed the door and sat down before a large map of Egypt over which he remained poring, head in hands, snapping and snarling at any interruption!

Friendly contacts were easily established with the inhabitants and many of them cooperated with the French not only in administrative but also in military matters. This was especially noticeable when Bonaparte advanced into Palestine, the following document being of interest. It concerns a mission which a member of my family — Antoine Zogheb — had been entrusted with by Bonaparte and explains itself:

“ Je soussigné Joseph Hamaouy, ancien Colonel des Mameluks
“ de la vieille garde, Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur et de Saint
“ Louis, certifie que feu Antoine Zogheb, oncle de Mr. l'Abbé Don
“ Joseph Zogheb, étant allé à S. Jean d'Acre en compagnie d'un Gé-
“ néral que le Général en chef Bonaparte envoya pour traiter avec
“ le Bacha de cette ville, celui-ci ayant refusé tout arrangement ren-
“ voya le Général, fit trancher la tête du malheureux Zogheb et la
“ fit jeter à la mer.

“ En foi de quoi j'ai délivré le présent certificat.

(s) Hamaouy.”

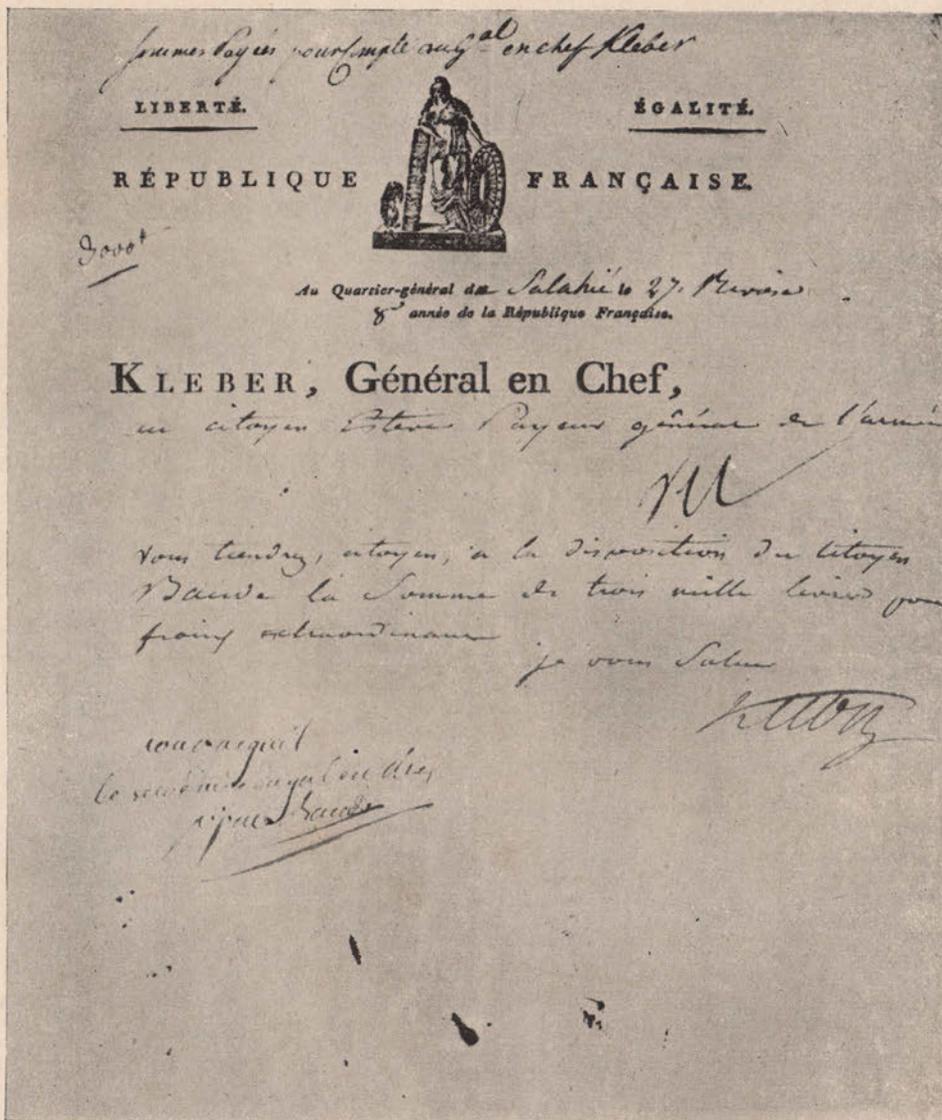
Paris, le 15 Juillet 1839.

This unfortunate member of my family — according to Mou'alem Nicolas-El-Turki, Secretary of the Emir of the Druzes — was accompanied by one Anna Attié who shared Zogheb's fate.

The Hamaouys are a well known Syrian Christian Orthodox family. Michel Hamaouy, Joseph's nephew, was appointed by the French Government Treasurer for the Egyptian Refugees' depot in Marseilles. Joseph's father had been, during the French occupation of Egypt a collector of taxes. The “Bacha” was Ali Pacha, surnamed “El Djezzar» (the

Butcher) by the wretched population subjected to his rule. Bonaparte's expedition against Palestine and Syria being likely to influence the fate of the Druzes, many of whom claimed French descent, the Emir of the Druzes ordered Mou'alleme Nicolas to Damietta an excellent observation point between Egypt and Syria. A letter from him, which was intercepted by Ali Pasha, caused the death of one of his brothers then living at St. Jean d'Acre.

The French occupation was — however short — an excellent opportunity for Alexandria to enter into close contact with Europe, the general standard of living being greatly improved thereby.



Autograph of Kleber

After the evacuation of Egypt by Bonaparte's troops, Turkey sent Mohamed Pacha Kouzrouf to reestablish its suzerainty over Egypt. Kouzrouf was accompanied by Mohamed Ali, a young Albanian Officer who after many vicissitudes, was proclaimed Pacha of Egypt and recognized by Turkey in that capacity. Though it is outside the scope of this little book to describe what his genius accomplished for Egypt, it should be recorded that, under his vigorous rule, Alexandria prospered exceedingly and it soon became possible to see what he had achieved: public security was such that it was possible to journey safely with a donkey-load of gold from Alexandria to Luxor! Order reigned everywhere: streets had been cleared of their mounds of rubbish; city walls had been rebuilt; public gardens were laid out; a regular distribution of canal water was assured; the East Harbour was reopened: consulates were active: hotels, lodging houses, restaurants and coffeehouses were doing a flourishing trade: there were many foreigners including several doctors and quite a number of French milliners and dressmakers!

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 did not — strangely enough — deal a death blow to Alexandria which, on the contrary, gained materially through the political and commercial advantages which this great waterway brought to the rest of Egypt.

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When my father, in the seventies, returned to Egypt from France where he had been educated at the *Lycée Impérial de Versailles*, he found a prosperous town still under the vigorous impulse of Mohamed Ali and his successors. Its appearance was largely influenced by Mediterranean art, its architecture being that of a less beautiful port of the Italian seaboard; many streets were still unlighted and, till the middle of the century, it had been no uncommon sight to see the financial magnate Tossizza whose friendship with Mohamed Ali had obtained for him the appointment of first Hellenic Consul General to Egypt returning home on his donkey preceded by a servant carrying a lantern!

Paved streets were rare and, during the rainy season, many of them were reduced to such a state of slush that cartboards of Ptolemaic potsherds from Kom el Chougafa quarter had to be dumped down into seas of mud to steady it. Pupils of the Jesuit College in Rue Abdel Mo-neim had often to alight and assist the driver of the college bus and his mules to pull his vehicle out of the mud. Hordes of pariah dogs roamed the streets. They were ruled by an unwritten law forbidding a dog of one quarter to enter another so that any intruder was immediately set upon by those already in possession. Alexandria nights were thus enlivened by a chorus of dogs barking, growling and yapping either at some passer-by or at one another. These sounds were accompanied by the caterwauling of amorous cats who, to this day, still disturb the Alexandrian's slumbers.

The land purchased by my grandfather was, as I have already said, in Rue Rosette (now rue Fouad). The latter was, many centuries ago, the Canopic street, the main artery of the Ptolemaic city, the ground level of the time being some ten or twelve metres below the present one. A good idea of the Canopic street and the rest of Ptolemaic Alexandria can be had by consulting Mahmoud Pacha El-Falaki's map of Alexandria of 1866. The principal streets were paved with grey or black granite and it is still possible to identify seven longitudinal streets intersected by eleven ones. Tradition has it that, all along the Canopic street, arose palaces of white marble the glare of which was such that it was necessary to protect wayfarers with awnings stretching across from house to house.

Of this grandeur nothing remained in the seventies except gardens, fields, mounds of rubbish and fellaheen huts. From the title deeds, dated the 9th of Shawal 1283 (A.D. 1867), one gathers that the land selected by my grand father was composed of fields belonging to one Mohamed Abbas and others. The description seems to have been somewhat vague, such terms being used: "The four plots of land are between the street of the Eastern gate and Missalla Street near the Roman Garden." After various changes of ownership (Constantin Natso, Dominia Vittori

etc...) the land eventually went to Edward, Count de Lavison, the ultimate purchaser being my grand father. Lavison was a Russian who had enjoyed, for many years, the friendship of the Khedive Ismail, grandfather of H.M. Farouk 1st, present King of Egypt.

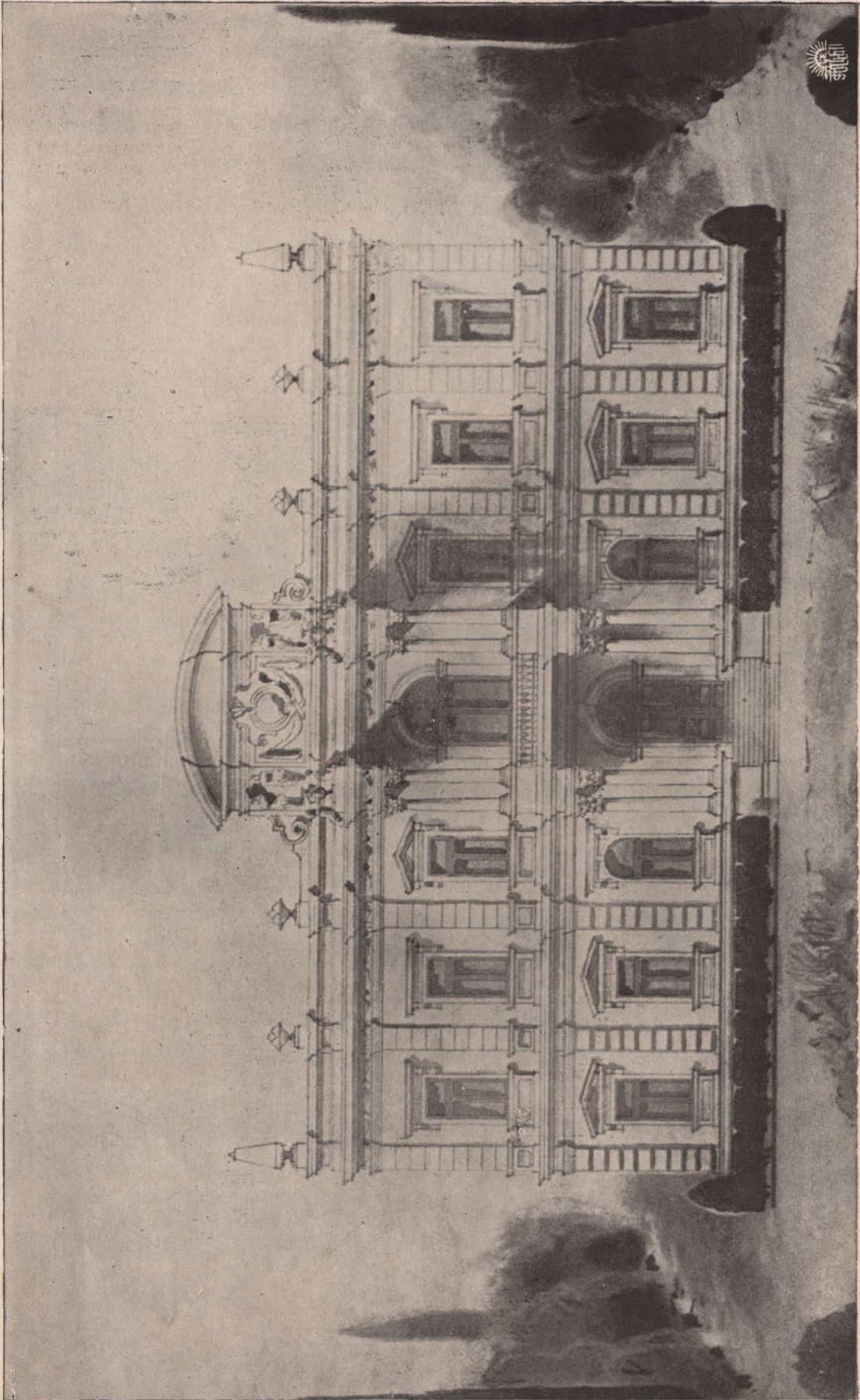
Then, as in later years, building was an Italian speciality. Architects and contractors of that nationality were very much in demand — not only because of the great Roman, Renaissance and Settecento traditions — but, also, because they were assisted by both skilled and unskilled Italian workmen whose qualities made them ideal builders. These Italians were sober and hardworking, honest and easy to handle. In this respect, it is interesting to note that, to this day, the Italian *scalpellino* is the only workman who can carve Aswan granite on the spot, no mean feat for Europeans who find the summer months of Upper Egypt extremely difficult. My grandfather's house therefore — in spite of a French Architect — conformed very much to the Italian conception of the *casa signorile* (Fig. 4 & 5).

At the time, it was described as follows :

“ A few minutes from the Zizinia theatre, could be seen the Palais Zogheb with its ironwrought emblazoned gates. These were the work of Théodore Autofage, a French master-craftsman. The plans were those of Gouron a French architect, a pupil of Garnier who built the Paris Opera. The frontage, of a dull grey colour in the Italian Renaissance style, was criticized by some and admired by others but all agreed as to the warm welcome it afforded to friends of all nationalities.

“ Between the railings and the frontage, fountains played: they were surrounded by ornamental flowers beds leading up to a large carved oak door framed by marble columns supporting a large balcony on which the window of the ball-room gave. The railings were covered with creepers which when in bloom, perfumed the whole street.

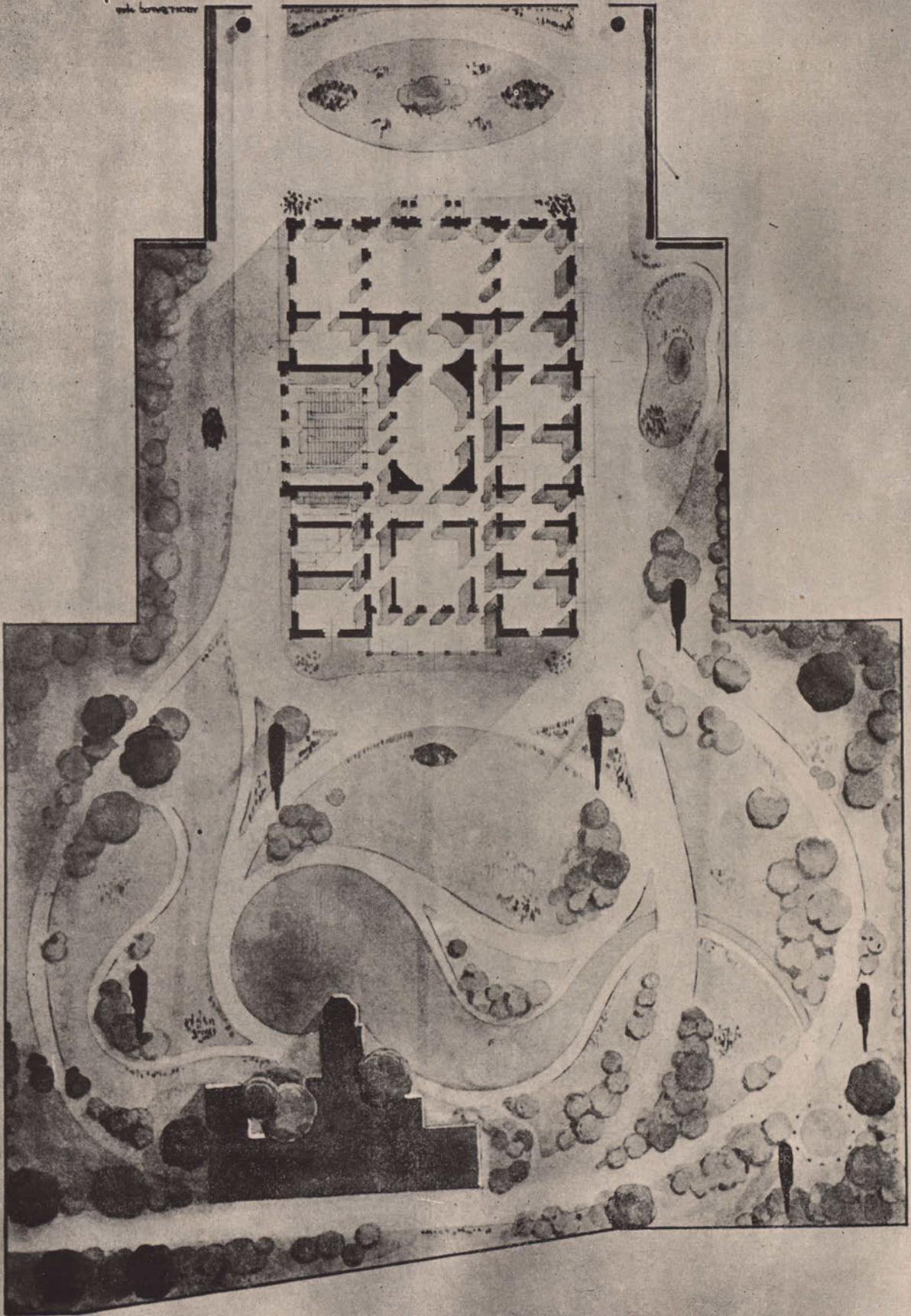
“ The front door led into a square Directoire hall with marble statues of the four seasons with, right and left, what were described as the *salon jaune* and the *salon bleu*. The *salon bleu*, used for informal receptions, was distinguished by banana trees in large vases which gave it a peculiar and unusual appearance. From the hall, through a Pompeian atrium, could be seen a monumental



Frontage

(Pl. 4)





“ staircase in white marble supported by marble lions. It had been
“ carved at Carrara by Vincenzo Bonanni and Sons and was set up
“ in Alexandria by Andrea Ricci. (Fig. 6) On the right of the stair-
“ case was the dining room in Louis XVI style, decorated with *af-
“ freschi*; it gave on a loggia through which one descended to gar-
“ dens and a lake.



Grand Staircase

(fig. 6)

“ The staircase, lighted by four life size bronze statues support-
“ ing torches, led to the *bel étage* — or *piano nobile* — where,
“ through a marble atrium, one came to the ball-room. The latter,
“ of the somewhat flamboyant style, akin to that of the Paris Opera,

“ was very like the ball room of Stafford house, once the London residence of the Duke of Sutherland, and now the London Museum. It had the defects and the qualities of an epoch in which taste, science and wealth strove for mastery against one another.” (See Frontispiece).

The rest of the *bel étage* was taken up by drawing rooms and bedrooms, some of them with exquisite frescoes more especially those in the Italian Settecento style at the end of the ball room (Fig. 7). Some of the rooms and my mother's for instance, were furnished in neo-



Ball room Ceiling

(fig. 7)

Arabic style, walls and ceiling being elaborately painted in arabesques of many colours. Another was the *chambre des bambous* with delicately painted bamboo leaves and branches on its walls. Many ceilings were in the Pompeian style while the library had less happy *affreschi* of famous writers and musicians.

Grounds with an ornamental lake, marble statues and vases, surrounded by flowers and trees of exotic origin, blended well with the dignified proportions of the building. A venerable *figus bengalensis* of enormous size, which took root by its branches, appeared, however, somewhat abnormal in these Italian surroundings! At the end of the grounds, were stables, a large tennis court — then an innovation in Egypt — and a banana plantation. Our next door neighbours were the Church and Monastery of Saint Saba — seat of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch — a Church having been founded there many centuries ago on the site of the Temple of Apollo. Rue Saint Saba and rue Photios separating us from them had not yet been opened.

North East of the Patriarchate grounds was what became later the Boulevard d'Allemagne. It was called *la route des soupirs* owing to its being a favorite meeting for lovers. North West of the Patriarchate what eventually became *Rue de l'Hôpital Grec* was then a dangerous zone to cross as it was infested by footpads.

Electricity being then unknown in Egypt, the *palazzo* was, on festive occasions, decorated by hundreds of small lanterns and, on the occasion of his accession visit to Alexandria, H.H. the late Khedive Abbas Hilmy told my grandfather how much he had been struck by the beautiful frontage of the house lit up in the dark.

Little, unfortunately, remains now of all this. The house still stands but the ornamental gardens, gates and railings are no more. The frontage is dishonoured by a series of buildings which, year by year, have crept up to it and it will soon be no longer visible from the street.

In the meanwhile, the town was acquiring much importance, more especially when in 1876, under the enlightened Khedivate of Ismail, the Mixed or International Tribunals were founded, Alexandria being selected for the Court of Appeal. State financial difficulties had however arisen and resulted finally in the abdication of the Khedive Ismail in favour of his son Prince Tewfick. Financial control having been imposed by the European Powers, a conflict arose between the Khedive and certain officers of his army — headed by Colonel Arabi Pacha — who were soon in open revolt.

The position became more and more involved and June 1882 found the British Fleet, under Admiral Seymour, in Alexandria harbour together with the warships of other foreign powers. The latter, however, in spite of riots starting on June 11th, did not take action, but the riots stopped thanks to Arabi in response to a telegram sent to him.

On July 11th, Seymour — who had unsuccessfully called on Arabi to cease mounting any more guns on the harbour forts — opened fire. The night before, all merchant shipping had left the harbour and in the town, which — except for the Egyptian Army — had been evacuated, remained only a few Europeans, the others having taken refuge on board ship.

M. Scotidis, an attaché of the Hellenic Diplomatic Agency and, later, Hellenic Consul Général in Alexandria, has contributed an interesting description of events in which he says :

“ One cannot but admire the courage and steadfastness of the
“ Egyptian gunners, while at same time expressing regret at the gal-
“ lantry and imprudence which these victims of Arabi showed in
“ vain. Most of the forts having no parapets, the biggest guns were
“ overturned and surrounded by hundreds of dead. Through the
“ thick smoke, from time to time, these gallant soldiers, who could
“ have served their country under other circumstances, appeared as
“ heroes struggling against giants.”

Seymour's accurate firing destroyed the forts but he did not unfortunately land a force to maintain order, the result being riots more disastrous than those of June. With the withdrawal of Arabi's troops and

the departure of the Khedive from Ras el Tin to Ramleh, the riffraff of the port lost all self control. The town soon became the prey of incendiaries, pillagers and marauders; plundering went on all the 19th. and, by evening, a large part of the town was in flames, fires continuing till July 21th. An idea of the damage can be ascertained by consulting the plan, drawn up at the time, by an Italian Architect, Ulisse Calvi.

On July 23th at 3 p.m., 200 British seamen under Captain Campbell were landed, guards being placed at the Moharrem and Rosetta Gates with a few American, Greek and Russian sailors occupying their respective Consulates. Lord Charles Beresford was appointed Provost Marshall and it is thanks to his energetic action that more damage was not done. A British Military Court set up at the Palais Tossizza, now the Bourse, dealt at once with pillagers caught *flagrante delicto* (Fig. 8). Those found guilty were tied to trees in the Square and shot.



Military Court in Mohamed Aly Square

(fig. 8)

On Friday 24th Alexandria was in a lamentable condition. The rue Franque, Mohamed Aly Square, rue des Soeurs, and rue Attarine were in flames. (Fig. 9 and 10) The streets were strewn with goods abandoned by pillagers. Many people were assassinated and Professor Schweinfurth the well known German explorer was only saved by the courageous intervention of Zulfikar Pacha, the Khedive's Master of Ceremonies. There were, also many other cases of Europeans having been protected by the devotion of Egyptians.



Mohamed Aly Square before the Bombardment

(fig. 9)

British sailors assisted by American, Greek, Russian and German seamen finally extinguished the fires raging all over the city.

Several buildings belonging to my family were gutted and there is a curious case of clairvoyance connected with the destruction of my great uncle Joseph Dimitri Count de Zogheb's residence in rue Rosette (Fig. 11). His son Gabriel occupied before the bombardment one of his father's houses in rue Nebi Daniel and his son René was baptized there.

As customary in the East, the *grand salon* of the Nebi Daniel house was used for the ceremony which was suddenly interrupted by my great uncle calling out: "I have seen myself lying dead on my bed in the middle of the room". The confusion can be imagined! Order was restored by my great aunt saying to her husband rather rudely: "You are *gaga*" or words to that effect!



Mohamed Aly Square after the Bombardment

(fig. 10)

Some years afterwards, when my great uncle's residence in rue Rosette was destroyed by the bombardment, he went to live in the Nebi Daniel house formerly occupied by Gabriel.

He fell ill and — owing to the heat — he was carried to the coolest room in the house which was, apparently, the *grand salon*. He died there shortly afterwards and — till he had been laid in his coffin — his body remained exposed for several hours on a bed in the middle of the room surrounded by flowers and tapers just as he had seen himself many years before!

My grandfather's house did not suffer any damage but — as children — we used to gloat over dark stains on a sofa in the *salon bleu*. These, we asserted, were blood stains. Somebody had taken refuge in the salon and, being wounded, had bled to death there.



Joseph, Count de Zogheb's town house Rue Rosette after bombardment

(fig. 11)

Thanks to the intervention of H.H. the Khedive Tewfik and the equitable attitude of the Egyptian Authorities, all victims, whatever their nationality, were indemnified, the total sum finally reaching 106.795.250 francs. Thus, a few years later, nothing remained of all these ruins on the site of which had arisen instead European buildings replacing the picturesque century old *okalas* of Alexandria.

My father, a few months afterwards, married the daughter of a Helene notable, Sophocles Constantinidi, who for many years had been President of the Hellenic Community of Alexandria. My mother was as

kind as she was beautiful, a perfect wife and a perfect mother. She and my father settled down in my grandfather's house in what appears now an obsolete and defunct order of society.

Family life was supreme and in Alexandria — always a censorious town attaching especial importance to the *qu'en dira-t-on* — many customs and conventions, inexplicable to the present casual generation, were laws not to be broken with impunity. Form, appearance and *ton* were everything, sloppy manners not being tolerated. Every hostess had her reception day, ours being Tuesday, a tradition which was continued by my sisters in Cairo, after the first World War, as late as 1921. Men, when calling, took especial care to hide the inside of their hats which they held in their — gloved — left hand. Tea and syrupy drinks were handed round after which gallant side-whiskered old gentlemen would conduct the ladies to pat-a-ball tennis (Fig. 12).



Tennis in the eighties

(fig 12)

My grandfather, whose word was law, lived — with two younger brothers, two unmarried daughters, his son and daughter-in-law with six

grandchildren — in patriarchal fashion. Lunch was at 12,30 and dinner at 7,30. Meals were copious and heavy and there were always a few empty places for friends remaining to a meal.

Alexandria has always been famed for its Junonesque women and this made the late Lord Carrington — a well known expert in such matters — remark: "I am afraid there is in the Alexandria goddess more *aubergine* than *ambrosine*." The rather rich food our beauties feast on certainly inclines them to the opulent type! Gabriel Charmes wrote, some sixty years ago in the austere *Journal des Debats*, that few towns in the world contain as many beautiful women as Alexandria and that church parades after Catholic and Greek Mass were a weekly social event, chairs being hired every Sunday to watch the interminable processsion of beautiful church goers.

Large balls were very much the fashion. They did not, like modern parties, start with the *jeunesse dorée* rushing to the bar nor was it the custom, during the evening, to walk about, glass in hand, with the subsequent danger — on kissing a lady's hand — to find it perfumed with whisky... An Alexandria ball room was a magnificent spectacle. Women wore decently low cut dresses with tiaras, diamond rings and ropes of pearls round their necks, the *collier de chien* being an especial favorite. Men were all in swallow tails with white gloves and pumps. Dances were the Waltz, the Washington Post, the Polka and the Mazurka while during the evening, couples went through the complicated figures of the *Quadrille* or of the Lancers. A ball always meant the *Cotillon* which was pretext for the distribution of flowers, knicks-knacks and sometimes costly presents. We, children, were on one occasion most indignant when we heard that, the night before, live birds in cages — many of which died — had been given to the ladies during a ball.

Not only did one take the trouble of paying one's respects to the host but gate crashing was unknown as the following anecdote shows: my grandfather finding young S—, an Alexandria *petit jeune homme*, lacking in manners, instructed my aunts not to send him an invitation for

our next ball. Being in the swim of thing, with an excellent opinion of himself, S—, never imagining he had not been asked, turned up at the function. My grandfather from the top of the stairs — where he was receiving his guests — caught sight of S-- and at once told my mother and aunts that, on no account, was the gatecrasher to realize that he had



A Menu of the epoch

fig. 13

not been asked. He was a guest and as such to be entertained. S-, enjoyed himself so much that he left the next morning after *café au lait* had been served. The story had however got about and — instead of apologizing to my grandfather S-, like the ill-mannered cub he was, preferred to cut the old gentleman whose only fault had been perfect courtesy.

An invitation to a dinner without three weeks notice would have been considered impertinent and gross eating, characteristic of a peaceful and unrated epoch, was imperative. (Fig. 13) Meals were ceremonious but not, however, always served smoothly as was the case when my grandfather's butler — during an official banquet — shouted out: "Fate attenzione alla testa di Sua Eccellenza" to prevent a clumsy *suffraghi* banging Lord Northbrook, British High Commissioner to Egypt, on the head with a dish!

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Life was comparatively cheap though my grandfather's daily menus were as follows: on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays there were three courses; on Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays four courses with, always, cheese, *entremets* and fruit.

The daily average for about seven "grown ups", plus 3 children and a staff of 20 servants was P.T. 200 that is about 40 shillings a day.

The following menu may be of interest to present worried house-keepers.

Sunday, June 24th, 1894

LUNCH :

Risotto à la Milanaise
Ragout de mouton aux pommes
Cotelettes grillées
Courgettes au naturel
Fromage
Fruits

DINNER :

Potage paysanne
Loup de mer sauce Hollandaise
Boeuf à la Flamande
Aubergine en timbale
Poulets de grain rôtis
Salade
Rombe Richelieu
Fruits

| The <i>Chef's</i> book was as follows : | P.T. |
|---|-------|
| fish | 18 |
| Brussels sprouts | 7 |
| potatoes | 8 |
| aubergine | 4 |
| vegetable marrow | 5 |
| lemons | 6 |
| salad | 2 |
| vegetables | 4 |
| apricots | 8 |
| melon | 6 |
| water cress | 2 |
| basket | 3 |
| tomatoes | 1,5 |
| cherries | 8 |
| prunes | 8 |
| cheese | 4 |
| salt | 12 |
| meat | 118 |
| | <hr/> |
| | 224,5 |

Yet, in 1442, Al Makrizi, the Egyptian historian, wrote :

“ He who comes to live in Alexandria is offered nothing except
“ water and a description of Pompey’s column; he is provided with
“ a generous amount of fresh air and is shown the Pharos; he is told
“ all about the sea and the great ships of Byzantium but is not
“ given a morsel of bread !”

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In the afternoon it was customary to drive in state to Ramleh or along the banks of the Mahmoudieh Canal (Fig. 14). Long strings of turn-outs would drive up and down with their inmates bowing ceremoniously to one another. Smart turn-outs were preceded by barefoot runners or syces. My grandfather, who was the soul of kindness, disapproved of the practice and would allow his syce to run from only the front

door of his house to the gates; a flying leap would then land the syce on the box next to the coachman. The latter was, for many years, Gioacchino a majestic Italian, whose mobile bulbous nose was severely wagged at us children when too unruly. My grandfather was very proud of his stables and, more especially, of a magnificent pair of chestnuts from Prince Caracciolo's stables in Naples who looked as if they had stepped out of a picture by Wouvermann. They formed a perfect well mannered turn-and, everybody, for some time wondered why Caracciolo had parted with them. Where was the snag? It was subsequently discovered that the horses had weak stomachs and on certain days became offensive to the last degree. Gioacchino's ingenious mind, however soon remedied to that by dosing them regularly with sulfate of magnesia!

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My brother and sister with a Syce

(fig. 14)

Alexandria wit has often expended itself in practical jokes, some of doubtful taste: In the middle of the night X — collected all the shoes belonging to guests at San Stefano Hotel and mixed them up. The confusion can be imagined and caused an incident between the practical joker and Alexandria's Beau Brummel. The latter, however, got the worst of it when — a few mornings later — attention was drawn to the number chalked on the soles of his shoes: it was the same as that of the room occupied by one of Egypt's most unattractive old ladies...

On another occasion, a local paper published an announcement that Y — a fussy old gentleman, was holding a three-day dog show in his garden to be followed, afterwards, by a sale of exhibits. During next three days, the unfortunate man was invaded by packs of yelping dogs accompanied by owners, brokers and touts all clamouring to exhibit and to sell.

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Anything on the social life of Alexandria would be incomplete without mentioning the Mohamed Ali, the *doyen* of Egyptian Clubs. This venerable institution, once an active, social and artistic centre, is now — like the Austro-Hungarian Empire — spinning out its last years in dullness, apathy and decay! Founded about the middle of the last century, it was originally in Place Mohamed Ali but, later, transferred itself to rue Rosette in premises furnished in sumptuous Napoleon III style. It rapidly became an important social centre, everybody claiming to be anybody being obliged to join. As election is not by the Committee but by Members owning shares, fierce campaigns to insure the blackballing, or election, of candidates were launched.

Such was the gossip poured out from its premises that many avoided passing the Club Terrace; inquisitive eyes would dog the steps of every passing lady and speculate as to her destination. Many members claimed pontifical authority on social questions; their decisions emanated from self-appointed dictators, usually without any social status at all. Judgment condemning a fellow citizen, often for alleged stinginess, was all the

more categorical as it almost invariably emanated from some *pique assiette* who had never been known to stand anybody even a glass of water.

Our Club has to its credit many *bons mots* fired off, very often, at those who cannot hit back the dead; about Blank, the millionaire who — on being carried away in a four horse hearse — was reputed, to have ridden for the first time in his life in something more expensive than a one horse cab; about Nemo who had successively changed his name, his religion and his nationality but never once his collar.

Though the Mohamed Ali is, on principle, reserved for men, it has never hesitated to welcome ladies and for many years its dinners, balls, *tableaux vivants*, fancy dress dances, official banquets, bridge tournaments and charity *fêtes* have been an attractive feature in Alexandria social life.

Alas!

Sic transit gloria mundi.

Of this past grandeur there remains only the sight — on the Club terrace — of elderly gentlemen whose decrepitude has earned for our Club many surnames, the most charitable being “*le Salon d’Automne*” or “*l’Asile des Vieillards.*”!

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Another feature of Alexandria was the Zizinia Theatre which was run by the *Société Artistique*, a syndicate of Alexandrians the object of which was to encourage operatic and dramatic performances. These, almost invariably, took place at the Zizinia theatre which had been built by the late Count Zizinia whose father was a grandson of Tossizza, first Hellenic Consul General in Egypt. The Zizinias were a Hellenic family of considerable wealth and influence due to their intimacy with the different Khedives of Egypt. The Zizinia was a fine building in the classical Italian theatre style, its purple and gold decoration forming an effective background for an audience, every one of whom was in evening dress.

Symphonic music was not forgotten and the *Société Philharmonique* — which became later the Hellenic Philharmonic Group of Alexandria — ensured a series of concerts, mostly of operatic music.

Racing was in its infancy and it was not till the first world war that it really became what it is now.

TEATRO ALHAMBRA
LUNEDI 24 Giugno 1895 alle ore 9 1/2
LA COMPAGNIA INTERNAZIONALE DI MUSICA E BALLO
diretta da
G. APREA e G. HERBIN
darà il programma seguente
Primo
UNA FARSA BRILLANTE
Secondo
IL CONTE DI MONTECRISTO
Grandioso ballo-romanzo in 1 Prologo e 6 atti
musica di G. HERBIN
Terzo
CANZONETTE E DUETTI
PREZZI
Palchi (compreso 4 Entrate) P.T. 50
Posti Numerati P.T. 10 | Entrata Generale P.T. 5

THÉÂTRE ZIZIKIA
Saison 1904-1905
Carte d'Entrée
SPECIALE

Amateur theatricals, concerts, charades and *tableaux vivants* were also very much the fashion, some of them being quite good as professional advice was invariably called in. One of the most successful *revues* was "Potinopolis" in which Alexandria gossips met their deserts.

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Society was not, however, as selfish and futile as might appear from this description of its social side for the poor were never forgotten. As State and Municipal relief were in their infancy, it was incumbent on the rich to cater for the needy and this they did most generously. Every foreign colony or religious community had its benevolent society, pressure of every kind being brought on all to contribute. There were also many international and inter-confessional associations, all hostesses *en vue* making it a point of honour to be on their committees.

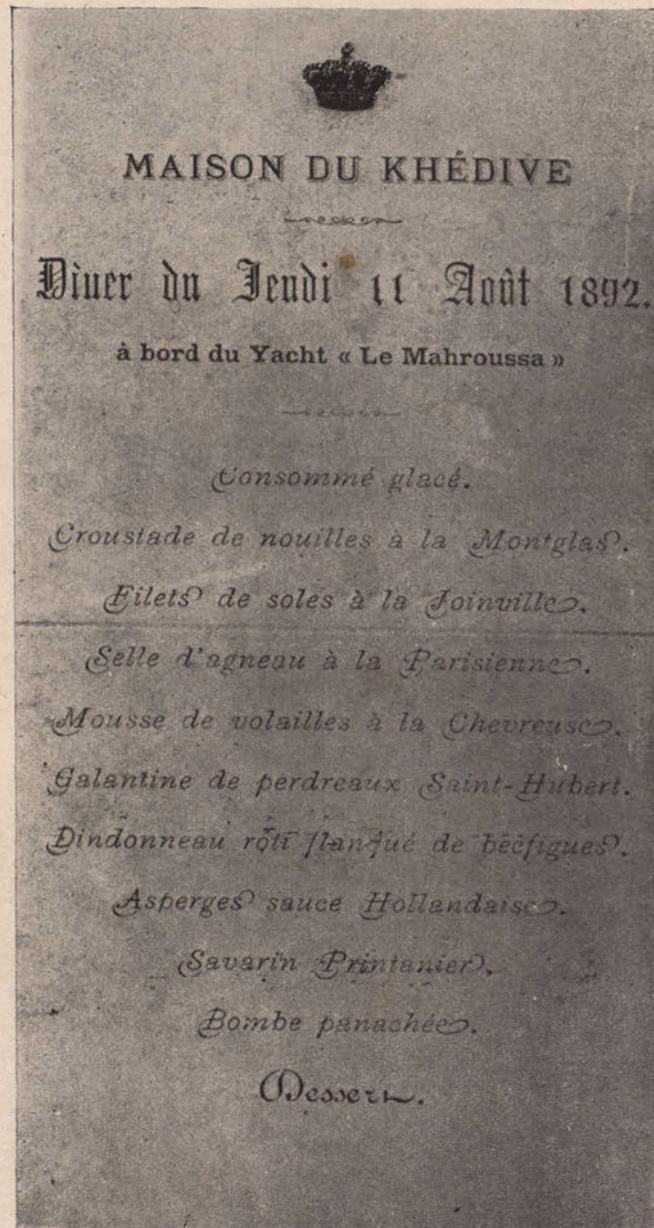
Carnival time could not pass unnoticed in our cosmopolitan town and the last days before Lent were enlivened by several days of rejoicing and masquerading in the streets, houses and places of public entertainment. There was a procession of carnival cars full of gay beauties with masks and dominos romping through the streets. In the evening, there would be a *veglione* or masked ball, usually in favour of some charity or other, at the Opera house and revelling would go on till dawn all over the town.

Summer months were as quite as cheerful, the arrival of H.H. the Khedive with his Ministers and Court giving the summer season an increased zest (Fig. 15 and 16). As mixed bathing did not exist, there were separate bathing establishments for men and women. Women bathed in stockings skirts and hats, while men wore suits, their legs and arms alone being bare.

The San Stefano Casino was a brilliant social centre with very fine flower exhibitions. Alexandria's damp and sunny climate lends itself very well to growing flowers and its gardens are famous all over Egypt.

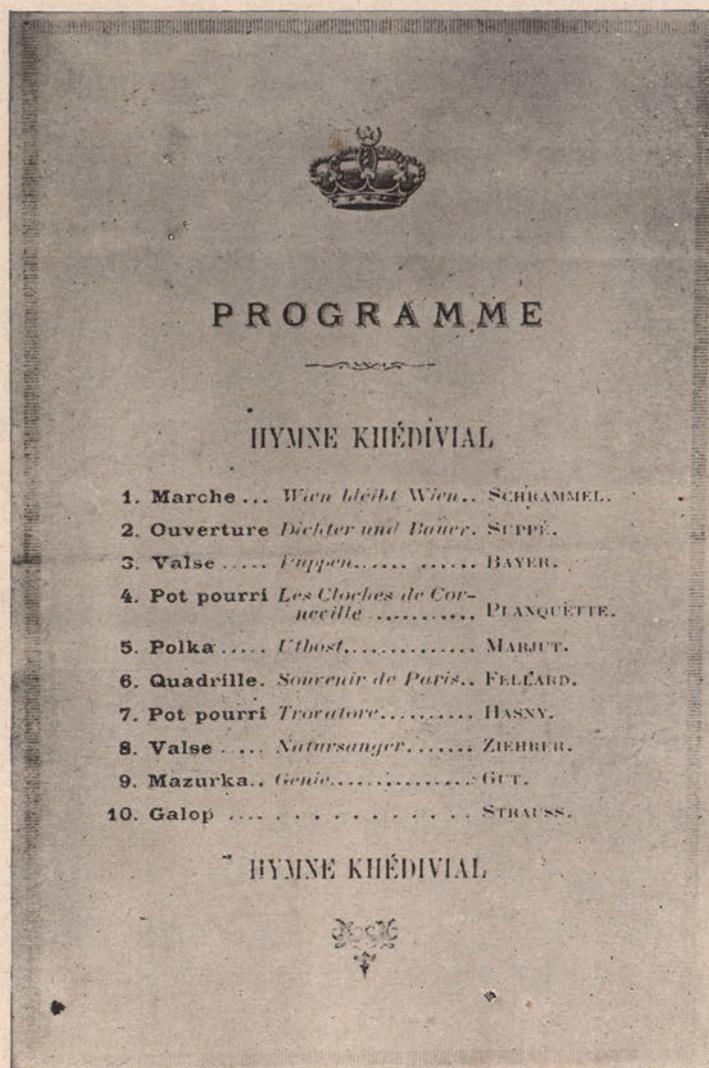
The general appearance of the town had in the meanwhile been steadily improving thanks to the excellent work of its Municipality. The

latter had been founded in 1890 to succeed what had originally been the *Commission Mixte Municipale Provisoire et de Commerce*. On the latter, first my grandfather, and then my father, had been asked by the Egyptian Government to sit. The Municipality has since then largely increased its activities and now plays an important part in the varied activities of Alexandria life.



(fig. 15)

H.H. the Khedivah Mother, widow of the late Khedive Abbas Tewfik and mother of the then Khedive Abbas and of his brother Prince Mohamed Ali, was — in spite of the strict privacy of the Palace Harem — a commanding figure in Egyptian society. Her beauty, dignity and charm were only equalled by her generosity to the poor and needy to which large portions of her important income were annually devoted. She honoured my mother with her friendship and I have vivid recollections of being taken, as a small boy, to an audience at her Palace in Ramleh. These



(fig. 16)

audiences were arranged by Mlle Leblond, the young Princesses' governess who fulfilled also the duties of Lady in waiting to the Khedivah Mother.

We were received at the Palace gates by eunuchs, dressed in long black frock coats without lapels described — owing to their Constantinople origin — as “stamboulines”. They conducted us to the Harem where, no men being allowed to enter, Mlle Leblond and the “bash-kallfa”, or head of the women *personnel* of the Palace, received us surrounded by female slaves. These slaves all wore dresses with long trains and my childish mind was struck by their *hotoz* or large head dresses of black material which contrasted vividly with their deathly white faces and black encircled eyes. The word “slave” terrified me for I did not then know the kindly and paternal attitude of Islam towards these members of a household.

We were ushered into the presence of the Khedivah Mother and after deep curtseys, the coffee ceremony took place: a slave brought in, on a magnificent salver, tiny china coffee cups with *zarfs* (stands for the latter) studded with precious stones. Another slave put each cup in its *zarf* and presented it, filled with boiling coffee, to each visitor.

After conversation varying according to the length of the audience, the Khedivah Mother rose, thus signifying that visitors were to leave which they did with the same ceremonial as on arrival.

I had been especially instructed to kiss the Khedivah Mother's hand but, being very shy, I also kissed the hands of a fairy-like apparition in a mauve dress with long *blonde* plaits. This was Princess Khadidja Abbas Halim one of the young Princesses who — not being used to having her hand kissed — drew back with a shriek.

The family of H.H. the late Prince Omar Toussoun is also intimately connected with Alexandria. The Prince was a descendant of the late Vice Roy of Egypt, Saïd Pacha — himself a son of the Great Mohamed Aly. From many years the family Palace was on the banks of the

Mahmudieh Canal until the late Prince Omar Toussoun removed himself to Bacos which is now the residence of his son Said.

Prince Omar was an outstanding personality whose activities in social and intellectual affairs were prominent. He owned a magnificent library — now donated to the Farouk I University of Alexandria — and his children have inherited from him many artistic treasures connected with Turkey and the Khedivial Family.

The family is now represented in Alexandria by his son Prince Said Toussoun whose delightful wife, Princess Mahivèche, is at the head of all artistic and musical movements whereas her husband is more interested in sport.

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My parents' brilliant, if somewhat vapid, life continued till 1896 when my grandfather, while visiting us in Geneva where we had settled for education purposes, passed away. His remains were brought back to Alexandria, the funeral being the occasion of a spontaneous demonstration of respect to one of whom it had been said "*qu'il avait l'intelligence du cœur*".

He was a man of courage for — on receiving at the age of seventy a threatening letter from a foreign workman — he not only refused the Consul's suggestion to have the man deported from Egypt, but made a point of passing the latter's shop every day on foot without any protection or escort.

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With my mother and we children living in Switzerland, my father decided to settle in Cairo. This was all the more natural for, since some time, Cairo was reasserting itself more and more as Egypt's capital. As my father, since some years, was Diplomatic Agent for Denmark to Egypt, it was natural for him to live in the town where the Government to which he was accredited resided.

What was then to be done with the large house which had been left to my brother and me with a life interest to my father? The latter decided to accept the Egyptian Government's offer to lease the house to the Ministry of Justice for the use of the National Courts.

Thus what had once been a private residence was now occupied by judicial officials, prisoners — brought to the Courts for examination or for trial — being temporarily accommodated in the kitchens in the basement! A magistrate, if he raised his eyes from a dry charge sheet he was studying would find himself looking at some nude allegorical figure. His astonishment can hardly, however, have been greater than that of some unfortunate fellah — detained, for instance, in connection with a family riot — who, after waiting for hours in a kitchen turned into a prison cell, would be brought up a magnificent marble staircase to the *piano nobile*; there, when seeking for some convenient lie to baffle the examining magistrate, his eyes would encounter those of some smiling goddess painted on the wall...

The building proved nevertheless convenient and the Courts remained in occupation for over thirty five years. With rapidly extending judicial work, more accommodation had to be found on the site of the tennis court, the stables, coach houses etc... the lake itself having to be drained. Accommodation was also found for officials coming down from Cairo who needed a resthouse when called to Alexandria. Many famous lawsuits took place in the buildings and it was used in 1916 by a British Military Court for investigations connected with the trial of Shams-el-Dine who was accused of attempting to murder H.H. the late Sultan Hussein.

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In 1931, the premises, left empty by the departure of the Egyptian Law Courts, were lent by us to the "*Ecole Egyptienne des Beaux Arts*", an art school for young Egyptians under the Directorship of Hassan Eff. Kamel. Many artists, professional and amateurs, contributed so that an exhibition of drawing painting and sculpture under the patronage of the Ministry of Public Instruction, with the assistance of the Municipality,

was opened by H.H. Prince Omar Toussoun. Lectures on art were delivered by well known Egyptians and foreigners such as Prof. Selim Hassan, Prof. K.A.C. Creswell, Mohamed Naghi, José Caneri, Grégoire Sarkissian etc... It lasted three weeks, a *souper par petites tables* given by the author being the last occasion on which a member of his family entertained in the house.

The success of our 1931 effort led to the founding in 1932 of the *Comité Permanent du Salon d'Alexandrie* which produced an exhibition of Architecture, Book Binding, Copper Work, Carpet Industry, Decoration, Drawing, Engraving, Etching, Furniture, Embroidery, Painting, Photography and Sculpture; exhibits arrived from all over Egypt



(fig. 17)

(Fig. 17). The Committee was an imposing one, all nationalities in Alexandria being represented. Concerts of European and Oriental music were given together with lectures in Arabic, English and French, the whole exhibition lasting a month. The name *permanent* seems, however, to have been unlucky, for since 1932, our Committee has lapsed into oblivion...

In 1933 we lent the building to the Municipality for what was described as a Retrospective Exhibition of Works of Art on Egypt. It was organised by the *Société des Amis de l'Art du Caire* which, after getting in touch with Austrian, German and French State Galleries and various private collectors, exhibited a very good example of what has been produced, throughout the centuries, on Egypt in books, drawing, painting and sculpture.

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This was to be the building's swan song in matters artistic for, shortly afterwards, it was leased to the Lycée Ghykas a well-known Hellenic boys and girls school and to various commercial firms. During the War, the basement became an Air Shelter, the British Red Cross occupying part of the ground floor.

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The sale of the premises with part of the grounds occurred at the end of the war and it is probable that the high price paid will compel the buyers to resort to demolition and rebuilding. With this will go many recollections of a happy childhood, but — as I close this little book — I trust I may always remember that "memories can be to us as roses in December".

Alexandria, January 30th 1949.

