

EDUCATION IN EGYPT

THE WORLD'S GREATEST MOHAMMEDAN UNIVERSITY AND ITS NINE THOUSAND STUDENTS

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CAIRO.—I have just returned from a visit to the largest university of the Mohammedan world. It has more students than any of our colleges, and twice as many as either Harvard, Yale or Cornell. It has 11,000 students, and 100 professors. It is situated in the heart of the city, and is a large number from every country where Mohammedanism flourishes. There are hundreds from India, and some from Malaya and Java. There is a large number from Morocco and also from Algeria, Tunis and Tripoli. There are Nubians as black as your hair, Syrians and Turks as yellow as rice, and even some from the southern islands of the Indian Ocean. There are long-haired, bearded, and brown-skinned men from the Sudan and from about Kuka, Bahr and Khartoum. The students are of all ages from 15 to 75 and some have spent their lives in the college.

A MIGHTY MOHAMMEDAN FORCE.

This university has been in existence for almost a thousand years. It was founded A. D. 988, and from that time to this it has been educating the followers of the prophet. It is today perhaps the strongest force among the people of Egypt. Ninety-two per cent of the inhabitants of the Nile valley are Mohammedans and the most of the native officials have been educated here. There are at least 25,000 men in the public service among the graduates, and the judges of the villages, the teachers in the mosque schools and the imams or priests who serve throughout Egypt are connected with it. They hold the university in the highest regard, and in order from its professors could be as much, if not more respected than one from the khedivial government.

The education in this university is almost altogether Mohammedan. Its curriculum is about the same as it was a thousand years ago, and the chief studies are the Koran and Arabic law together with the sacred traditions of the religion and perhaps a little grammar, prosody and rhetoric. Within the past few years there have been attempts to extend its sphere, and it now has 12 government professors, but their teaching is done outside the university itself. A number of the professors are also teaching in the government schools connected with the mosques of the Egyptian villages, but even there the Koran takes up half the time and religion is far more important than science.

HOW THE EGYPTIANS STUDY THEIR BIBLE.

Indeed it is wonderful how much time these Egyptians spend on their Bible. The Koran is their primer, their first and second reader and also their college text book. As soon as a baby is born, the call to prayer is shouted in its ear, and when it begins to speak its father teaches it to say the creed, which runs somewhat as follows:

"There is no God but God; Mohammed is the apostle of God, the King, the Truth! There is no God but He! The Lord of the glorious throne."

When the boy reaches 6 or 8 years of age, he starts to the mosque school, and there squats down, cross-legged, and sways to and fro as he yells aloud the texts of the Koran. He studies the alphabet by writing with a black brush texts on a slate of wood or tin, and he pounds away from year to year committing the Koran to memory. There are now about 200,000 pupils in the Egyptian schools, of whom a majority are under thirteen years of age. By a recent census it was found that over 10,000 of these boys could recite a good part of the Mohammedan Bible, and that 4,000 had memorized the whole from beginning to end.

Another 4,000 were able to recite one-half of it from memory, while 3,000 could correctly give three-fourths of it. When it is remembered that the Koran contains 114 divisions and in the neighborhood of 30,000 words, it will be seen what this means. I venture that there are not 1,000 children in the United States who can recite the New Testament without looking at the book, and that with our vast population we have not 1,000 boys who can recite even one book of our Bible from memory without a dictionary.

The Mohammedans recite their Bible quite as much as we do ours. While it is being recited they will not allow it to be upon the floor, and no one may read or touch it without first washing himself. It is written in Arabic and its style is considered a model. They believe that it was revealed by God to Mohammed, and that it is eternal. It was not written at the first, but was entirely committed to memory, and it is still taught to a large extent. I understand that the present khedive can recite the most of it. During my interview with his father, Tewfik Pasha, he told me that he could begin at the back and by memory alone recite the Koran clear to the beginning. The better classes of Mohammedans have beautiful copies of this book. They have some bound in gold with the text illuminated, and the university here has a collection of fine editions which is looked upon as one of its greatest treasures.

NINE THOUSAND BALD HEADS.

This famous Mohammedan university is situated in the heart of business Cairo. When I rode to it today on my donkey I passed through a mile or so of covered bazars, thronged with turbaned men and veiled women and walled with shops in which long-robed Egyptians were selling goods and giving their trades. The university is known as the Mosque of El-Azhar, which is one of the oldest mosques of Cairo. It covers several acres and the grounds about it are largely taken up with industries connected with the university. One of the bazars is devoted to bookbinding and bookbinding and another to head dressing. Every Mohammedan has his head shaved several times a week, and in this college there are 9,000 bald-headed students. The scholar who would appear here with an ordinary college football cut would not be admitted. The students wear turbans of white, black or green, and there is not a hair under them except on the top of the crown, where a little tuft may be left that the owner may be the more easily pulled into a turban.

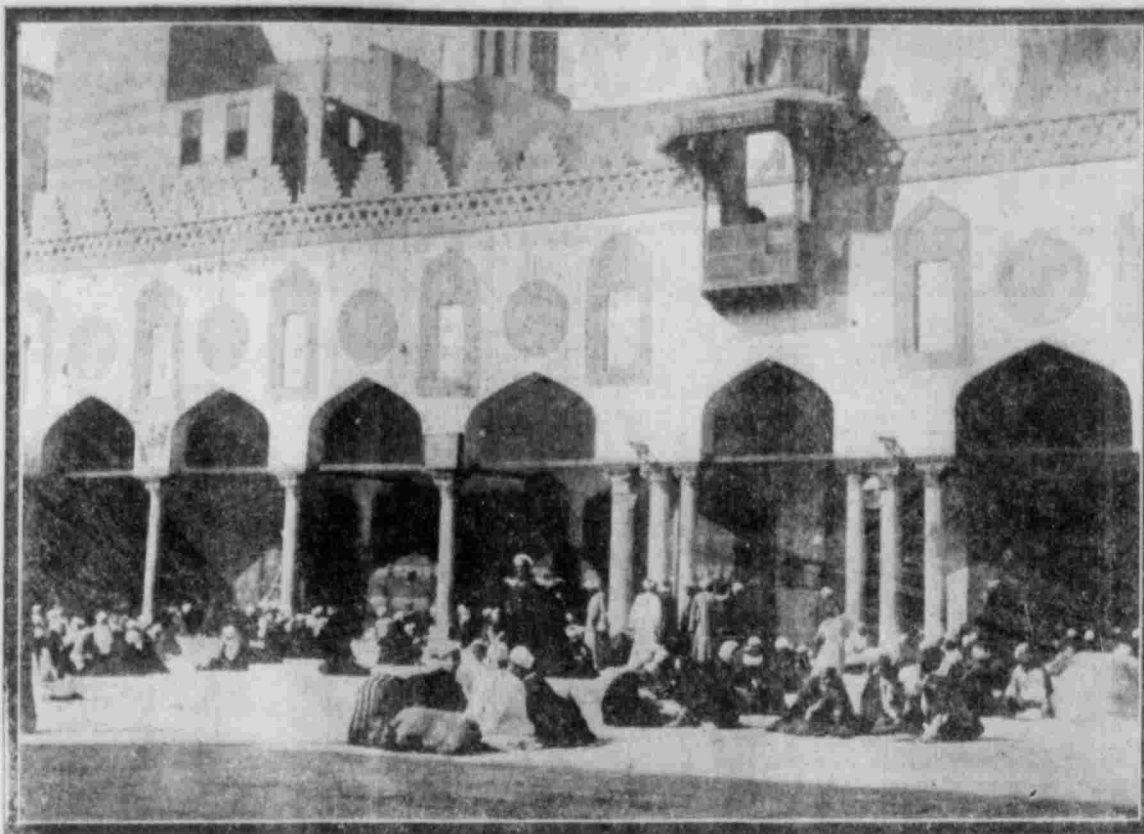
My way led through the street of the barbers. There were a number of them working on the heads of the students. The barbers made them kneel down to be shaved, and I saw one or two lying with their heads in the laps of the men who were shaving them. The barbers used no razor, wiping the shavings on the faces of their victims instead. At the end they gave the head, face and ears a good washing.

As I approached the entrance of the university I saw many young, long-robed, turbaned men, with their books under their arms, standing about and some carrying manuscripts in and out. Each student has his shoes in his hand when he enters the gates, and I was made to put a pair of slippers over my boots before I went in. The slippers were of yellow sheepskin and a turbaned servant tied them on with red strings.

MOHAMMEDAN STUDENTS AT WORK.

Entering the gate I came into a great stone-floored court, upon which the students of this university fare. The court was surrounded by arcades upheld by marble pillars, and in the arcades

Queer Studies in a College Where the Teachers Work Without Pay—How the Egyptians Memorize Their Bible—What the Government is Doing in the Village Schools—Female Education—Industrial Schools and Schools of Agriculture—Egypt's New National University Soon to Be Organized.



"I CAME INTO A GREAT COURT."

Photographed for the "News" by Frank G. Carpenter.

and in the immense rooms beyond were thousands upon thousands of students. They sat in groups on the floor listening to the professors, who were lecturing on various subjects, swaying back and forth as they sang out their words of wisdom. Some of the groups were studying aloud, and altogether the confusion was as great as that at the Tower of Babel when the tongues of the builders were changed. There were at least 5,000 men, all talking at once, and some, it seemed to me, were shouting at the tops of their voices. I had many unfriendly looks as I made my way through the mass, and narrowly escaped being mobbed when I took snapshots of the professors and students at work under the bright sun which beat down upon the court. The inmates of this school are among the most fanatical of the Mohammedans, and I have since learned that the Christian who moves among them is in danger of personal violence.

I spent some time in this university, going from hall to hall and making notes. In one section I found a class of blind boys who were learning the Koran, and I am told that they are more fanatical than any of the others. In another place I saw 40 Persians listening to a professor. They were sitting on the ground, and the professor himself sat flat on the floor with his bare feet doubled up under him. I could see his yellow toes sticking

out of his black gown. He was lecturing on theology and the students were attentive.

Another class near by was taking down the notes of a lecture. Each had a sheet of tin, which looked as though it might have been cut from an oil can, and he wrote upon this in ink with a reed style. The letters were in Arabic and I could not tell what they meant.

I looked about me in vain for school furniture such as we have at home. There was not a chair nor a table in the hall; there were no maps nor diagrams and no scientific instruments. There were no libraries visible and the books used were mostly pamphlets.

THEY SLEEP IN THE SCHOOL ROOMS.

There is no charge for tuition and the poor and the rich are on much the same level. Many of the undergraduates are partially supported by the university, and it is no disgrace to be without money. Some of the students and professors live in the university. They sleep in the school rooms, where they study or teach, lying down upon the mats and covering themselves with their blankets. They eat there, and there are peddlers who bring in food and sell it to them. Their diet is plain, a bowl of bean soup and a cake of pounded grain, together with a little garlic or dates, forming the most common meal. Such food costs

little, but to those who are unable to buy the university gives food, 300 loaves of bread being supplied without charge to needy students every day. As I passed through the halls, I saw some of the boys mending their clothes and others spreading their wash out in the sun to dry. They did not seem ashamed of their poverty and I saw much to admire.

The professors serve for nothing and support themselves by teaching in private houses or by reading the prayer at the mosques. It is considered a great honor to be a professor here, and the most learned men of the Mohammedan world are glad to lecture in the El-Azhar without reward. In fact, the only man about the institution who receives a salary is the president, who has 10,000 piasters a year. This seems much until one knows that the piaster is only 5 cents, and that it takes this many of them to make \$500.

I asked as to the government of the university, and was told it had a principal and under professors. All students are under the direct control of the university, and if they misbehave outside its walls the police hand them over to the collegiate authorities for punishment. The students are exempt from military service, and it is said that many enter the institution for that reason alone. There seem to be no limitations as to age nor as to the time one may spend at the college. I saw boys between six and eight studying the Koran in one corner of the building, and gray-bearded men sitting around a professor in another. The most of the scholars, however, are from 15 to 25 or about the same age as our college students at home.

EDUCATION IN EGYPT.

This university has but little to do with the great movement of modern education which is now going on in Egypt. It is rather religious than educational, and the live, active educational forces outside it are two. One of these is the United Presbyterian church and its mission school, of which I will write later, when I visit their college at Assiout, about 500 miles farther up the Nile valley, and the other is the government, directed by the British, who are collecting the taxes and administering all matters of importance in Egypt today. In addition to these there are about 1,000 schools supported by the Copts, who, by the way, are the most intelligent of the native population.

Egypt was very illiterate when the British took hold of the administration, and even now not more than six or seven per cent of the natives can read and write. The desire for learning is increasing, however, and the system of common schools which has been inaugurated is being rapidly developed. There are now over 10,000 schools in the country, with something like 20,000 teachers and perhaps a quarter of a million pupils. There are a number of private schools, several normal schools and also schools devoted to special training. In the last few years a system of technical education has been inaugurated, and the government now has a school of engineering, a school of agriculture here at Cairo, a school of engineering and schools of law and medicine.

THE VILLAGE SCHOOLS.

An important movement has been the introduction of modern studies into the village schools belonging to the Mohammedans. These were formerly, and are some extent now under the university of El-Azhar. They were connected with the mosques and were taught by Mohammedan priests. They were supported by the people themselves, and also by a Mohammedan religious organization known as the Wafk, which has an enormous endowment. There are something like 10,000 of these schools here and there are over the lower part of the Nile valley, and they had an attendance of something like 200,000. They taught little more than the Arabic language, the Koran, and reading, writing and arithmetic. Lord Cromer wanted to bring these schools under the ministry of public instruction and introduce our modern studies. He tried to force the teachers to come under him, but they refused. He then offered to give every mosque school that would come in an appropriation of 60 cents for every boy and 10 cents for every girl, and this has apparently solved the problem.

The village schools are rapidly adopting modern methods. Already 4,500 of them are subject to the government, and within a short time they will all be under the immediate direction of its educational department. At present it is necessary to handle them carefully and to make the religious studies among the most important. Now the half of each school day is set apart for the study of the Koran and the precepts of Islam, and I am told that such Mohammedan scholars as do well are more than likely to get appointments under the government than if they were Christians or Copts.

FEMALE EDUCATION.

The girls of Egypt are beginning to go to school. For a long time it was hard to persuade their parents to send them either to the government schools or private schools, but of late some of the native educated women have been given places as teachers and many girls are now preparing themselves for school work. Other parents are sending their daughters to school to give them a good general education and the time will come when there will be girls' schools all over Egypt and the Mohammedan women may become educated.

BENEVOLENT EGYPTIANS.

We are apt to think that the only charity is Christian charity. I find that there is Mohammedan charity as well, and that many of the richer Moslems give much to the education and other such things. One of the endowments of the El-Azhar university, which is almost entirely of this nature. Some of the village schools are aided by the native charity, as are also some high schools. In 1903 Mahmoud Suleiman constructed at his own cost, and endowed liberally at Abou-Tig an individual school in which are taught weaving, carpentry, blacksmithing and tanning. This school has now 92 pupils, all of whom are receiving their training free of charge. The khedive has an industrial school with 200 pupils on his private estates, and there is a Mohammedan benevolent society at Alexandria which has raised \$30,000 for an industrial school there. That school will accommodate over 500 pupils, and it has now an endowment of about \$4,000 per day. One of the princes of the khedive's family is starting a similar school in the Behera province, and the towns of Fayoum and Beni-Suef are raising money to build industrial schools. There is also talk of a national university along modern lines, to be supported by the government. This is favored by many of the leading Egyptians, and Lord Cromer has advocated it in his report of this year. It is stated that this university will be absolutely scientific and literary, and that its doors will be wide open to all desirous of learning, irrespective of their origin or religion.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

Ask your grocer to send you Royal Bread. It is made in a clean bakery and the crown label is on every loaf.



FISH-HARAHAN CONTROVERSY.

When Stuyvesant Fish, former president of the Illinois Central railway, wrote James T. Harahan, president of that corporation, and called him vigorous names while the latter lay on the floor of the directors' room on Broadway, New York, the result of the encounter was merely numbered on. Harahan took a fast train for Chicago and it is now generally conceded that he will open round two with a body blow in the shape of a suit for damages. In addition to this, it is asserted that at the annual meeting of the stockholders of the Illinois Central, to be held in Chicago on Oct. 16, Mr. Fish will be treated to a severe drubbing at the hands of his late antagonist, who represents the Harahan forces which ousted Fish from the presidency.

JAPANESE COMMERCIAL EXHIBITION AT MUKDEN.

Consul-General Willard D. Straight, of Mukden, quotes the Japanese consul-general there as stating that it would be possible for the American manufacturers or merchants desirous of showing their goods to obtain floor space in the commercial exhibition, which was looked to be opened there about Nov. 15. The enterprise is conducted under the auspices of the chambers of commerce of the six principal cities in Japan, which, advised by the government, have submitted a plan necessary to meet the expenditure incurred.

Places along will be let at the rate of \$10 per 600 square feet for the three months of the exhibition, at the expiration of which period the buildings will be used as a bazaar, where it will doubtless be possible for American firms to sell their goods. Japanese exhibitors, who are expected to be in large numbers, should desire to exhibit agricultural or other machinery of considerable size and great weight, arrangements should be made for the erection of special sheds within the grounds.

REDUCTION IN RATES ON CANADIAN RAILWAYS.

Consul J. H. Worsman of Three Rivers, in the interests of American shippers calls attention to the fact that the Grand Trunk railway has, by reason of the opening of competitive lines by the Canadian Northern from Toronto to Port Huron and by the Canadian Pacific from Hudson to Cranshaw and from Oshawa to Milwaukee, lowered its traffic rates to competitive points.

GENERAL ROBERT E. LEE.

Was the greatest General the world has ever known. His life and his military career is the greatest of all. He was a man of great courage and great ability. He was a man of great faith and great hope. He was a man of great love and great kindness. He was a man of great wisdom and great understanding. He was a man of great strength and great power. He was a man of great honor and great glory. He was a man of great fame and great renown. He was a man of great respect and great admiration. He was a man of great love and great kindness. He was a man of great wisdom and great understanding. He was a man of great strength and great power. He was a man of great honor and great glory. He was a man of great fame and great renown. He was a man of great respect and great admiration. He was a man of great love and great kindness. He was a man of great wisdom and great understanding. He was a man of great strength and great power. He was a man of great honor and great glory. 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