

CAIRO IN 1907.

By FRANK D. CARPENTER.

ALL ABOUT THE BIG CITY AT THE HEAD OF THE NILE DELTA.

It Has More Than a Million People, and is Leading the Mohammedan World—A Look at Its Mosques and Their Pious Worshipers—The Bazaars and Their Queer Customers—How Cairo Women Dress—The New European Section Where Land is Bringing \$30 a Square Yard—The Big Hotels and What It Costs to Stay at Them—Thirty Thousand Tourists Who Spend \$10,000,000 a Year.

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Stand with me on the Hill of the Citadel and take a look over Cairo. We are high above the River Nile, and far above the minarets of mosques which rise out of the vast plain of houses below. We are as high up as the tops of the Pyramids, which stand out upon the yellow desert away off at the left. The sun is blazing and there is a smoky haze over the Nile valley, but it is not dense enough to hide Cairo. The city, which lies right under us, is the largest on this continent and one of the mightiest of the world. It now contains a million inhabitants and, in size, it is fast approximating Heliopolis and Memphis in the height of their glory.

Of all the Mohammedan cities of the world, Cairo is now growing the fastest. It already has only 100,000 less people than Constantinople. It is four times as big as Damascus, eight times as big as Bagdad and fifteen or twenty times the size of either Mecca or Medina, where the Prophet Mohammed was born and



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died. It has more than doubled its population since I last visited it, and with my glass I can now see the folding about the new buildings which are rising here and there over the plains. The town now covers an area equal to fifty quarter-section farms; and its buildings are crowded together that they form an almost continuous structure. The only trees to be seen are those in the new French quarter, which lies on the outskirts.

Mohammedan Cairo.

The most of the city is of Arabian architecture. It is flat roofed, and is made up of yellowish-white buildings so crowded along narrow streets that they can hardly be seen at this distance. Here and there, out of the field of white, rise tall, round stone towers with galleries running about them. They dominate the whole city, and under each is a mosque. These are the Mohammedan churches. There are hundreds of them in Cairo, and not a few have been recently erected. Every one has a dome, and upon the shrill-voiced Arabian priest calls out for the people to come to prayers. There is a man now calling from the minaret of the Mosque of Sultan Hassan, which is just under the mosque itself covers more than two acres, and the minaret is about half as high as the Washington monument. The priest is standing on a gallery, with scaffolding above and below him. His mosque is being repaired, and \$200,000 will be spent upon it when the present plans are completed. Just next to it is another mosque, recently begun, and all about us we can see evidences that Mohammedanism is by no means dead, and that these people worship God with their pockets as well as with their tongues.

In the Alabaster mosque, which stands at my back, fifty men are now praying, and in the courtyard a score of others are washing themselves before they go in to make their vows of renunciation to God and the Prophet. Not far below me I can see the mosque el-Azhar, which has been a Mohammedan university for more than a thousand years, and where something like 9,000 students are now learning the Koran and Koranic law. During my stay in Tunis the Mohammedans were celebrating their Lent or Ramadan, and not a one of the vast population of Tunisia, who believe in the Prophet, would take a bite to eat from sunrise to sunset, and the more devout would not even swallow their spittle. Here at Cairo I have seen the people preparing to take their pilgrimage to Mecca, rich and poor starting out on their long journey into the Arabian Desert. At present many go part of the way by water. The ships leaving Alexandria and Suez are crowded with pilgrims, and there is a regular exodus from Port Sudan and other places on this side of the Red sea. They go across to Jeddah and thence to Mecca, their costly clothing and make their way inland, clad only in aprons and a piece of cloth over the left shoulder. This is so for the rich and the poor. Many of the former carry with them other offerings for the sacred city, and such gifts cost the Egyptian government alone a quarter of a million dollars a year. Not only the Jews, but the Mohammedan rulers of the Sudan, send gifts, and I understand that the new railroad which has been recently completed from far up the Nile to the Red sea is now giving special rates to pilgrimage parties. It is by no means safe to look upon Mohammedanism as a dead religion.

A Religion of the Lips.

And still I sometimes wonder whether this Mohammedanism is not a religion of the lips rather than of the heart. These people are so accustomed to uttering the words of prayer that they forget the sense. The use of the word God is heard everywhere in the bazaars. The water carrier, who goes about with a pike-stick upon his back, jingling his brass curns to announce his business, cries out: "May God recompense me!" and his customer replies as he drinks close through the silt in their veils.

of the Lord. The lemonade peddler, who carries a glass bottle as big as a four gallon crock, does the same, and I venture the name of the Delty is uttered here more frequently than in any other part of the world. It is through the British consular pretext that I am able to get free of the beggars of the city. I have learned two Arab words, "Allah yatik," which mean: "May God give thee enough and to spare." When a beggar pleases me I say these words gently. He looks upon me in astonishment and then touches his forehead in a polite Mohammedan salute and goes away.

A City of the Egyptians.

The tourist who passes through Cairo and stays at the big hotels is apt to think that the city is fast becoming a Christian one. He is told that the British are their real governors, and as he drives over asphalt streets lined with the fine buildings of the European quarters it seems all together English and French. If he is acquainted with many foreigners he finds them living in beautiful villas, or it may be in apartment houses such as would not be out of place in any city of Europe or of the United States. He does his shopping in modern stores, and gradually comes to the conclusion that the Arab city is fast passing away. This is not so. Cairo is a city of the Egyptians. Not one-tenth of its inhabitants are Christians, and it is the eight or nine hundred thousand natives who make up the life blood of this municipality. They are people of a different world from ours, and we can see it we go down and stroll through the city. They do business in different ways, and they carry much the same way as they have been trading for generations back. Their stores are crowded along narrow streets which wind this way and that, so that one might lose himself in them. Every branch of business has its own section. In one place there are nothing but saddlers, in another shoemakers, and in another the workers in copper, silver and brass. The booksellers and bookbinders have a street of their own; and so have the clothiers and tailors. Nearly every street is a factory as well, and most of the goods offered you are made in the shops.

I have been in most of the great bazaars of the world, and I know of none more interesting than those of Cairo. In them thousands are buying and selling, and each narrow street is a stream of color which flows back and forth all day long. From the top of one's donkey this stream is red and white upon a bed of black and blue. There are many turbans and white turbans, while the blacks and blues are the gowns of the people below them. The sides of the streets are a steady stream of people, and out of each little shop, and the whole is like wandering through a world's fair in which the exhibitors are dark-faced, turbaned, long-gowned men, who sit cross-legged on carpets, with all the treasures of the orient piled about them.

The Cairo of the Arabian Nights.

Although the foreigner and his innovations are almost everywhere in evidence, native Cairo is much the same as it was in the days of the Arabian Nights. These people believe the same as they did then; they wear the same costumes; the women are freely veiled, and all the characters of the days of Haroun Al Raschid are to be seen. Here the visionary Alhambra quats in his narrow, dark, grey-bearded men are sitting on a bench drinking coffee together; and there a straight, tall maiden, robed in a gown which falls from her head to her feet and with a long black veil covering all of her face but her eyes, looks over the wares of a handsome young Syrian, reminding us of how the hours shopped in the days of the past.

Donkeys and Camels.

Oriental Cairo is a city of donkeys and camels. In the French quarter you may have a modern cab for 15 cents a ride, or you may jump on the electric street cars and go a long distance for from 2-12 to 5 cents, or you may even hire an automobile to carry you over the asphalt. The streets of the native city are too narrow for such things, and you are crowded to the wall again and again for fear that the spongy feet of the camels may tread upon you. You are grazed by loaded donkeys, carrying grain, bricks or bags on their backs, and the donkey boy who is trotting behind an animal ridden by some rich Egyptian or his wife sits upon you to get out of the way. The donkey is the best means of getting around through the native city and the cheapest. You may hire one for two hours for 20 cents, for a half day for 50 or 60 cents, and all day for a dollar. Every riding animal is numbered. My donkey of today was named "California," and the number on his saddle was 977.

Some Queer Citizens.

The characters of these bazaars are odd to an extreme and one must have an educated eye to know who they are. Take that man in a green turban; he is looked up to by his fellows. Your attention is drawn to you that he has a sure passport to heaven and that the turban is a sign that he has made the pilgrimage to Mecca and thus earned the right to the color of the prophet. Behold him come, a fine-featured, yellow-faced man in a blue gown wearing a turban of blue. You ask your guide who he may be and are told, with a sneer, that he is a Copt. He is one of the Christians of modern Egypt, and has descended from the fanatical band which Charles Kingsley describes in his novel "The Water Babies." In his class he is intelligent and like most of them well dressed. The Copts are among the shrewdest of the business Egyptians, and with the prospect now common in the valley of the Nile, they are growing in wealth. They are money lenders and are also land speculators. Many of them have offices under the government, and a few have amassed fortunes. Some of them are very religious, and some can recite the Bible by heart. They are different from their neighbors in that they believe in having only one wife.

The Girls of Cairo.

But the crowd in these streets is by no means all men. There are women scattered here and there through it, and such women! Talk about your peek-a-boo veils! The Cairo girls have peek-a-boo veils. All their bodies with the exception of their eyes are hidden, and one has to look close through the silt in their veils.

to see whether their skins are white, black or brown. They are by no means good looking as they walk through the streets. Those of the better classes are clad in cloaks of black bombazine made so full that they hide every outline of the person. Some have their cloaks tied in at the waist, and they look like black bed-ticks walking off upon legs. Here one raises her skirts, and you see that she has on zouave bloomers which fall to her ankles; they n. k. e. me think of the fourteen-yard breeches worn by the girls of Algiers. The poorer women wear gowns of blue cotton, and a single gown and veil make up a whole costume. Some of them carry babies astride their hips or their shoulders, and the babies are often as naked as when they were born. Not a few of the ladies have enough to go about with them. The latter are as black as my hoon, and as sour as the Sphinx. They are to keep the young women from flirting, as they shop in the bazaars.

Nearly all of the women have their faces covered. In the oriental quarters you will not meet any, except the very lowest of the peasants, who has not a lock of hair or a nose six inches wide reaching from just below her eyes to her ankles. This is stitched at the corners to her head-dress, and fastened in the center by a brass rod four inches long, which covers the bridge of the nose. The eyelids of most of the women are blackened with kohl; they have thick black eyelashes, and one often imagines them beautiful until the wind blows away a veil and you find out the contrary.

The New Cairo.

In striking contrast with Egyptian Cairo is the new European section which has grown up off its edge. That part of the city is having a boom, and lots which sold for \$10 a square yard two years ago are now bringing \$30. There are instances where ground is being sold for ten times as much as it did in 1905. Property is going up all over this section, and an enormous amount of building is being done. There are so many moving out into the suburbs, and this city promises to have a suburban development just as we have about our American towns.

European Cairo is a city of wide streets, paved with asphalt. It is a city of electric lights and sanitary improvements. It has fine residences, surrounded by gardens filled with tropical plants and trees, and its better stores carry goods which would sell readily in Paris or New York. One can buy almost anything from anywhere in the world at these stores. This is especially true of the jewelry and in demand by the tourists and the rich do-nothing class. The peddler of antiquities and fine china, of jewelry and of oriental goods, who here in all his glory and during the season he does a big business.

Cairo has many doctors and dentists. The doctors charge \$5 a visit whether you see them in their offices or at your hotel. The dentists are mostly Americans, and they are not here for their health. The town is one of newspapers, libraries and clubs. It has its daily journals, in which you can read the telegrams in French, English and Arabic, and it has its loud-mouthed news men, who cry the papers on the streets. My shoes are blacked every morning by a boy wearing a turban, and his charge is two cents a shine.

Cairo has a good postal system, with a letter delivery several times a day, and it has hundreds of policemen both on foot and on horseback. A policeman stands in the center of every street crossing to see that all carriages go to the left instead of the right, and that every motor car is in every section to make life and property safe.

Cairo's Big Hotels.

Cairo is one of the winter resorts of the world. It is thronged during the season with Europeans and Americans. There are three thousand rich citizens here every year, and they leave millions of dollars in Egypt. Thirty thousand tourists visited the valley of the Nile last winter, and it is safe to say that they left upwards of \$10,000,000. The hotels of Cairo increase in size and number every year. They are run by syndicates with large capital and they pay big dividends. Shepherds, which is so well known everywhere, has 400 beds. The Savoy has 150. The Hotel Continental 300. The Ghezireh Palace can accommodate 400 guests at one time, and the Mena Hotel, right under the Pyramids, has 150 rooms. All these hotels have modern improvements and they charge roundly for them. At Shepherds I pay \$8 a day for a double-bedded room with bath, and in addition there is a charge of 10 cents a day for electric lights. If I have my breakfast in my room that is an extra, and if I do not in the dining room, at just the moment when dinner begins, I find the doors closed, and have to go to the grill room and pay extra for whatever I order. Four or five dollars per person per day for room and board is the usual price of the first-class Egyptian hotels, and this is so at Alexandria and all up and down the Nile valley. The prices are somewhat less during the summer season, but such times many of the hotels are closed, the most of them running only during December, January, February and March.

Many people come here to spend the winter, and many find it so cold that they have to leave. It seems to me that the advantages of Cairo as a health resort have been greatly overrated. For the last year or so the city has had an epidemic of dengue or breakbone fever during the winter, and there is no doubt that many a man or child who has escaped. The climate is better farther up the Nile valley.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

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NOTICE OF BOND SALE.
Notice is hereby given that sealed bids will be received by the Board of Commissioners of Robeson county until 2 o'clock p. m. October 7th, 1907, for the sale of \$50,000 of Robeson county court house bonds. Said bonds to run for thirty years and to bear interest at the rate of 5 1-2 per cent per annum. Interest payable semi-annually; bonds to be issued in denominations of \$500. Bids may be filed with E. J. Britt, attorney for the board, Lumberton, N. C., or with J. W. Carter, chairman of the board, Maxton, N. C. All bids to be sealed bids and to be accompanied by certified check for two per cent. of amount bid, check made payable to J. W. Carter, chairman of board of commissioners of Robeson county. The board of commissioners reserves the right to reject any or all bids. This Sept. 4, 1907. J. W. CARTER, Chairman Board Commissioners. 9-6-30d.

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