

**LEAVES FROM AN
EGYPTIAN
NOTE-BOOK**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649627622

Leaves from an Egyptian Note-Book by Isaac Taylor

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ISAAC TAYLOR

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EGYPTIAN NOTE-BOOK

BY

ISAAC TAYLOR

M.A., LITT. D., HON. LL.D.

CANON OF YORK

LONDON

KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH & CO., 1, PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1888 H.

PREFACE.

NARRATIVES of Egyptian travel being already sufficiently abundant, I have not attempted to add another to the list. The scope of this volume is wholly different. It consists, for the most part, of notes of conversations with Egyptians on politics and religion.

I went to Egypt, the head-quarters of Islam, in order to investigate the truth of certain assertions which have of late been freely made as to the barbarism, ignorance, profligacy, and intolerance of Mahomedan nations. My inquiries were facilitated by the fact that some of my pleas for a better mutual understanding between Christians and Mahomedans had been recently reproduced, with appreciative comments, in the vernacular journals of Caire, Beyrout, and Constantinople.

Hence I found, somewhat to my surprise, that my name and my opinions were not unknown to Mahomedan gentlemen, who placed at my disposal means of information not accessible to ordinary tourists. I have held long and interesting discussions, not only with Europeans resident in Egypt, and with men who fill important posts in the Egyptian government, but with Moslems of every class, who have conversed, without reserve, on the tenets of Islam, and on the condition and prospects of their country and their religion. I have also been allowed to visit many of the schools and colleges of Cairo, and have talked freely with the students and teachers, and have examined several of the classes.

What has been told me may not always have been the truth, but at all events it has been that which my informants wished me to believe; and it is not unimportant to know what Moslems desire that Christians should think as to the tenets and practices of their religion. I have, as far as possible, checked the information given me by personal observation. The conclusions at which I have arrived differ so widely from the views

prevalent in England, that I believe I shall be doing a real service to the cause of truth and charity by placing them on record. And if I seem to have stated my opinions somewhat dogmatically, I have done so simply for the sake of brevity. Neither have I considered it necessary perpetually to reaffirm my belief in the immeasurable superiority of our own religion and civilization to those of Egypt, these being matters on which my readers have doubtless formed their own conclusions.

I find that comparatively few travellers seek or obtain opportunities of conversing confidentially with Mahommedans on the subject of their beliefs as to which they are usually reticent, in accordance with a precept of the Koran, which forbids them to argue with Christians in the spirit of hostile controversy. But since, in India and elsewhere, we have at least fifty millions of Mahommedan fellow-subjects, it cannot be unimportant for us to know how far they agree or differ from us in their way of looking at fundamental questions of science, morals, politics, and religion. Considering also the peculiar relations in which we stand to Egypt,

it seems desirable that we should not be ignorant of what the Egyptians think of our occupation of their country, of our methods of administration, and of the reforms we have introduced.

The greater portion of these notes originally appeared in the *St. James's Gazette*, and I have to thank the proprietors of that journal for permission to reprint them. Two descriptive papers—the first and the last—have been added, and the rest have been revised, and, in some instances, considerably enlarged.

I. T.

SETTRINGTON RECTORY, YORK,
June, 1888.

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