

1927

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Recommended Citation

Thomas, Frances (1927) "Marketing in Egypt," *The Iowa Homemaker*: Vol. 7 : No. 8 , Article 5.
Available at: <http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol7/iss8/5>

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Marketing in Egypt

By FRANCES THOMAS

"TO MARKET to market to buy a new cloak" is as feasible an expression in Egypt as our American ditty which ends with the purchase of "a fat pig," for in Egypt the middle class peasant men go to the market to buy their clothes.

Two of the best known markets in the world are situated in Egypt, one in Damascus and the other in Cairo. The "muski", as the Arabian people call it, is usually about two blocks long, and so narrow that cars can not drive into it. On each side of the street are the stalls or booths in which the wares are displayed. There are no shelves or counters. The merchandise is spread on the ground, and a matting of some kind of raffia or straw is put above to keep off the hot rays of the sun.

The dealer stands in front of his stall continually calling his wares. These men are very superstitious, and believe if they do not have a sale in the morning that it means bad luck for the rest of the day. Thus anyone who does his marketing early in the morning can make a good bargain. If the customer seems the least bit interested, the proprietor serves lemonade or coffee in the hopes of inducing his customer to make a purchase.

It is the custom of the Egyptian merchant to price his wares just twice as high as their real worth, and it is up to the shopper to jew the merchant down to a reasonable price. The white people rarely go to the market, for their native servants are more capable of making a good bargain with the native merchants. So the market men count on the inexperienced tourists, who know little of the real value of Oriental goods, to make their great profits.

Almost every sort of ware is sold in the "muski". Stalls displaying oriental rugs are placed side by side with stands selling brass ware. Booths selling beads, jewelry and pictures are perhaps the most numerous and popular.

The Egyptian man of moderate means goes to the market to buy his clothes. Each tailor has his own little

stall where he takes his customer's measurements and makes their native garb. The man's garment, known in Arabic as the "galibya", is made like a night shirt. Usually it is of some



An Egyptian Market Place.

coarse white cloth, or if the customer wishes a nicer gown, it is made of pongee. The rural shieks of wealth wear gorgeous robes of fine, bright colored flannel.

Not only are some of the clothes made and purchased in the market, but many of them are also ironed there. The ironers sprinkle their clothes by filling their mouth with water and spraying it on the cloths. Then the garments are ironed with charcoal irons.

The food markets in Egypt are more numerous but smaller than the "muski's". The food is placed in piles on the ground uncovered, in spite of the fact that there are swarms of flies about. Perhaps one of the largest vegetable markets in the world is the French Market at Alexandria. The variety and the quality of the vegetables is good, and the price differs little from that of American products. The meat also is uncovered and hangs from the matting roof over the stalls. Fruits of all kinds are displayed in the numerous stalls. Egypt raises many grapes and figs, and these seem to be great favorites with the native people. Although apples are not raised in the country, many are shipped over from Italy and are for sale in every food market. Some candy is for sale in small quantities.

The knowledge of the health proper-

ties of milk and other dairy products is either unknown or of little concern to the Egyptian family, for they give their children but little milk to drink. Perhaps the fact that there are but few cows and most of the milk comes from goats or an Egyptian buffalo partially explains the fact that milk is not a popular food. Undoubtedly, this does not decrease the infant death rate. Although Egyptian families are very large, the death rate for children is exceedingly high, for the parents know little about correct feeding of children. What milk is consumed is usually not a very sanitary food. However, it is fresh enough, for the goats are brought to the door and milked in the presence of the purchaser.

The sanitary conditions in the home are not much better than those in the market. The houses are as a rule wooden structures of few rooms for a large family. There are few furnishings, save in the homes of the rich, where conditions are, of course, similar to those of rich American people. In many of the humblest houses the floors are earthen. Rope network takes the place of our spring in the beds.

The Egyptian people are not prepared for cold weather and of course have no furnaces. All the cooking that is done is accomplished over charcoal grates. Baking is done in the old-fashioned dutch oven.

All the Egyptian people seem to prefer foods which are combined into a sort of stew. They do not care for our much liked dry dishes. Their vegetables, grains and meat are combined into one dish, and each member of the family helps himself out of the one large kettle.

Aside from the many little differences found in any foreign country, Egypt is a land of romance and history. Not many of the people are as yet educated, but there are many schools springing up, and the country as a whole is progressing.

The old man is the head of the family and he gets the headaches