

## THROUGH A MONOCLE

### CUSTOMS IN CAIRO—AND CANADA.

AS Cairo is the place where "east meets west" — where two civilisations blend — it logically follows that there is a large liberty in conduct—and in costume. When things are done in public to which you are not accustomed, you—whether you are a Christian or Mohammedan, east or west—tolerantly put it down to "the other civilisation." There is one phase of life here to which I hardly know whether to refer. I can seldom feel sure just how much Toronto—and though the Courier is Canadian, it emanates from Toronto—really wants to be told about things which are not Torontoesque. Would it like to hear, for instance, that there is a street here, hard by the principal hotels and tourist offices, where women appear, as the shades of evening fall, in great numbers on balconies one or two storeys from the pavement, dressed—well, unconventionally, and with faces painted as if they were sign boards; as, perhaps, they are. It is very like the "public women" quarters of Tunis and Tangier, except that it is not on the street level. The Tunisian might find it tame, but the Torontonians would find it amazingly frank.

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PEOPLE who know native gentlemen well, tell me that they are utterly unable to associate innate virtue with the European women whom they see, dressed for dinner, sitting in the drawing-rooms of the public hotels. This applies, of course, only to native gentlemen who are still unspoiled by contact with Europeans and who take the purely native view. The shock which the stoutest Torontonians would feel in walking along the street I have ventured to mention, would be only a feeble tremor when compared with the shock felt by the native gentleman when he meets the aforesaid Torontonians escorting his wife and daughters in to dinner in fashionable evening dress. There is another point of view for you. There is the east judging the west. But both east and west become accustomed to each other in this cosmopolitan Cairo, and regard each other's peculiarities as something to be dismissed with a shrug. But let us get away from dangerous ground and discuss—well, let us try differences in spelling.

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ONE lovely thing about Egyptian names as rendered into English is that you cannot mis-spell them. This is because there is no authoritative European spelling. Arabic sounds and English sounds do not answer to each other; so that every writer who has tried to convey in English letters the true sound of an Arabic word, has only hoped to come as close to what his ear caught as he could. Now his ear might not agree with the next man's or his use of letters might be different; and hence the next man has satisfied himself better with a different English spelling. And so on with the next and the next; with the result that, if you hit upon yet another variety, people will only think that you are a careful observer and are trying to get nearer to the truth. Take the word "Assouan." That has the authority of our geographies and we generally regard it as fixed. But now people are more apt to spell it "Assuan." That is Baedeker's choice. The postal authorities, however, are not content with this; and you will find "Aswan" on your letters. And so it goes. Our old friend "Luxor" is more commonly spelled "Lôuksor" out here; and "Rameses" has lost his middle "e" and become "Ramses." But if we get among the Pharaohs, we shall be lost. Seti is now Sethos; Amenhotep has turned into Amenophis; and Queen Hatasoo is known at Hatshepsowet.

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EVEN closer at hand, we have a large freedom. The names of the streets in Cairo seem to be spelled "according to the taste and fancy of the speller," to quote the immortal Sam Weller. The word for street itself appears as "Sharia" in the guide books but "Chareh" on the street corners—sometimes. As for the names, they are often so different from that of the map I carry that I do not feel quite certain that I am on the right street. But the difficulty of getting the true sound is enormous—if not insuperable. At this moment, I could not put in rigid type the sound which an Arab makes when he calls his friend "Mohammed." It is not in the least like you are pronouncing the name now if you chance to be reading this aloud. "Abdul" is easier—it is simply "Abdool," with the accent on the first syllable. The common word "sheikh" defies the alphabet. It is not

"shake"—as some phrase books put it—nor yet "sheek," but a nice blend of the two. The word we call "Pasha" is here "Basha," and the street of the post-office is Sharia el Bosta.

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THEN alongside liberty in orthography, there exists liberty in dress. It would be hard, indeed, for a man to dress in such fashion as to attract more than a passing glance on the streets of Cairo. The straw hat and the overcoat go together toward evening as naturally as the bacon and the egg on the breakfast table. The natives of the poorer classes wear any combination of dress which will keep out the cold. You will see a European sack-coat worn frequently over a native cloak; and the other day we watched from our Nile boat a native labourer at one of the wharves struggling to keep the boat from damaging the landing-place, and he was dressed in a turban, a thin cloak, no shoes or stockings, and over his cloak an old frock coat with long tails and glossy seams. A vest is very often put beneath their cloaks to protect the vital parts of the body; and it comes to sight when they undress to plunge into the river as they frequently do for all sorts of purposes from merely taking a bath to helping get the rudder of the boat clear from some obstruction.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

### Pronunciation in Paris

ACCORDING to some Canadians who have been in Paris there is a marked deviation in the way certain foreign words are pronounced from the way they are done in Canada. Now of course every Canadian has his troubles saying French words; and even the most fluent English-speaking French members in the House of Commons have difficulty with the accents of English. But in Paris a large number of people differ with English usage in pronouncing the improper Greek name *Psyche*. They persist in saying it *Phishe*; whereas English-speakers call it broadly, *Sikee*. Why? Obviously because the French pull the "h" forward into the first three letters; putting "ph" instead of "ps"—when in the Greek there was an entirely separate character for each of these sounds.

### HOW WOMEN DRESS IN CAIRO



VEILED EGYPTIAN LADIES IN A "TRYING-ON" ROOM  
Fashionable Ladies of the Dark Continent must keep up with the Modes of Paris.