

THROUGH A MONOCLE

THE ORIENTAL BAZAAR

THERE is much to be said for the Oriental bazaar as a shopping place. It is a little like an individualistic departmental store, except that it contains the wholesome element of competition. That is, you go down one alley-way, and you find a dozen shoe shops, cheek by jowl; and down another and you get a dozen hat shops. If you cannot get suited either as to article or price in one shop, you may in the next; and it is no farther from one to another than it is from one clerk to another behind the counter of the same store. Few merchants in the truly Oriental bazaars keep shops any larger than the reach of an arm when they stand up, and these little rooms are packed in together in rows like lockers in a golf club house—to use a modern simile. So shopping does not call for much walking. Moreover, each merchant provides a stool outside his shop on which the customer may sit while shopping, and, if the bargaining be prolonged—as it is likely to be when the customer is a native—he will probably send for a cup of coffee to refresh the bargainer.

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NOW if you are through buying shoes and want shawls, it is quite possible that they are in the next street, which means no more in a bazaar than that they are in the next aisle. It is really no farther as a rule to go from one set of shops in a bazaar to another than it is to go from one department to another in a departmental store; and you have the advantage of going in the open air and finding brisk competition when you arrive. In Cairo, the bazaars have in some streets developed into something more like a street of modern shops—spacious and elaborately stocked places with a number of clerks. But this is the effect of European and American demands. Our people like to shop in large stores such as they have at home, and the alert Orientals are quick to meet their fancy. But the older and more native streets in the bazaars of Cairo still preserve the old character, and, while they may not sell so much to tourists, they are of far greater interest to travellers.

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THE bazaar is usually covered. In Tripoli, its streets were chiefly roofed over with vines which had the advantage of being a shelter in summer and letting in the light and air in winter. The Oriental street is narrow—not as Europeans are so apt to imagine because he does not know any better—but for the beneficent purpose of making them cool. They are usually in the shade, and the roofed bazaars always are. An English colonel who had served long in India told me that the English had discovered the folly of abandoning the native custom of narrow streets in Bombay. Under the natives, Bombay had been a comparatively cool city; but where the English had run their broad boulevards across it, the heat was now intolerable. So the roofed bazaar is not a mistake but a wise precaution against the heat. As the air blows through it at will, it is never stuffy like our larger stores; and as the Oriental does not relish walking all over a city to make a few purchases, it really enables him to economise exertion. He could economise time if he valued it, but, as it is, he prefers to economise money by careful and patient bargaining.

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A FEATURE of the bazaars is that they frequently make the goods there that they sell. One of the most interesting bazaars in Cairo is that of the goldsmiths, where in a couple of little lanes, in which two people can only pass with difficulty, scores of real artists produce the most costly things in fine gold. The value of the stocks here is enormous, but the diminutive huts in which they work would set our factory inspectors wild. Boys pass up and down selling soap for the workers, and it is very seldom that any one offers to sell the precious gold work to the passing traveller. These are not articles to be picked up at a chance bargain, but jewels and plate to be purchased after careful consideration and with still more careful examination. They have scales to weigh the gold that is in any object purchased, but the minute work costs more than the metal. The brass workers have another bazaar which is sufficiently noisy, and announces its position—like that of the perfumers—from far away.

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HERE in the East, you see the evolution of the shop from the workshop. What could be more natural than that the worker should sit in his workshop, open to the street, and hang his finished wares

on the walls about him where possible purchasers could suit their fancy. Then when they want to buy, he will stop work and bargain with them over the price. Under such circumstances, he would not be likely to have a fixed price, but would be influenced by the state of his stock and the power of the public demand. Our system of wholesale manufacture, middlemen and rapid and numerous sales compels a fixed price, but where a single workman merely sells off his own output as he gets it ready, and deals with the chance customer who appears at his door, he naturally gets what he can for each article, knowing that the laws of supply and demand are more powerful than any calculation of his as to the worth of his labour. This, too, accounts for his willingness to spend time in bargaining. Money which he earns by keeping up the price is quite the same as money which he could earn by making other articles; and it affords a change of occupation which must be restful. There is not, as with us, a worker who goes on working while another man sells, and who must have a fixed price for each article. In the East, the middleman is largely eliminated; but so is division of labour.

THE MONOCLE MAN.

HOW greatly the British royal family has become united with the royal houses of Europe is being summarised by the press. Princess Victoria, King Edward's sister, married Emperor Frederick of Germany and Emperor William II is their eldest son. King Edward married Princess Alexandra of Denmark and her brother is now King of that state. Princess Alice, another sister, married the Duke of Hesse and their daughter is Alexandra, Empress of Russia. Prince Alfred married the Grand Duchess Marie of Russia and their daughter is Princess Ferdinand of Roumania. Princess Beatrice married Prince Henry of Battenburg and their daughter is Queen Victoria of Spain. King Edward's daughter Maud married the King of Norway. These are the principal descendants of Queen Victoria, but there are also a score of princes, princesses, grand dukes and dukes who are grandchildren of Her Illustrious Majesty, to say nothing of great-grandchildren. Perhaps this enumeration partly explains the distinctive influence of Edward VII in European affairs and the great gap caused by his decease. King George can never hope to gain a similar prestige, because he is of a newer generation.

THE BULLETIN AT BUCKINGHAM PALACE



This picture shows a reverential group reading the simple announcement which indicated that the Greatest Monarch of His Time had passed away. This simple bulletin and the Royal Standard at half-mast, were the only symbols, but the telegraph wires and cables of the whole world were flashing fire in their effort to convey the news to millions of people—black, brown, yellow and white.

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