

The Mamur Zapt and the Donkey Vous

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The Mamur Zapt and the Donkey Vous by Michael Pearce ©1990 ®1994 – Recorded Books. Recorded book/shelf #93243 (6 cassettes/8 hours). This book is the third in a series of Pearce's 'Mamur Zapt' books. Although many of the characters were present in the previous books, you could read this one first and still find it enjoyable. As with his second of the series, he gives enough background to educate the new reader, but not so much that someone who's read the previous books would get bored.

As with the other books, this one takes place in Cairo in 1908. The mystery starts out with the kidnapping of an elderly Frenchman from the busy terrace at the posh tourist spot, Shephard's Hotel. This book does not focus as much as the previous ones on conflicts of religion or ethnicity, however some of those tensions are still evident.

Captain Owen interviews the donkey boys who always take up their spots at the front of the hotel to interest tourists in their trade. The description includes the fact that each of the donkeys wears a blue bead to ward off the evil eye. The boys have many tales to tell, but none that seem to help Owen with the investigation.

Just as with Pearce's other books, this one gives you a wonderful flavor of life in Cairo just after the turn of the century. The way people converse, the way they dress and the way they conduct their business affairs come through clearly. You also learn more about the religious sects and the tensions between foreigners and the beginnings of the nationalist movement in Cairo.

Interviewing the vendors who ply their wares in front of the hotel is quite amusing. They bicker amongst themselves as Owen tries to get any information that might help him solve the mystery: "Yes, he talked to you, when you dropped the postcards", "No that was another day.", "No it wasn't, I'm certain of it." Owen is often times beside himself at the twists and turns of Egyptian conversation. Most often, he leaves the questioning of the street sellers, Arabia drivers and donkey boys to Mahmood, the head of the Cairo police.

As always, the mystery (or mysteries!) get sorted out and you put the book away, smiling!