

The Khedive of Egypt.

BY STUART CUMBERLAND.

HIS HIGHNESS ABBAS II., whose visit to England will increase the popular interest in his personality, is a very different man from the ordinary type of Oriental Sovereign.

He has none of his religious bigotry, his narrowness of thought, or ignorance of the outside world, its people and its languages. On the contrary, he is a man of considerable enlightenment, speaks several languages fluently, has visited many European countries, and is now seeking to draft on to the Egyptian system such of the European institutions as he considers suitable for his country.

Whilst the Khedive Abbas is, and has for some time past been, about the most-discussed ruler the world takes cognizance of, he is at the same time the most misunderstood. To the public eye he is a stubborn, stiff-necked Oriental with the wilfulness of youth, fanatical in his hatred of England and the English, and, as a ruler, uncompromisingly despotic in his instincts. This view of him has been arrived at through the telegraphic fiction which malice and political exigencies have caused to be given to the world.

It is time the public saw the other side of the picture; that His Highness should be depicted as he really is, and not as he has been most falsely represented to be.

A young man, called to rule at an age when most Europeans have scarcely begun to seriously consider the question of the battle of life; full of energy, pluck, and ambition; possessed of an indomitable will, impatient of restraint, and anxious to be up and doing. Such was Khedive Abbas II. when he was called to the Khedivial throne—a throne which had been graced with the most amiable, the most easy-going ruler Egypt has ever known.

I first saw His Highness when the much-made-of crisis was at its height, when I was assured that I, as an Englishman—so great was His Highness's hatred of everything English—would receive no sort of consideration at his hands. As it happened, His Highness received me most cordially, and on this and subsequent occasions I had ample opportunity of closely studying him.

In manner His Highness strikes one at first as being somewhat cold—the coldness of Oriental reserve tempered with not a little natural shyness. But this reserve once broken, quite another man unfolds himself before one. His frank, pleasing countenance lights up with almost European vivacity, the half-mistrustful, questioning look in his eyes gives place to a look of confidence; he converses brightly, intelligently, seizes a point with marked quickness, and is most ready with his replies. For one so young his general knowledge and insight into things are really remarkable. He has a high opinion of his dignity, and the training he received at the strictest Court in Europe—that of Austria—has left a strong impression upon him. The officials, who under the easy-going régime of his father had such an easy time of it, find him a somewhat severe disciplinarian, but no one can honestly question his sense of justice.

Since his coming to the throne he has made many radical changes at the palace. In the old days people used to drop in, much after the fashion of dropping in at a club, under the pretext of State affairs, to drink coffee and smoke cigarettes with the officials. *Nous avons changé tout cela*, however, for Khedive Abbas emphatically declared at the outset that he would not have his palace turned into a Viennese café; so to-day free coffee, free smokes, officially speaking, are “off” at the Abdin Palace; the inevitable gossip, minus the smokes and



From a Photo. by] THE KHEDIVE OF EGYPT. [Heyman, Cairo.



From a] PRINCIPAL ENTRANCE—ABDIN PALACE, CAIRO. [Photograph.

the drinks, is, however, still on—very much on. The most exacting Khedive in the world could not, I fear, stay the gossiping tongue of an Egyptian official short of cutting off his head. The Abdin Palace, I may mention, is the official palace, in Cairo. It is a straggling, although somewhat striking, structure in pink and white. It has a really magnificent staircase, a romantic conservatory, and a gorgeous State reception-room, picked out in white and gold.

Khedive Tewfik was not a great stickler for forms and ceremony, but there is nothing that the present Khedive is so particular about as the manner in which those no matter how highly placed conduct themselves in his presence, any relaxation of the prescribed form of respect meeting with severe condemnation at his hands. His Highness's look of indignation when a certain European official presumed to cross his legs whilst seated in his presence will never be forgotten by those who witnessed it.

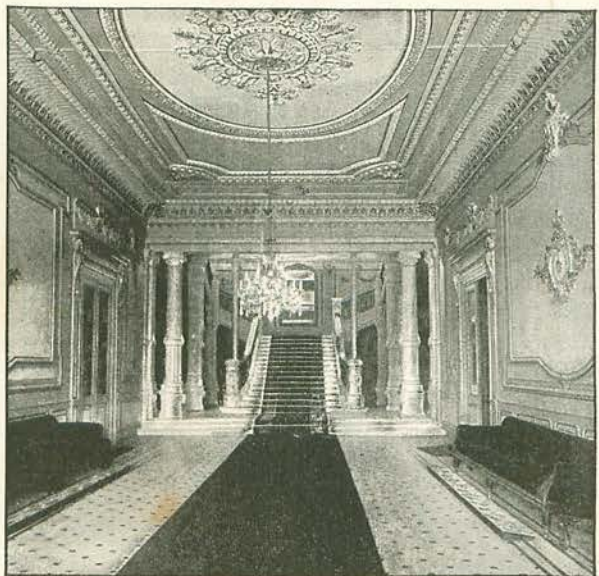
At the reception which His Highness did me the honour of extending me at the Abdin Palace (in the State reception-room), I was much struck by the great deference paid him by his Ministers. They know only too well that, like the heroine in Rider Haggard's fantastical romance, he is one who must be obeyed, and, outwardly at least, their obedience is unquestionable.

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There is much solemnity attached to the display of respect on the part of those surrounding the Khedive. To the European mind it at first seems strange to see grave and learned seniors practically abase themselves with their low bow and humbly clasped hands in the Khedivial presence; but it is not long before one sees that it is more than a mere matter of form; usage requires it, but it has its origin in the Oriental reverence of rank and power. Between the ruler and the ruled there is a wide gulf which, in this world at least, is not to be bridged over, and, as a being apart as it were, deep obeisance towards the ruler on the part

of the ruled is the natural outcome of the situation.

It is asserted in European official quarters in Cairo that the Khedive is much given to treating his Ministers as if they were children. True it is that he imposes his will upon them, and they, as I have pointed out, show him every deference; but as to treating them as children, that is another matter. Undoubtedly, His Highness, with his indomitable will, quickness of thought, and activity of purpose, is at times a little impatient of the circumlocution attached to Ministerial deliberations,



From a] ENTRANCE-HALL—ABDIN PALACE, CAIRO. [Photograph.
(Showing Grand Staircase.)

and there are probably occasions when he would like to act altogether independently of his Ministers, few of whom have, in spite of his youth, his strength of character and determination of purpose. But His Highness is young, it must be remembered, and youth is impatient.

As an instance of His Highness's sense of justice and his impatience of stupidity, I may mention a little incident that occurred at my thought-reading reception at the Abdin Palace, already referred to. I had tried the experiment of writing out a word in Arabic with one of the Court officials, who, through a combination of obstinacy and denseness, did not wish to have his thoughts read, with indifferent success, and was trying with another official of the same mental calibre with a like result, when His Highness hurriedly arose from his seat and said, "I will show you how it should be done."

I took the Khedive by the hand and at once wrote out, in Arabic characters, a word thought of by him.

In the experiments I performed with His Highness I found him to be possessed of considerable concentration of thought, whilst his quickness at grasping an idea was most marked. As a rule,



From a]

CONSERVATORY—ABDIN PALACE, CAIRO.

[Photograph.

Oriental are not good "subjects" for me; they, generally speaking, won't think straight. Superstition has a good deal to do with it, for, truth to tell, they are afraid of

having their thoughts read. Your Oriental thinks that if you can get at his thoughts in simple matters, what is there to prevent you from divining everything that may be passing in his mind? Those who know the Oriental official will know what a terrible thought this must be to him. But the Khedive is an enlightened man, and I found him to be a most excellent "subject."

One of the



From a]

STATE RECEPTION-ROOM—ABDIN PALACE, CAIRO.

[Photograph.

things strongly urged against the Khedive in the European quarter is that he is anti-English, even to the selection of his staff.

Now, as to this, the Swiss gentleman who acted as the Khedive's private secretary, and who, during the first "crisis," was the one man who, it was asserted, influenced His Highness against the English policy, no longer has the ear of the Khedive in the way that he was alleged to have had. This Helvetian gentleman must not be confounded with His Highness's English secretary, Brewster Bey, one of the most straightforward and at the same time most amiable of the Khedive's personal staff. In Brewster Bey, who is an Englishman, His Highness has implicit confidence, and he could, no doubt, relate many instances of the generous treatment Englishmen have received at the Khedive's hands, for he is the medium between His Highness and his countrymen, and knows, perhaps better than anyone else, the Khedive's real feelings towards England and the English.

Much has been made of the assertion that His Highness is given to taking heed of evil advisers. All I know is, that His Highness is a seeker after truth, and that he appeared to be most anxious to know how he could tell the true from the false. Almost his last words to me were: "How can you know when a man is trying to deceive you? How can one tell that a man saying one thing may mean another? Is there anything in your art to tell me this?"

I ventured to suggest to His Highness that this was the very rock upon which poor human nature had been splitting for centuries

untold, and that experience plus a natural perception would alone aid him to arrive at anything like a satisfactory conclusion.

His Highness has never, unfortunately, stood well with the representatives of the English Press in Cairo, and the British public has formed its opinion of him from the views advanced by these representatives in the newspapers here. The first difference with the English Press arose in a very curious way—but from small things do great matters sometimes spring. A representative of one of the great London dailies called at the Abdin Palace to see the Khedive, attired in a garb proscribed by the rules and regulations at the palace—the orthodox frock-coat and chimney-pot hat being *de rigueur* for callers. The Khedive, as was to have been expected, refused to see his visitor. A complaint was made to Lord Cromer, but, of course, without result, and the representative and his colleagues—for the Press in Cairo is a close fraternity—took it out of His Highness in their own way.

His Highness is quite a sportsman, is an excellent shot, and is fond of riding and driving. It is astonishing the amount of really fatiguing work he can get through without being in the least knocked up; indeed, his activity is frequently provocative of much groaning amongst his *entourage*, many of whom have neither his high spirits nor powers of endurance.

His Highness has all an Oriental's love of horse-flesh, and he has recently caused a Commission to be appointed to improve the breed of horses, and prizes to the value of about £1,000 are given by him at horse shows in different parts of the country.

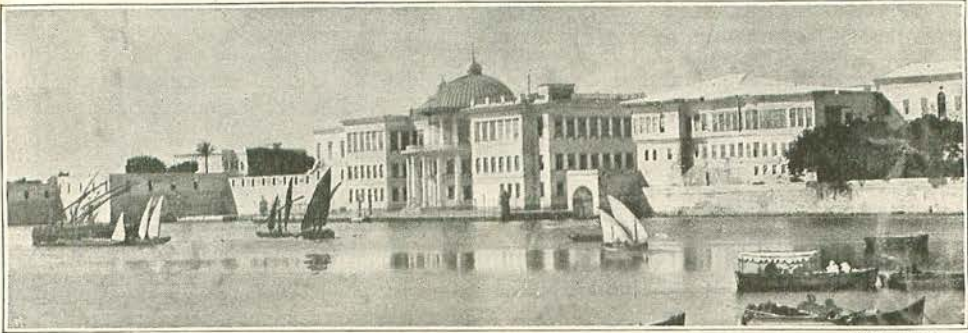
At Koubbeh, which is his favourite residence—it can scarcely be called a palace—a short drive from the Abdin Palace, he leads almost the life of a typical English squire. There he has 800 acres of farm land, which he strives to make quite a model farm of, *pour encourager les autres*. On this farm he has



From a]

BACK ENTRANCE—KOUBBEH PALACE, NEAR CAIRO.

[Photograph.



From a

PALACE OF RAS-EL-TIN.

[Photograph.]

all the newest English agricultural machinery, with the object chiefly of impressing upon the native landowners the advantages to be gained by model farming as compared with the antiquated methods in vogue elsewhere. At this model farm one sees imported specimens of all that is best in Europe of horses, cattle, and poultry. His paternal efforts on behalf of the labourers and work-people on his estate are equally praiseworthy. For them he has erected a model village, with school, club, and mosque; they have also a fire-engine station. All these His Highness supports at his own expense. How much further can enlightenment in a ruler go?

A few words as to His Highness's personal habits. Like the Sultan of Turkey, he, from a State-work standpoint, is a hard worker. He rises every morning a little after five, and, after dressing, rides round the home farm or to the parade ground at Abbassyeh, returning to Koubbeh at half-past seven to breakfast. His breakfast is generally brief, being over in about half an hour, so that at eight o'clock he commences work on affairs of State, not in a merely perfunctory way, but in real earnest ;

for he goes minutely into every detail of any question that comes before him, and, until this is done, nothing is either put aside or decided upon. His attention to State business lasts till noon, when he lunches with his personal suite.

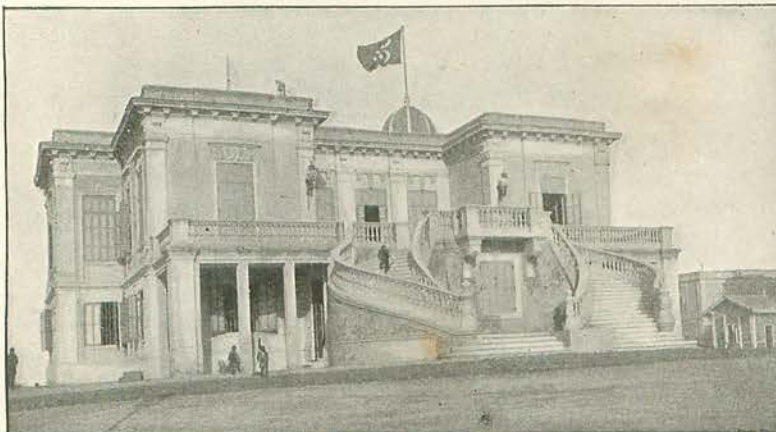
Luncheon over, he attends to his private correspondence, and reads the newspapers of the day, for His Highness is an omnivorous reader. From three to five he receives visits from the Diplomatic Corps and other officials. This over, he rides or drives until sunset, seldom failing to visit the stables, dairy, etc., at the home farm before sitting down to dinner.

His Highness, like the Kaiser Wilhelm, is much given to paying surprise visits in order to see that his orders have been properly executed, and he prefers giving his orders personally instead of intrusting them to those about him.

After dinner His Highness passes the evening with his Khedivial mother—by-the-bye, one of the most beautiful women in the East—and his sisters.

In the summer months the Khedive leaves Cairo for the cooler air of Alexandria, where he resides at the Palaces of Ras-el-Tin or Ramleh.

Such is the daily life of the young ruler of Egypt, about whom so much that is erroneous has been written, and who, through the medium of THE STRAND MAGAZINE, will become better and more correctly known to the English - reading people.



From a

SUMMER PALACE—RAMLEH, NEAR ALEXANDRIA.

[Photograph.]