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House to House Visiting in Cairo, Egypt.

(Miss E. F. Waller, in 'Church Missionary Gleaner.')

Most of the children in the Old Cairo Girls' School, whose parents I visit, are of a poor class, and come from small houses, or huts.

The houses have flat roofs, with rails round the edge and staircases leading up to them outside. People keep hens and chickens on the roof, have their wash-house up there, hang out the clothes there, and in a general way use it as people would use a yard at home. The houses have plastered walls, colored pale pink, or gray, or yellow, according to the owner's fancy. All the windows have shutters outside, opening outward like doors, and the street door opens into a quadrangle or court. The houses do not usually have gardens attached to them. The rooms are very high and airy. The floors are of stone, and there are no fireplaces.

One gets, as a rule, a very cordial welcome, more especially in these poorer houses, where the people are most eager to listen. One is more likely to be scolded for not coming often enough than for coming too often. Any hour from half-past eight to twelve a.m., or three to seven p.m., seems suitable for visiting. Even if the people are ill, or at a feast, or mourning round the dead body of a friend, one is always welcome. They think our visits very short. Half an hour is only a 'shake hands,' an hour a short visit, and half a day reasonable, so that it is difficult to accomplish more than two or three visits in an afternoon.

It is not easy to find the houses. There are so many narrow streets, one leading out of the other, that they are most bewildering. The best way is to take a school-child, who knows where several of her companions live, as guide. A married woman is not known by her husband's name, but by her own 'Christian' name, with 'sitt' (lady) prefixed, or as the mother of her eldest son, e.g., Sitt Fahima, or mother of Mohammed. Fancy having to search in a London court for the mother of Bill or Jack, and you will have some idea of what it is like.

The house-door is unlatched by means of a string, which is pulled by some one upstairs. If the door is closed the visitor knocks, if it is open she claps, and in both



EGYPTIAN POOR RIDING IN A DONKEY CART.

cases is answered by a loud 'Meen?' ('Who?').

She replies 'I' or 'We,' and sometimes adds where she comes from.

She is invited to come up, and greetings are shouted, and suitably answered, till she arrives in the room at which she is aiming, and even then they continue for some time.

For example: 'You are one of us.' 'Make yourself at home.' 'How are you?' 'May God preserve you.' 'How is your health?' 'Praise be to God,' and above all 'Tafadully,' an indescribable word, which does for an invitation to help oneself to anything, or to take precedence of somebody, or almost anything.

As a rule one is ushered into a guest-room, which is unlocked for the purpose, or in a very poor house a mat is spread on the earth floor, where one sits amongst the cocks, hens, pigeons, or kids, which may be walking about downstairs.

After three minutes of greetings and general civilities, some one goes out to make coffee, which is served in small cups like our egg-cups; or glasses of syrup, green, purple, blue or red, are brought.

Alas! it is scarcely ever possible to escape refreshment of some kind or other. Sometimes one can manage to drink only half, and then, by patting a neighbor on the back, and using 'blarney' freely, make her finish it, and then one comes to the Gospel.

There is not so much difficulty in introducing the subject as there usually is in England. The name of God is constantly on the lips. 'This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me,' is a text frequently in one's mind. It is wonderful how they listen.

Lately in a very poor house I found a woman who had been ill. Her child had only attended the school a very short time, and I had not known where she lived, but found the mother in a house where I had gone to look for somebody else. She had never heard of the Lord Jesus, not even by the name of 'Saeedna Eesa,' by which the Moslems usually speak of him. When I had explained who he was, I read to her the story of his casting out the evil spirit in the synagogue (St Mark i.), and of his healing Simon's wife's mother. She was intensely interested. I have often seen the women listen before, but never devour the words as this one did. At last when I asked her if she would like to pray to our Lord, and ask him to save her, she was much astonished.

'Can I pray to him? I don't know the right words to say, and ought I not to put on a clean dress to pray in? He will not like me dirty like this.'

When I suggested that it was no use trying to make oneself better before going to the doctor, and that she had better come just as she was, she consented to pray, and said the words after me. Will all you who read this pray now while you read that this woman may really believe in Jesus Christ as her Saviour?

I will mention another instance at a better-class house, where I met with a very different reception, the only house, I think, where I have not been well received. In the better houses the people strike one as more occupied with the things of this world, and they do not want the Gospel unless they are specially prepared by trouble to listen.

In this house of which I speak the people were barely civil, according to our ideas, and certainly rude according to Eastern ones. It was only in answer to prayer that an opportunity came of saying something on how engrossed the Moslems of this land



A DISTANT VIEW OF CAIRO.