

CURIOUS CAIRO.



ONE of the most interesting and attractive towns in the world is Cairo. All time and all the nations of to-day seem to be represented here. The great museum presents to us statues of wonderful life and real beauty and artistic merit older than the pyramids—not less than five thousand years old now—whilst we can see the same type of men exactly, walking in the streets of Cairo. Besides the great annual influx of winter visitors, principally English and Americans, there are some regular residents in Cairo, of which twenty or thirty thousand are Europeans of all the nations of Europe. The rest are Orientals from all parts of Africa, with a good many from Arabia and other parts of Asia.

The first thing that strikes the eye on entering the city is the charm and novelty of seeing nearly all the men and boys dressed in long white or pale blue garments. These hang quite loose and look like long night-shirts, coming down to the feet. The feet are covered, when covered at all, with bright yellow or bright red slippers, and the head is enveloped in a white turban, generally wound round a cap, which shows above it. This is either the well-known red fez with its black tassel, or the pale brown felt cap characteristic of the fellahen.

Next to the very picturesque effect of these airy, pretty garments, perhaps the most surprising thing was the great number of donkeys, carrying large bright-coloured cloth saddles, that thronged the streets. Each of these is attended by a boy in the dress described above, who runs behind it and shouts at it and whips it. At first sight it looked as though there were almost as many donkeys as people in the streets.

The native women constantly ride donkeys and very curious figures they look in the saddle. Of course a woman in this country thinks it as great a disgrace, unless one of the very lowest class of the people, to expose her face as to expose any other part of her person. The eyes only are visible, the mouth being kept most scrupulously covered. Very large, loose garments, generally of shiny, black silk, are worn by ladies when out of doors, and they ride cross legged, but with stirrups so short that their limbs do not hang down at all, but are in an almost horizontal position. In fact, they rather suggest trussed chickens. In this way they have hardly any hold on the saddle, and one or often two men run beside them and support them. Some of the donkeys are magnificent, proud-looking white or grey animals as large as a rather small mule, and carry gorgeous embroidered saddles and saddle-cloths of red velvet or blue cloth. Most of the hack donkeys, on the other hand, are insignificant-looking little animals, which are most inappropriate when carrying some great fat Turkish merchant, or a long-legged, red-coated English soldier. The wealthy Egyptians will often pay five hundred dollars for a really good donkey, while excellent ponies can be bought for a quarter or a third of the money.

The most remarkable sight, perhaps, is the number of camels to be seen slowly marching through the streets of Cairo. Camels in the desert one expect to find, but few people are prepared to see so many of them in the city. The fact is they largely supply the place of carts, of which very few indeed are to be seen, and nearly all the alfalfa used in Cairo is brought in, stacked on and around camels. Both donkeys and the numerous horses in small hack carriages, which abound here, seem to be fed almost entirely on alfalfa. Till one is accustomed to the sight, it is most strange to see a stream of large stacks of this bright, green herb perambulating the streets, with a little bit of four legs shown beneath each, a weak, foolish-looking head, rather like an ostrich's, at the end of a long neck, peering out in front and carelessly chewing the cud, and the smallest possible piece of the camel's rather slight hind-quarters just visible behind. The alfalfa is so stacked at either side of the animal in nets of rope, and on his back, that no more of the camel than I have described is visible from a side view.

The camels may often be seen going about singly, but very often as many as six of them are tied together by a slight string and march along, always in single file, very silently, for their great soft pads of feet, intended for walking on sand, make no noise, yet by their very size and character clearing a path for themselves without difficulty through the swarms of humanity, whose noise and excitement contrast most unfavourably with the dignity and quiet of these great, tall denizens of the desert.

Another strange sight to see is the water carriers going about the streets. Water is laid all through Cairo, but the water rate is high, and many of the poor people prefer to buy their water from the carriers, as they or their ancestors have been doing from time immemorial, rather than impoverish themselves by adopting such new-fangled European fads as mysterious jets coming out of iron pipes.

Some of the water carriers carry the water in large earthenware vessels with brass spouts, that are strapped on to their backs, and from which they pour the water very cleverly over their shoulder by just stooping forward, into a cup which they hold in their hand. The majority, however, still use goatskins, which look most uninviting, being black skins with the hair only roughly shaved off them and with the four legs and tail cut off not very short, and tied up, while the water runs out through the neck of the skin,



W. J. STEWARD, ESQ., M.H.R.
(Speaker of the House of Representatives.)

SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

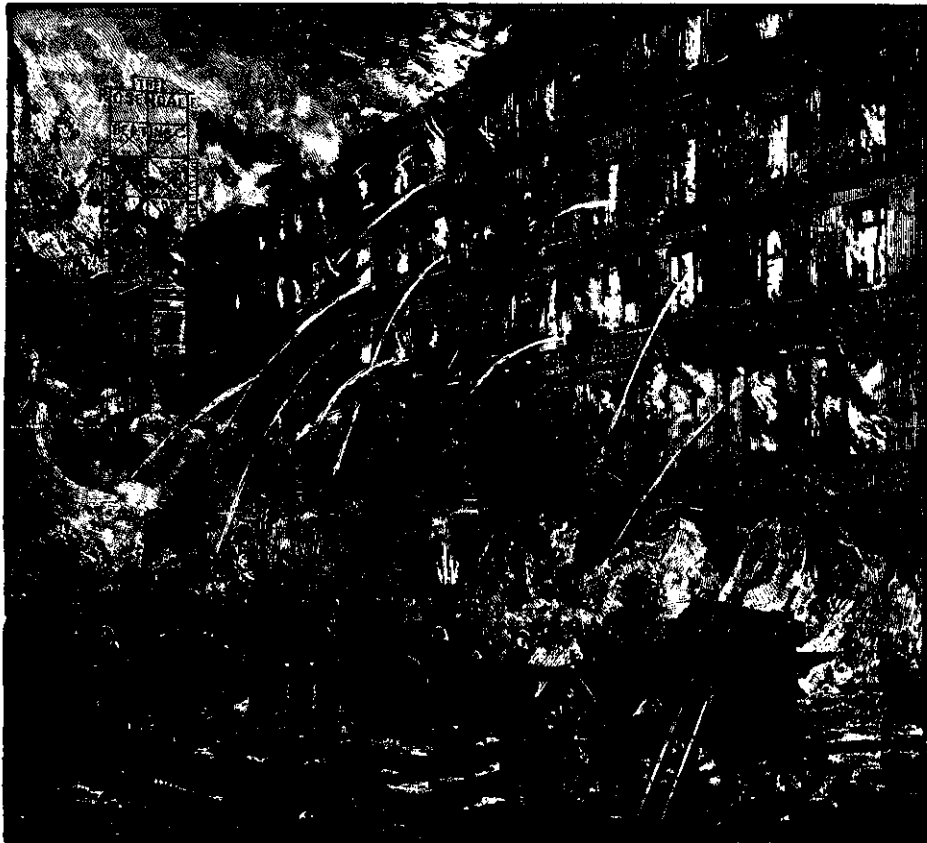
MR WILLIAM JUKES STEWARD, M.H.R. for Waimata, Major in the New Zealand Volunteer Force, and a Justice of the Peace for the colony, was born in 1841 at Reading, Berks, and educated at King Edward VI. Grammar School, Ludlow, Salop. He arrived in New Zealand in September, 1862, and was for some years resident in Christchurch, where he took an active part in volunteer matters, raising and commanding the No. 6 Company C.V.R., now the City Guards. Having removed to Oamaru in 1867, he edited the *North Otago Times* for twelve and a-half years, and eventually became the principal proprietor. Mr Steward was elected for Waitaki at the general election in 1870, and sat for that electorate during the Parliament of 1871-75. Being defeated at the general election in 1875, he became mayor of Oamaru, and occupied the civic chair for three years in succession, 1876-78. He sat in the last Provincial Council of Otago, representing Oamaru county district, and was a member of the last Provincial Executive. Having raised companies of rifle volunteers in Oamaru, Otepepe, and Hampden, which with the Oamaru Artillery, were formed into a battalion, he held the command as major for over five years. In 1879 Major Steward removed to Waimata, where he remained for six years editing the *Waimata Times*. Subsequently he became proprietor of the *Ashburton Mail*, and also editor. In 1881 he appealed successfully to the electors of the Waimata constituency, and entered the House as their representative. There Major Steward has established a reputation for the moderation of his views, and for such a sound knowledge of the forms of Parliament, that on the meeting of the present House of Representatives he was elected Speaker over Mr Rolleston by a majority of thirty-six to twenty-nine.

GREAT FIRE IN THE CITY OF LONDON.

AT noon on Tuesday, December 30, a fire broke out in a block of warehouses on the south side of Queen Victoria-street, in the City, in the paper warehouse of Messrs Davidson and Co., in an upper room occupied by working girls. It quickly spread, with a north-easterly wind, to the adjacent premises of Messrs Adolph Frankau and Co., importers of tobacconists' fancy wares, thence to the Victoria Luncheon Rooms of Mr T. Baze, and to Messrs Revillon's wholesale fur warehouse. These premises, with much valuable stock, were destroyed, and the damage is estimated at £300,000. In spite of the efforts of the Fire Brigade, with twenty-three steam-engines, under Captain Shaw, the fire was not subdued till four o'clock in the afternoon. The woodwork of the tower of the Welsh Church, St. Benet's, close to Messrs Davidson's warehouse, soon caught fire, and it was much damaged. There were some fears of the conflagration extending down Benet-hill to Thames-street. Happily there was no loss of life, most of the workpeople being out at the dinner hour. The fire caused great alarm in that part of London. It was immediately followed by another, at Hackney-wick, destroying the chemical factory of Messrs Hope, with 100,000 gallons of oil.

We append to the above the description of an eye-witness of the conflagration, gathered from the premises of the London agency of the NEW ZEALAND GRAPHIC, which lie in the same street, and had a narrow escape of being involved in the general catastrophe:

In the general catastrophe:
—I saw it travelling down the street towards 147 with fearful rapidity. The flames leaped out from the windows, and were carried from one window to another by the strong, biting, bitter wind, until it seemed the whole block from Frankau's to Shaw's building would be involved. We got our publications out from 147 as quickly as possible, Messrs Story and Lingey's and Nops affording a snifter for mine, while the people below deposited many of theirs in a cabin Thames-street. The firemen were at one time in fear lest the fire would reach 143, where it was understood there was a store of cartridges, and if so the result would have been—well, we don't know. Fortunately, the wind shifted when the fire had reached Revillon Fretes, which was of the greatest help to the firemen, who then seemed to get the upper hand of the fire, which was thus stopped three doors from our place. You will see by the papers it was no child's play for the firemen. One poor fellow was brought into our place who had been overcome with heat and smoke, and had a fall. They gave him some brandy, and he was removed in an ambulance. I have seen a few fires here, but I never saw one spread with such rapidity. The men came off the escapes and ladders with beards and clothes covered with ice. One man came down, and could hardly move himself when he reached the ground. Yesterday the ruins, ladders, lamps, pavement, roadway, etc., were covered with ice, and crowds of people have been to "have a look," the police having to request the "lookers" to move on.



FIRE IN THE CITY OF LONDON.