

# Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXIV., No. 49

MONTREAL, DECEMBER 8, 1899.

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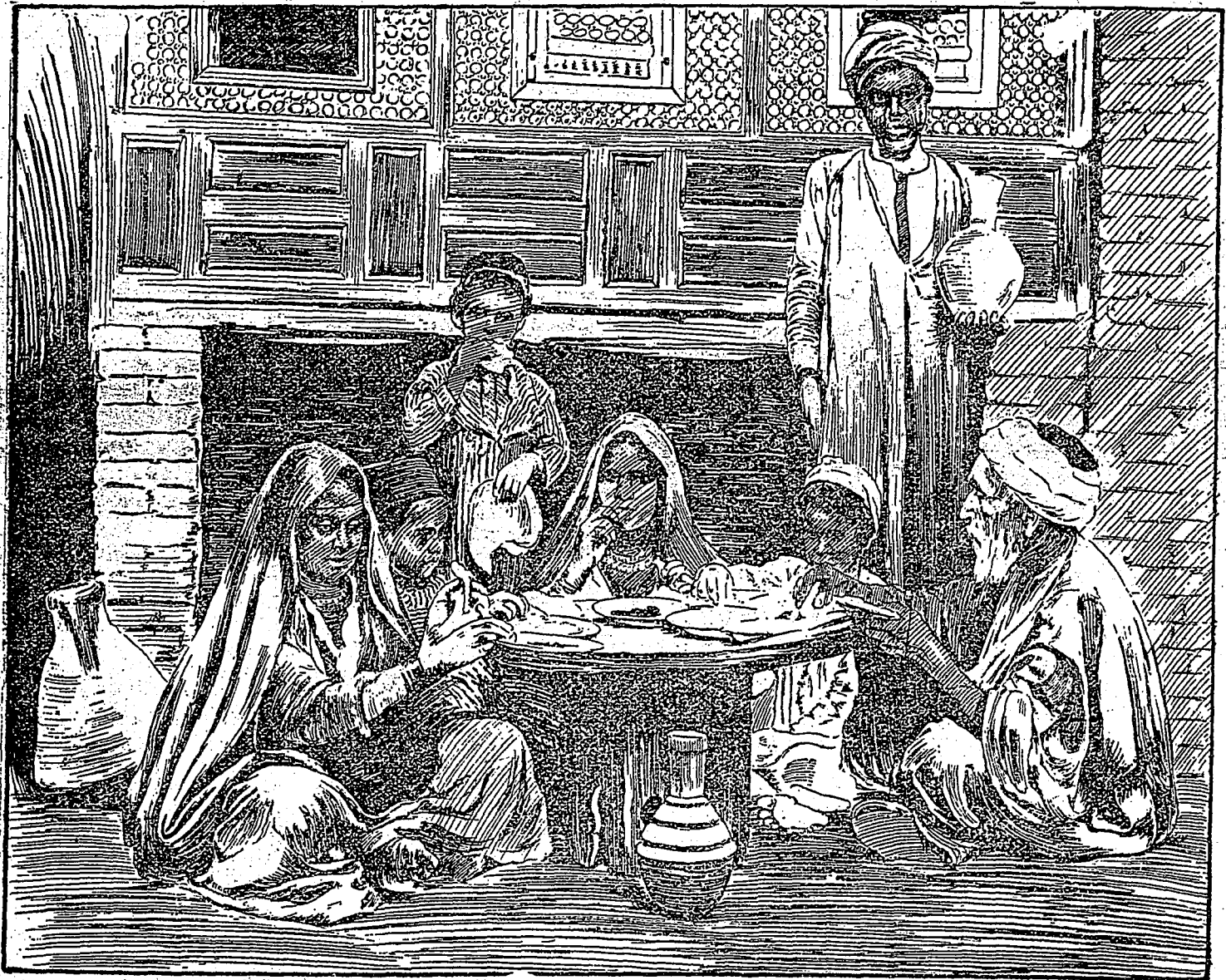
## Hospitality in the Orient.

Hospitality is one of the leading traits of the Oriental character. With the Arabs it is a part of their religion, and whether the host be Bedouin or city dweller, the duty is equally incumbent upon him to extend to his guest the best his home affords, and to give him also complete protection while under his roof. In multitudes of Arab homes in the cities of Arabia proper, as well as among the Syrian Arabs, who have adopted the Jewish mode of life, the same

ground, with a small wooden stool placed in the centre, to receive the principal dish, the other dishes being laid on the bag. In many homes, however, the bag is dispensed with and a table with platters to hold the chopped meat is used instead. Around this the entire family sit down in a circle, all squatting either on mats or upon the ground, each member having previously washed his hands with the most scrupulous care. Each diner takes a cake of thin dough (which has been baked on a hearth of heated stones), and rolling or twisting it

sent day the custom is to use a polygonal stool called the kursî, about 14 inches high, surmounted by a tray—the seniye—made either of basket-work or metal, and upon this the food is placed, the whole table being known as the surfrah. Under the tray on a mat lies the bread and the water-pitcher is conveniently near. In homes of the better class, a servant stands behind the diners to pass the water pitcher and wait upon any guest who may be present.

From the Persians, Greeks and Romans, the richest people of the East adopted many



AN ARAB FAMILY OF CAIRO AT THE AFTERNOON MEAL.

generous rules of hospitality that prevailed in patriarchal times are still observed. The stranger must be welcomed, and to drink coffee, or even water, or to break bread and eat salt together, establishes a sacred bond of amity. It is not strange, therefore, that even in the humblest of Arab dwellings in Cairo, Damascus or Jerusalem, the needy stranger usually finds a welcome, and a seat at the household table.

Everywhere in Egypt and Palestine, small low, flat tables, of the same general character as that shown in our illustration, are in common use. In some parts of the Holy Land, the peasants—Arab, Syrian and Hebrew alike—use a flat, circular leather bag (through which a cord has been run), and at meal-time this bag is placed on the

with his fingers, dips it into the principal dish, a portion of which is conveyed to the mouth. When the tough, thin cake becomes soft it is eaten with the rice or stoved meat, or whatever the dish may be. Everything is eaten with the fingers. Water is served at table from baked clay jars or pitchers of the same unvarying pattern so common in the East. After the meal, the crumbs and bits of refuse are thrown to the dogs or fowls, and the table set in a corner for future use.

There are many points of resemblance between the tables of the ancient Hebrews and those in use among the Arabs to-day. A feature of both was a piece of skin or leather spread upon the ground upon which the table was set. In Palestine at the pre-

luxurious practices, among them the custom of reclining at meals. 'Dinner-beds' were among the luxuries of King Ahasuerus's palace at Shushan, and special tables were placed in front of the couches or divans for the convenience of the guests.

Wherever any allusion appears in either the Old or New Testament to 'sitting at meat,' it is probable that the custom of reclining is implied. Among the poorer people, however, the old method of sitting around a common table is everywhere prevalent. In ancient Egypt, low chairs or stools were employed, on which the diners sat with the right knee raised to form a support for the hand. One or two guests usually sat at a table, though sometimes—as on the occasion of a high feast or banquet