

P R E F A C E.

IN the year 1842, a most generous offer made to me by the present Duke of Northumberland (then Lord Prudhoe) enabled me to undertake the composition of this work; and to His Grace's princely aid I have ever since been mainly indebted for the means of accomplishing the project thus originated.

The object proposed was not to do in English little more than what Golius and others had already done in Latin, by translating and composing from a few Arabic lexicons of the class of epitomes or abstracts or manuals; but to draw chiefly from the most copious Eastern sources; one of which, comprising in about one seventh part of its contents the whole of the celebrated *Ḳāmoos*, I knew to exist in Cairo. There, also, I had reason to believe that I might find other sources unknown in Europe, and obtain more aid in the prosecution of my design than I could elsewhere; and thither, therefore, I betook myself for this purpose.

On my arrival at Cairo, I first had recourse, for help in making my preparations, to an accomplished Arabic Scholar, the late M. Fulgence Fresnel, with whom, during a former residence in Egypt, I had contracted an intimate friendship. Previously informed by me of my project, he had tested the qualifications of several learned natives for the task of assisting me in collecting, transcribing, and collating, the materials from which my lexicon was to be composed; and he recommended to me, as the person whom he esteemed the most fit, the sheykh Ibrāheem (surnamed 'Abd-el-Ghaffār) Ed-Dasookee. To have engaged as my coadjutor a sheykh respected for his character and learning, and to have been disappointed in him, and obliged to dismiss him, might have made him my enemy, and enabled and induced him to baffle my scheme; but my experience led me to believe that a person better qualified for the services that I required of him, than the sheykh Ibrāheem Ed-Dasookee, could not have been found by me in Cairo; and I had no occasion to employ any other assistant, except, occasionally, transcribers, under his supervision.

The assistance that I received from my friend M. Fresnel was not limited to the favour mentioned above. With a generosity rarely equalled, he insisted upon transferring to me the most valuable of his Arabic manuscripts, to remain with me during the whole period of the composition of my lexicon, and in case of his death during that period to become my absolute property. Most deeply do I deplore his not having lived to see how greatly those precious manuscripts have contributed to the accuracy and value of my work, and to have them restored to him. They consist of two copies of the *Ṣiḥāḥ* and a copy of the *Ḳāmoos*. One of the copies of the former lexicon is a manuscript of extraordinary excellence: it was finished in the year of the Flight 676 (A.D. 1277); and forms a large quarto-volume. The other copy of the same lexicon is in three volumes: the second volume surpasses in accuracy every other copy of the same work that I have seen, and is enriched with numerous important extracts, in its margins, from the celebrated Annotations of Ibn-Barree and El-Busṭee: the first volume is similarly enriched, and little inferior to the second in accuracy: the third is of the ordinary quality. The copy of the *Ḳāmoos*, which is written in a very small and compact hand, and forms a single octavo-volume, I believe to be unique: it contains, in its margins, (with other annotations and with various readings,) copious extracts from the great work which is the main source of my own lexicon; and its text, of which the transcription was finished in the year of the Flight 1120 (A.D. 1708-9), has been carefully collated. These valuable acquisitions I made almost immediately after my arrival at Cairo.

It was indispensable, I believe, to the success of my undertaking, that I should most carefully avoid whatever might draw down disrespect from the 'Ulamā of Cairo, or others of the Muslim inhabitants, either upon myself or upon the sheykh