

owls and bats. The great wooden door, of a thickness to match the wall, is secured by a bar so thick that it is rather a beam. The porter opens with a huge wooden key or club in which nails are arranged to correspond with slots in the beam. What the Judenstrasse and the Ghetto were to the Jews of the old German and Italian towns, this Babylon was to the Copts of Cairo. When the rabble of the great city rose, like an angry sea, and swept down upon the Christians, here, among the thick walls and narrow ways, they could find a hiding-place.

"The Christian Church was founded in Egypt in the first century. It obtained the name 'Coptic' from the insignificant town of Coptos in Upper Egypt. The Coptic tongue, now dead and used only in the service of the Church, is simply Egyptian—that is, it is the language of the Pharaohs, slightly altered by lapse of time.

"The Coptic church of 'Sitt Miriam,' the Lady Mary, is built above a crypt of very ancient date, probably the first Christian church in Egypt. In this crypt the verger points out the place where Jesus and Mary with the infant Christ rested on their arrival in Egypt."

The beggars of Old Cairo surpassed any that we met elsewhere. One poor epileptic creature, of almost de-humanized aspect, smote his naked breast and importuned us for alms, exclaiming, "Christian! Christian!" (with the accent on the last syllable), and rolled up his sleeve to show, tattooed on his arm, the cross, the symbol of the Coptic faith. A very unhappy-looking specimen of a Christian, I thought. Even the priest of the Church of "Sitt Miriam" was almost as importunate in levying tribute. Elsewhere, however, I must say that the Coptic churches were large and clean, and even imposing, and the priests were very courteous. There are about 1,000,000 Copts in Egypt, and they occupy places of influence and responsibility in the civil service and commercial life, quite beyond the proportion of their aggregate numbers.

Cairo is so Europeanized that there is no exhibition of that fierce fanaticism that assailed us elsewhere; but the strangest exhibition we had, of what might be called the religious frenzy of Islam, was at the mosque of the Howling Dervishes. It was a shabby old structure, in a rather squalid neighbourhood, its walls studded with shields and spears, and draped with green flags. Thirty-five dervishes marched in and formed a circle, sitting on leopard-skin mats. They rose, laid aside their outer garments and turbans, and to the accompaniment of drums, and flutes, and cymbals, began swaying slowly with a low chant—*La-ilaha illallah*—"There is no god but God." One pretty little girl, almost white, thumbed a tambourine among the performers. Presently, the music and the chant quickened, and the swaying and the bowing became more and more rapid. After a time, all stopped while one tall man, in dark blue kaftan, talked or exhorted in a