The third dictionary was of a different kind, Edward William Lane’s incomplete 8-volume *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Lane 1863—93). Lane paid three extended visits to Egypt, where he conceived the idea of compiling a large-scale Arabic dictionary with definitions in English, instead of the Latin of Golius and Freytag. He took as his prime source Zabīdī’s Ṭāj al-ʿArūs (cf. Art. 237) of which he found a MS. Compiled in Egypt in the 18th C., it is of all extant Arabic dictionaries the most copious in words defined (c. 120,000), though exceeded by others in fulness of citations. But Lane also used about 100 other sources, which he lists, with abbreviations, in his Preface (cf. Lane I, xxxi), and these include major dictionaries in three different arrangements — the phonetic-anagrammatical and the modern alphabetical arrangement as well as the rhyme order. Moreover, Lane aimed to give the fullest and most accurate English definitions, supported by citations from Arab lexicographers and literary quotations. Leaving Egypt finally, he returned to England, taking his MSS with him to complete the task, with financial support from the Duke of Northumberland. But, realising that he would not live to finish his work, he divided it into two parts, Pt. I being restricted to the commoner roots, thus omitting most quadri- and quinqueliteral roots. He completed Pt. I as far as the root q-d-d, q being the 21st of the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet. V. 6 was published after his death,
in 1877. His nephew, Stanley Lane-Poole, at first decided to complete the work from notes left by his uncle, but, finding these inadequate, he contented himself with rearranging them, and publishing them as vv. 7 & 8. They are, in fact, very sketchy. Nevertheless, Lane’s Lexicon is considered one of the finest dictionaries in any language, even though it is incomplete, and omits the rarer roots, the knowledge of which is required for the understanding of much of the classical literature, both poetry and ‘art prose’; and it is, of course, inadequate for Arabic of the 19th and 20th C. It lacks also words peculiar to peripheral areas of the Arab world of which the lexicographers failed to take note. Two supplementary dictionaries were written to fill these gaps, particularly so far as Arab Spain and North Africa are concerned. They are R. Dozy’s Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes (Dozy 1881) and E. Fagnan’s Additions aux dictionnaires arabes (Fagnan 1923).

2.2. The Project for a New Comprehensive Arabic Dictionary

The impact of Lane was tremendous, not only on European orientalists, but also on Arab scholars — and scant justice has been done to this impact so far. For example, would Zabidi’s Taj al-‘Arus have been published (Bulaq, Cairo, 1306—7 AH), had Lane
not drawn attention to it? The Arabs themselves seemed unable to embark on a new dictionary comparable in scope with the OED, despite the Egyptian Royal Decree of 1932 calling for one. At that time, August Fischer was in Cairo collecting material for one. He left Egypt in 1939, and when he died 10 years later, he left behind him 360,000 pieces of paper containing material for the project. The International Congress of Orientalists called for the 'completion of Lane's Lexicon': but Fischer's objective was much more ambitious — no less than a comprehensive Arabic dictionary on etymological and historical lines, illustrating every word and meaning from actual use in literature, taking due note of syntax, phraseology and style. The project was commenced in Tübingen in 1954 by Jörg Kraemer and Helmut Gätje. The first fascicule appeared in Wiesbaden in 1954 as Wörterbuch der klassischen arabischen Sprache (WKAS 1970—). It starts with the letter kāf (k), with the aim of deferring work on those parts of the work which are already covered — however imperfectly — by Lane, thus concentrating the effort
where the need is greatest. (For an account of
the scope and progress of WKAS, and discus-
sion of the limitations of medieval Arabic
dictionaries, see Gätje 1985). This dictionary
has only roots in the Arabic script. All other
words are in Latin transliteration, thus per-
mitting the use of small print without undue
loss of legibility. But this will be regretted by
many Arabists and most Arabs. Detailed de-
finitions and explanations are in German;
but English definitions are included. So the
work is not strictly bilingual: nevertheless so
vital a research tool had to be discussed. It
will take decades to complete: v. II appeared
in 1983. During the same period work has
been in progress on a somewhat similar pro-
ject in France — Dictionnaire arabe-français-
anglais, langue classique et moderne, ed. Bla-
chère, Chouémi and Denizeau (DAFA
1967—), the first three volumes of which were
run, it will partially duplicate WKAS, but it is
distinguished by its inclusion of modern vo-
cabulary. However, entries in the French
work seem to be less full. One point in its
favour is that all words defined are in Arabic
script. It should be noted that it starts at the
first letter of the alphabet, alif. But it certainly
does not replace Lane, with his full and exact
definitions of classical words and his numer-
ous citations.