

frequently have misled me, in consequence of the changes which have taken place in the applications of many words since the classical age. Great caution is likewise requisite in the attempt to elicit the significations of words by means of analogy; as I could easily show by giving all the principal words of one article with their significations, and then requiring any student to divine the significations of the other words of the same article by such means, and comparing his explanations with those that have been authoritatively transmitted. Perfect reliance is not to be placed upon vowel-signs and the like when they are merely written, without their being either described in words or shown by the statement that the word of which the pronunciation is to be fixed is similar to some other word well known. Even when they are described, one has to consider what rule the author follows; and in some lexicons the rules followed by the authors are not explained. For instance, when a noun of three letters is said to be with fet-ḥ, if in the *Ḳāmoos*, the meaning is that it is of the measure *فَعْلٌ*: but in some other lexicons it means that it is of the measure *فَعْلٌ*. If we find such a noun in the *Ḳāmoos* written as of the measure *فَعْلٌ* and said to be with fet-ḥ, we must infer that *فَعْلٌ* (not *فَعْلٌ*) is the correct measure: and if in the same lexicon we find such a noun that is to be explained written otherwise than as of the measure *فَعْلٌ*, without its being followed by any indication of its measure, we must infer that *فَعْلٌ* is probably its true measure, unless it be a word commonly known. But these and other technical difficulties are comparatively small, or become so after a little time spent in the study of different lexicons with a previous knowledge of the principles of Arabic lexicology and lexicography. Among the graver difficulties are those which are often presented by verses cited as confirmatory examples, or as illustrations, without either context or explanation; many of which I have inserted in my lexicon as being either absolutely necessary or such as I could not omit with entire satisfaction. Various other obstacles that I have had to encounter I refrain from mentioning, hoping that I shall be deemed to have said enough to excuse myself for the length of time that has elapsed since the commencement of my work. I have, however, been unusually favoured by circumstances; and especially by my having acquired, in familiar intercourse with Arabs, an acquaintance with their manners and customs, and their mental idiosyncrasies, indispensably requisite to success in my undertaking. Encouraged by these circumstances, I applied myself to the working of the rich mine that I had discovered, with the resolution expressed in the saying of a poet,*

• لَا تُسَهِّلَنَّ الصَّعْبَ أَوْ أُدْرِكَ الْمُنَى • فَمَا أَنْقَادَتِ الْإِمَامُ إِلَّا لِصَابِرٍ •

When I had prosecuted my task in Cairo during a period of nearly six years, I understood it to be the desire of my Patron that the British Government might be induced to recognise the importance of my work by contributing to the expense of its composition. I therefore submitted to the Head of Her Majesty's Government a request that my undertaking might be thus honoured and promoted: and I did so in a time peculiarly auspicious; the Premier being Lord John Russell, now Earl Russell. His Lordship graciously and promptly replied to my appeal by granting me an annual allowance from the Fund for Special Service; and through his recommendation, this was continued to me by one of his successors in office, another Nobleman who added eminence in letters to elevation of birth and station, the late Earl of Aberdeen. And here I must especially and gratefully acknowledge my obligations to the learned Canon Cureton, for his friendly offices on these and other occasions. I must also add that Professor Lepsius and Dr. Abeken, and the late Baron Bunsen, kindly exerted themselves to obtain permission for my lexicon to be printed at Berlin, at the joint expense of the Prussian Government and the Academy of Sciences; and several of the learned Orientalists of Germany seconded their endeavours; but conditions were proposed to me to which I could not willingly accede.

After a stay of somewhat more than seven years in Cairo, a considerable portion of which period was spent by me in collecting and collating the principal materials from which my lexicon is composed, I returned to England; leaving to the sheykh Ibráheem Ed-Dasockee the task of completing the transcription of those materials, a task for which he had become fully qualified.

* Cited in page 123 of this work.