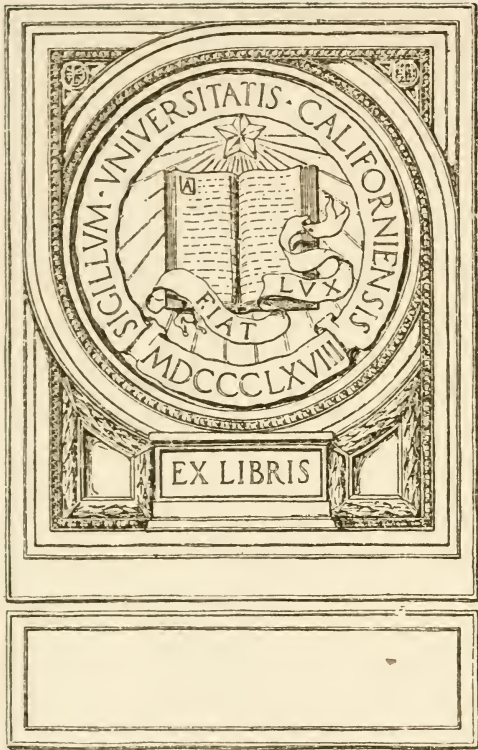


EGYPT IN  
TRANSITION

SIDNEY LOW



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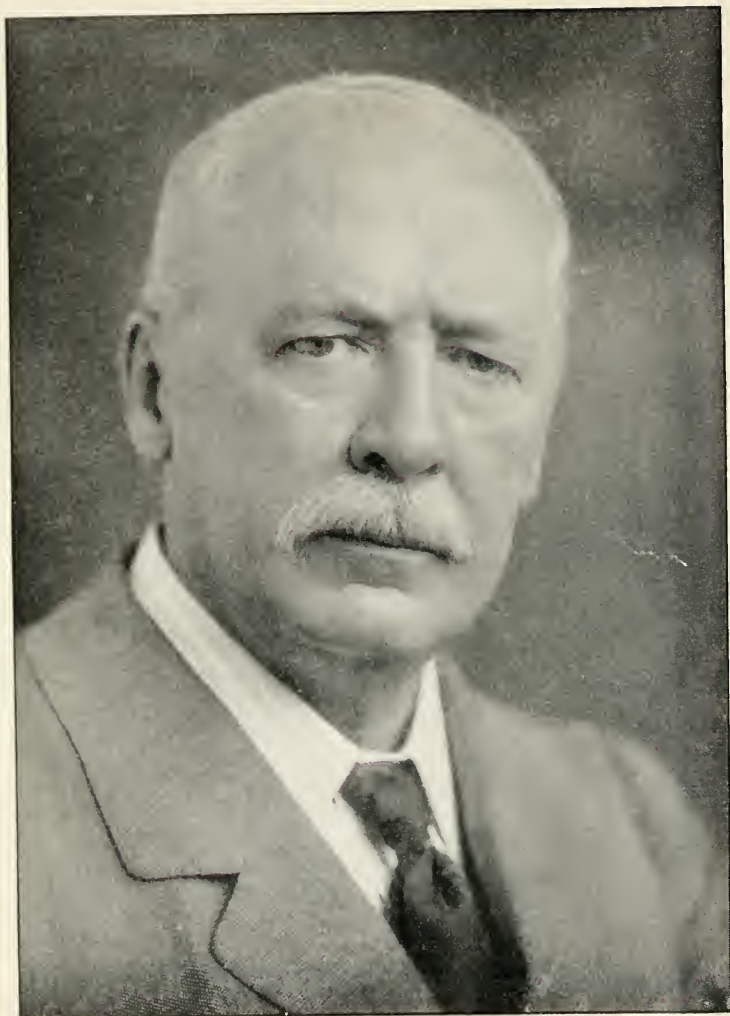
EGYPT IN TRANSITION



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TO MR  
ALBERT



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THE RT. HON. THE EARL OF CROMER, G.C.B., O.M., ETC.



# EGYPT IN TRANSITION

BY

SIDNEY LOW

1

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

THE EARL OF CROMER, G.C.B., ETC.

WITH PORTRAITS

LONDON

SMITH, ELDER & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE

1914

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DT 25  
L8

TO THE  
ABBOTTS

TO  
EDMUND GOSSE, C.B., LL.D.,  
POET AND CRITIC,  
WHO HAS VINDICATED THE LITERATURE OF THE SMALLER NATIONS,  
AND ILLUMINATED THAT OF THE GREATER.

297033



## INTRODUCTION

I HAVE been informed on good authority that a few years ago an English gentleman paid a visit to a high official of the Sudanese Government resident at Khartum, and, as a preliminary to a searching interrogatory on a number of points of great public interest, stated that he had just arrived and that his intention was 'to get at the very heart and soul of the people of the Sudan.' The official in question was naturally rather staggered at the declaration of a programme of such far-reaching ambition, all the more so because he had himself passed many toilsome years in the country, in the course of which he had made strenuous efforts to understand the habits and aspirations of its inhabitants, but did not feel at all confident of the degree of success which he had attained. He therefore anxiously inquired of the newcomer how long a time he intended to devote to the accomplishment of his self-imposed task. The reply given by this ardent seeker after Sudanese truth was that he proposed to leave Khartum by the train on the following Friday morning.

It may be, albeit I was told the anecdote as an authentic fact, that this is a caricature, but in any case it departs from the reality less than many might, as a first impression,

be inclined to think. In truth, the rapidity with which casual visitors to the East occasionally form their opinions, the dogmatism with which they assert those opinions, which are often in reality formed before they cross the British Channel, and the hasty and sweeping generalisations which they at times base on very imperfect data, is a never-ending source of wonderment to those who have passed their lives in endeavouring to unravel the tangled skein of Eastern thought and have had actual experience of the difficulties attendant on Eastern government and administration. The scorn and derision excited by these mental processes have found expression in the creation of an idealised type, under the name of 'Padgett, M.P.,' who is supposed to embody all the special and somewhat displeasing characteristics of his class.

There is, however, another side to the question. My personal experience rather leads me to the conclusion that what Pericles said of women holds good about British officials in the East, that is to say, that the less they are talked about the better. I have noticed that on many occasions the really good work done has varied in the inverse proportion of the degree of public attention which it has attracted, whether in the sense of praise or blame. Nevertheless, it is certainly desirable, if for no other reason than to serve as an antidote to current fables, that the British public should have accurate information furnished to them as regards the proceedings of their agents abroad. It is equally desirable, even from the point of view of the agents themselves, that those proceedings should be from time to time scrutinised by intelligent and independent

witnesses who are not bound by any official ties. Moreover, it sometimes happens that a newcomer, bringing a fresh mind to bear upon the facts with which he has to deal, may notice points which, owing to custom and familiarity, have escaped the attention of residents, and may thus make suggestions of real practical utility. The value of the information thus afforded to the public necessarily depends on the intelligence, the powers of observation, the absence from prejudice, and the care displayed in the collection of data exercised by the informant. In the present instance all who are interested in the affairs of Egypt and the Sudan have been singularly fortunate. Mr. Sidney Low entered on his task already equipped with a wide experience gained in other countries. He evidently spared no pains to ensure accuracy in the statements of his facts. His letters testify to the acuteness of his powers of observation. His pleasing literary style is calculated to attract many who would be repelled by more ponderous official or semi-official utterances. The result is that he has produced a lively and, so far as I can judge, a very trustworthy account of the present conditions of affairs in the Valley of the Nile. I have no hesitation in commending what he has written to the favourable consideration of all who are interested in the subject.

The abundant literature which exists on modern Egypt, coupled with the fact that a steady stream of winter visitors now passes annually through Cairo, have contributed to render the public tolerably familiar with the present condition of Egyptian affairs. On these, therefore, I need not dwell at any length. I wish, however, to repeat an opinion

which I have frequently expressed on former occasions, namely, that by far the most important question connected with Egyptian internal administration at present is the abolition, or at all events the modification, of the Capitulations. The evils of the system, on which Mr. Low dwells in one of his letters, are universally recognised. The difficulty is to find a remedy which shall at the same time be both effective and practicable. I have in my official reports, and more recently in an article published in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, made certain suggestions for solving the legislative dilemma which at present exists. I do not attach any exaggerated importance to the particular scheme which I have recommended, but, without attempting to go fully into the subject on the present occasion, I may say that no plan of reform can, I am convinced, be successfully carried into execution unless it steers between two extremes. In the first place, it would be in the highest degree unjust and also impolitic to deprive the Europeans resident in Egypt of their present privileges without providing adequate guarantees against the recurrence of those abuses to guard against which the privileges were originally created. The best guarantee would probably be the creation of machinery which would in some form or another enable European residents in Egypt to make their voices heard before any legislation affecting their special interests was undertaken. There are many ways in which this object may be accomplished, neither have I any sort of wish to dogmatise as to which method is the best; but whatever plan be adopted it will certainly prove a failure unless



the general principle is recognised that personal rule, which must for a long time to come be the predominating feature in Egyptian administration, must in this instance be tempered to such an extent as to enable local European opinion to be brought into council. Equally objectionable would be any attempt to treat all the inhabitants of the Nile Valley as a single or homogeneous political unit, and to amalgamate the machinery for purely Egyptian and for European legislation.

Between the extreme of personal government and that of parliamentary institutions of the conventional type there lies a tolerably wide field for action. The statesmanship of those responsible for the government of Egypt will be shown by the extent to which they will be able to devise a plan not open to the charge of excess in either direction. In the meanwhile there is a distinct risk that in view of the great difficulty of finding a practicable and unobjectionable solution to this question ; of the fact that the subject, which is very complicated, is but little understood in this country ; and of the further fact that public attention is at present directed to other and admittedly more important topics, matters will be allowed to drift on as they are, and that the present regime will continue without any very substantial change. Such a conclusion would be unsatisfactory and disappointing to those who are interested in the well-being of Egypt and its inhabitants. But, on the other hand, it will be better to drift on as at present rather than to take a step in a false direction.

The public are, however, generally speaking, less fully acquainted with Sudanese than with Egyptian affairs.

Mr. Low's letters from the Sudan are, therefore, to be welcomed. They constitute, as I venture to think, the most instructive and interesting portion of his book. It is with very special pleasure that I note that so competent an observer as Mr. Low is able to give a very satisfactory account of Sudanese progress. I trust it will not be thought presumptuous if I supplement his account by stating the main causes which, in my opinion, have contributed towards rendering that progress possible.

Unquestionably, amongst such elements in the situation as are under human control, the first place must be given ✓ to the fact that the form of government in the Sudan is singularly adapted to the special condition and requirements of the country. It is probable that, with the exception of a few experts who might be numbered on the fingers of one hand, there are not a dozen people in England who could give even an approximately accurate account of what that form of government is. Neither can the general ignorance which prevails on this subject cause any surprise, for the political status of the Sudan is different to that of any other country in the world. It was little short of providential that at the time this question had to be settled a Minister presided at the Foreign Office who did not allow himself to be unduly bound by precedent and convention. ✓ The problem which had to be solved was how the Sudan, without being designated as British territory, could be spared all the grave inconveniences which would have resulted if it had continued to be classed as Ottoman territory. When the cannon at Omdurman had once cleared the ground for political action, it appeared at first sight

that politicians were impaled on the horns of an insoluble dilemma. Lord Salisbury, however, whose memory I shall never cease to revere, said to me on one occasion that when once one gets to the foot of apparently impassable mountains it is generally possible by diligent search to find some way of getting through them.

So it proved in the present instance. It occurred to me that the Sudan might be made neither English nor Egyptian, but Anglo-Egyptian. Sir Malcolm McIlwraith clothed this extremely illogical political conception in suitable legal phraseology. I must confess that I made the proposal with no very sanguine hopes that it would be accepted. Lord Salisbury, however, never thought twice on the matter. He joyfully agreed to the creation of a hybrid State of a nature eminently calculated to shock the susceptibilities of international jurists. The possible objections of foreign governments were conjured away by the formal declaration that no preference would be accorded to British trade. The British and Egyptian flags were hoisted with pomp on the palace of Khartum, and from that time forth Sir Reginald Wingate and his very capable subordinates have been given a free hand.

The second cause to which the success of the Sudanese administration may, in my opinion, be attributed is that, broadly speaking, the Sudanese officials have been left to themselves. There has been absolutely no interference from London. Nothing has, fortunately, as yet occurred to awaken marked parliamentary interest in the affairs of the Sudan. Supervision from Cairo has been limited to guidance on a few important points of principle, to a very

limited amount of financial control, and occasionally, but very rarely, to advice on matters of detail which has invariably been communicated in private and unofficial form. A system of this sort cannot, of course, be made to work satisfactorily unless thorough confidence is entertained in the agents who are responsible for its working. The agents employed in the Sudan have always been very carefully chosen, and they have fully justified the confidence which has been shown in them. They have been mainly, though by no means exclusively, soldiers. The civilian element is, however, being gradually increased.

I may perhaps conveniently take this opportunity of explaining the genesis of the Sudanese Civil Service. In the first instance, the civil work of the Sudan was carried on almost exclusively by officers of the army. This system continued practically unchanged until the commencement of the war in South Africa. It was not modified by reason of its having worked badly, nor because any special predilection was entertained for civilian in preference to military agency. Speaking with a somewhat lengthy experience of administrative work done by both soldiers and civilians, I may say that I find it quite impossible to generalise on the subject of their respective merits—I mean, of course, in respect to ordinary administrative work, and not as regards posts where special legal, educational or other technical qualifications have to be considered. In the present case my feeling was that a certain number of active young men endowed with good health, high character, and fair abilities were required to assist in governing the country, and that it was a matter of complete indifference whether they

had received their early training at Sandhurst, or at Oxford or Cambridge.

But the South African war brought out one great disadvantage which is an inevitable accompaniment to the employment of army officers in civil capacities. It is that they are liable to be suddenly removed. The officers themselves naturally wish to join their regiments when there is a prospect of seeing active service. The War Office, although I think it at times allows itself to be rather too much hide-bound by regulations, naturally looks, on an occasion of this sort, solely to the efficiency of the troops which it sends into the field. The result is that the head of a Government such as that of the Sudan may suddenly find himself deprived of some of his most valuable agents, and is thus exposed to the risk of having his administration seriously dislocated at a critical moment.

Frequent changes in any administration are at all times to be deprecated. One of the reasons of whatever successes have been achieved in the Nile Valley has been that all such changes have, so far as was possible, been avoided. They are especially to be deprecated at a time when events of importance, such as those which occurred in South Africa, send an electric shock through the whole British Empire, and more or less affect indirectly all its component parts. To any one sitting in a London office the removal of half a dozen young officers and the substitution of others in their place may not seem a matter of vital importance. But the question will be regarded in a very different light by the head of an administration such as the Sudan, who will very fully realise how impossible it is, whether in

respect to civil or military appointments, to fill at once the vacuum caused by the abrupt departure of even a very few trained men. As a matter of fact the withdrawal of a certain number of officers from the Sudan to go to South Africa led to consequences which were serious, and might well have been much more so. It was manifestly desirable to do all that was possible to obviate any such risks in the future. Hence the embryo of a Sudanese Civil Service was brought into being.

I should add that another very potent cause which has contributed to the successful administration of the Sudan is that the officials, both civil and military, have been well paid and that the leave rules have been generous. These are points to which I attach the utmost importance. In those outlying dominions of the Crown where coloured races have to be ruled through European agency, everything depends on the character and ability of a very small number of individuals. Probably none but those who have themselves been responsible for the general direction of an administration in these regions can fully realise the enormous amount of harm—sometimes irremediable harm—which can be done by the misconduct or indiscretion of a single individual. Misconduct on the part of British officials is, to their credit be it said, extremely rare. Indiscretion or want of judgment constitutes greater dangers, and, considering the very great difficulties which the officials in question have at times to encounter, it cannot be expected that they should not occasionally commit some venial errors.

The best safeguard against the committal of any such

errors is to discard absolutely the practice of selecting for employment abroad any who for whatsoever reason have been whole or partial failures in other capacities at home. Personally, I regard anything in the nature of jobbing these appointments as little short of criminal; and although my confidence in the benefits to be derived from parliamentary interference in the affairs of our Eastern dominions is limited, there is, in my opinion, one point as to which such interference, if properly exercised, may be most salutary. A very careful watch may and should be kept on any tendency to job, whether that tendency be displayed by the executive Government or, as is quite as probable, by Members of Parliament or others connected with the working of party machinery. Imperialist England requires, not the mediocre by-products of the race, but the flower of those who are turned out from our schools and colleges to carry out successfully an Imperial policy.

Their services cannot be secured unless they are adequately paid. Of all the mistakes that can be committed in the execution of an Imperialist policy the greatest, in my opinion, is to attempt to run a big undertaking 'on the cheap.' I am, of course, very fully aware of the financial difficulties to be encountered in granting a high scale of salaries. I can speak with some experience on this point, inasmuch as for the long period, during the early days of our Egyptian troubles, I had to deal with a semi-bankrupt Exchequer. But my reply to the financial argument is that if money is not forthcoming to pay the price necessary to secure the services of a really competent man, it is far preferable to wait and not to make any appointment at

all. Apart from the consideration that high ability can or ought to be able to secure its own price, it is not just to expose any European to the temptations which, in the East, are almost the invariable accompaniment of very low salaries ; and, although to the honour of British officials it may be said that the cases in which they have succumbed to those temptations are so rare as to be almost negligible, the State is none the less under a moral obligation to place its employés in such positions as to prevent personal feelings of honour and probity being the sole guarantee for integrity.

Scarcely less important is the question of leave. A period of nine consecutive months is quite long enough for any European to remain in such a climate as the Sudan. After the expiration of that time his physical health and mental vigour become impaired. Moreover, he is liable to get into a groove, and to attach an undue importance to local circumstances, which loom large on the spot, but which are capable of being reduced to more just proportions by change of climate, scenery, and society.

There is one further point to which attention may be drawn. I have already alluded to the desirability of avoiding frequent changes in the personnel of the subordinate staff. The same holds good even to a greater extent in respect to the highest appointments. It almost invariably happens that sound and durable reforms take time in their conception and execution, and that they are slow in their operation. It is an immense advantage if the same individual or individuals who are responsible for initiating the reform can also for a certain period watch



over its execution and operation. The continuity of policy gained by the long tenure of office which has been enjoyed by Sir Reginald Wingate has been of incalculable value to the Sudan.

I have now, I think, indicated the principal reasons which have enabled the Sudan to progress in the manner recorded by Mr. Low. Under one condition—and it is a condition of the utmost importance—that progress will, I hope and believe, be steady and continuous. It is that the pace should not be forced.

CROMER.

36 WIMPOLE STREET,  
*December 8, 1913.*



## NOTE BY THE AUTHOR

THE chapters that follow were written after visits to Egypt and the Sudan, in which I endeavoured to gain some insight into the political, social, and administrative conditions of those countries. They are intended to convey some account, slight, but I hope faithful, of my impressions of the territory in that stage of transition which ensued after the conclusion of Lord Cromer's great period of reconstruction and financial readjustment—the stage which lay between the reconquest of the Sudan by Lord Kitchener and his return to Cairo as British Agent and Consul-General. It was thus the Nile lands, in certain of their aspects, presented themselves to an observer, with some knowledge of political and social developments at other epochs, and in other countries of the East and the West.

Most descriptions of Egypt begin with the Nile mouths or the capital, and work upwards towards the tropical provinces. I have preferred to start with the Sudan, which was the part of the area first examined at close quarters, and thence to follow the course of the great river downwards to the Delta and the sea.

S. L.



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EGYPT IN TRANSITION

## CHAPTER I

## THE DESERT TRAIN

THE Egypt of history paused at that gorge among the Nubian rocks where the Nile spouts its way over the Second Cataract. Often it could not get so far, and the frontier fell back to the First Cataract, where now the great dam blocks the stream by the island temples of Philæ; sometimes an ambitious ruler pushed his armies to the south and levied tribute from the tribes and nations towards the Equator; once or twice in the age-long process the movement was reversed, and the lower valley of the river has been subject to the masters of the upper plains. But nearly always, be it under Usertsen or Ramses, under the Ptolemies, the Romans, the Arabs, or the Turks, a line was drawn at some border fortress below the Cataract, by the site of what in modern times is called Wady Halfa. Egypt, with one hand clasped to Asia, ended here; all beyond was Africa—vast, confused, mysterious, incomprehensible, at once a menace and a temptation; a land perhaps to prey upon, perhaps to fear, but one that seemed to have little kinship or community with the kindly, habitable earth men knew. There,

at Wady Halfa, where to-day you first touch the Sudan soil and leave the Nile boat for the train that bears you across the desert—at Halfa, or at Syene, which now is Assuan, was the last outpost of Europe and Asia, the final vedette of civilisation. The level sun flamed across the waste of sand upon the spearheads of Pharaoh's mercenaries and the helmets of Roman soldiers as it did upon the bayonets of Kitchener's sentries. Beyond the frontier camp the Nile wound its way slowly upwards towards the Unknown, the region of many names—Cush, Ethiopia, Merçæ, Napata, where only vague rumour and doubtful travellers' tales told of dim kingdoms, rising and falling, and restless tribes of untamable savages.

But now this vast realm lies open. For the first time in its history it is in full touch with the outer world. When British generals overthrew the Khalifa's hordes they did more than merely reconquer the Sudan for Egypt: they conquered it in a sense in which conquest had never been effectual here before. It is true that previous to the Mahdist revolt the 'Turks' ruled all through the Sudan, even to the Equator on the south and to the farthest borders of Darfur on the west. But though Egyptian officials took heavy toll from the natives, and though Egyptian and Turkish soldiers lived (and plundered) all over the provinces, the country remained inaccessible, remote, and inhospitable. For those who were not officials or emissaries of the Government, the journey into it was difficult, and even dangerous; for all it was long and slow. Now the neat and well-appointed express boats of the Sudan Government service float you smoothly up to Halfa in the extreme of comfort.



And at Halfa you transfer yourself and your baggage to the train, which is also run by the Sudan authorities, with no greater trouble than you would experience at Clapham Junction. You will make your first acquaintance with the realms of Queen Candace through the windows of a fine dining-room car. You enter the barrier desert to the whistle of a locomotive that will roll you up to the capital of North Central Africa in a night and a day of luxurious travel. It is a very simple business to get to Khartum nowadays. You can book through from Charing Cross if you please, and the worst adventure that need befall you on the way will be a bad Channel crossing or an inadequate luncheon at a railway buffet. Measured by time of transit, which is the only practical method of calculating distances, Omdurman is nearer Piccadilly than Inverness when George III was King, or Venice when Charles Dickens discovered Italy.

Eight days and a half from door to door—from the Thames to the Blue Nile. ‘Good going!’ said an officer who went up with Kitchener in ’98. ‘It took us three years to do the same journey the first time we tried it. But we didn’t happen to have a railway ready for us then. We had to build it as we went along—and fight a battle every few months while we were doing that.’

Yet, despite the tourist agents and the steamship companies and the railways, there is still some vagueness, outside the ranks of the regular Egyptian holiday crowd, as to where and what the Sudan is. A lady, the wife of a high official in Khartum, tells me that her friends at home seem divided in opinion as to whether the town is a sort of

suburb of Cairo or a section of Wildest Africa. 'How awful for you to have to live in a place like that, my dear!' says one sympathiser. 'I suppose you hardly see a civilised human being from one year's end to another.' And another will write in this strain: 'Young Blank, you know, my husband's second cousin, has gone to Cairo. Such a nice boy! Do, please, ask him to come out and have tea with you one afternoon.'

Let us hope these intelligent geographical conceptions are not widely diffused, though we Britons, unless we have business or social relations with any particular part even of our own dominions, are apt to be curiously ignorant of it. I doubt, at any rate, whether many of us have grasped the real and astonishing truth about the last great Empire over which the flag of Britain flies. Do we all know, for instance, that here, alone on the earth, that ensign floats alongside another? The Sudan is under Two Flags: on all the public buildings, on the barracks, the Government steamers, the police stations, the palaces, the post offices, at a review of troops, you look aloft and see two flagstaves—the White Crescent of Egypt waves from the one, the Union Jack crackles jauntily from the other. Through all the length of the Nile, from Uganda to the Mediterranean, England is in partnership with the Khedivial Government. In Egypt it is a relation somewhat veiled and not formally admitted, though real enough; in the Sudan, though Britain is, beyond question, the predominant partner, the joint rights of Egypt—(itself nominally still a Turkish province)—are carefully asserted. It is a curious situation of which more anon. Meanwhile, let us not forget that we

are dealing with a *condominium* of a very remarkable and novel kind. The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan is a political entity such as does not exist anywhere else on earth, such as never has existed in this precise shape so far as we know. We have here something exceptional and unique, whereof the two flags that greet us before we enter the train at Halfa are the striking symbol. There is the record of many stirring chapters of history, of the epitaph of many brave men's lives—black, brown, and white—in those two tall masts and those squares of bunting flapping in the dusty desert breeze.

That is one of the things that perhaps everybody does not grasp touching the Sudan. There are some others. Is it commonly understood that this territory, which has been added to the sphere of British interest during the past fifteen years, is enormous in extent and immense in its potential, if not its actual, resources? It is twelve hundred miles long and a thousand miles wide, and it has an area of a million square miles—two-thirds the size of India, larger than Great Britain, France, Germany, and Austria together. One province alone would hold Spain comfortably and have room to spare. Nor are these vast spaces mere waste tracts, empty squares, such as used to be left blank on those old maps of Africa which are still too often reproduced in our modern atlases. There is plenty of swamp, scrub, and desert in the Sudan. But there is also a large amount which is actually rich and fertile, and a still larger amount which, under certain conditions, such as we are now beginning to apply, might be made so. The population of the whole territory is estimated at little more than three millions. But this is due to temporary causes which we have now

eliminated. That is to say, to the ruin and havoc wrought by Mahdism. The Sudan has in former times supported a large number of inhabitants, it was even the seat of populous civilised communities, and it may become so again. It is no Sahara into which we are bringing the light, but a country of great, though unequal, possibilities worth developing and cultivating. Different views are taken of the Sudan by those who may be called Sudan experts; there are few who do not hold that, in parts at least, it will be more than worth the pains that are being taken by a small knot of Englishmen, assisted by a competent body of Egyptians and natives, to bring it into prosperity. The task will be long and difficult: none more worthy and arduous has been undertaken by Englishmen of our generation.

You get some glimmering of it as you travel in the desert train, which bridges the stretch of utter barrenness that fends Egypt from the south. This railway was, indeed, the beginning of the work which rendered the rest possible. At Halfa the Nile bends in a mighty loop to the west, and then turns north again before it resumes its proper southward course at Abu Hamed. Wolseley, in 1884, took the long and tedious way round the bend and over the two cataracts it passes. Kitchener, in 1898, determined to take the short cut across the 230 miles of desert. And such desert! Africa, the world, has scarcely its equal. Treeless, waterless, lifeless, it glistens on either side—a sea of dead sand that washes to the base of scarred hills, without a leaf, a patch of green, the twinkle of a mountain torrent. Through this ruined wilderness, in the heat of the tropical

summer, Girouard's men made the track, laid the sleepers, and spiked down the rails at racing pace, one gang ahead preparing the way for the next as it came along. Between that fiery May and that fierce December the young Canadian lieutenant of engineers got the road begun and finished—never less than a mile of rails laid in a day, sometimes three miles. Often as you have read of that wonderful achievement, it is not till you are looking from the windows of the desert train that you comprehend its full meaning. Even in December, with all the comforts of the *train de luxe*—wicker chairs, iced drinks, smoked-glass panes, and lattice shutters—you gasp at the heat and cough with the dust. The glare of the level yellow plain makes your eyes ache; you are glad when a mirage comes to rest them, so that the jagged rocks on the horizon seem floating in sheets of cool white water and the fronds of delusive palms wave mockingly on the horizon line. And you may think of the men working against time there in the open, not in the winter, but in July—think what the dust, and the furious sun, and the burning sand, and even the cruel irony of the mirage, must have been to them. At Abu Hamed, where the Nile is touched again and there are groves and fields, you slip comfortably into a well-kept bath they have ready for you at the railway station, and with soap and hot water wash off the desert dust and go back to your car, refreshed and clean, for breakfast. And then you glide past Berber, where roofless mud houses still tell of the ruin wrought by the dervishes before we came to stay the devastation, over the great iron bridge across the Atbara, and the branch line to the Red Sea coast which Girouard's successors have

built ; along the river, past Shendy and Metemmeh and in sight of that other desert of the Nile bend which our men trod wearily in the fruitless advance that came too late to save Gordon. The sun has set, and the pall of the tropical evening rests darkly on the land, as your journey ends at the railway station of Khartum.

## CHAPTER II

### A CITY OF ROMANCE

#### KHARTUM !

It is a name which many Englishmen cannot hear, even when it is prosaically called at a railway station, without a certain thrill. To some, indeed, of my fellow-travellers who arrived with me by the desert train that dark, warm evening in December it may have meant little. 'Also sind wir zuletzt am Ende!' says the stout German, who has been grumbling and perspiring for many hours. For him, coming into the Sudan with strictly commercial aims, Khartum is only a town like any other. So it is to the American lady tourist, under the disc of a vast white felt helmet and a blue veil like a mosquito-curtain; to the good-looking young Briton, bound for Gondokoro and the pursuit of big game, it is merely the starting-point of a sporting expedition; to the bimbashi of a Sudanese battalion going back to duty after his three months' leave it means another spell of hard, hot, dusty toil before the moist greenness of 'home' can be felt again. The aliens have no part in the associations that gather round the spot where the two Niles join. The youngsters were not old enough to share in the long tension of that unavailing march which ended in futility and retreat; they were

only schoolboys during the progress of the later victorious expedition which avenged the failure. So many things have happened since Stewart fell at Abu Klea and Wilson took the *Bordein* under a rain of bullets past the swarming walls of Omdurman: many things since Wauchope's Highlanders and Hector Macdonald's Sudanese mowed down the Khalifa's dervishes at Kerreri. Nations have risen and fallen since then: great armies have fought greater battles. No wonder the story of Khartum has waxed dim.

But to those who lived through it, who followed at a distance the whole strange dramatic series which began with the massacre of Hicks Pasha's hapless regiments and ended with the death of Abdullah the Khalifa, it must be a romance merely to breathe the air of Khartum. The very names of things and places recall events which once stirred us to the marrow with hope, or fear, or anger, or suspense. As I traced our route on the railway by the guide-book the long-forgotten geography of the Sudan came back to me. How well all England knew it once! How they used to pore over the maps behind windows lurid with the London fog, till Dongola and Berber, and Korti and Metemmeh, the Atbara, and Abu Hamed were burned into our memory! I saw *Safiyeh* herself in that brisk little dockyard—a Portsmouth in miniature—where a captain of the British Navy builds boats and repairs engines and keeps the Sudan Government's flotilla in order. A battered, empty, mastless, and unfunnelled hulk was the famous Thames penny steamer which went through such vicissitudes in her heroic day. A mere shell of shabby



planking ; but to set foot on the poor old lighter is to recall the breathless nights spent when the tale was being told in England of the gallant dash to save Gordon at the last, of the rush up the Nile, of the mending of the boiler under the dervish fire, of all the desperate efforts that came too late. After Lord Charles Beresford had used the little steamer to rescue Sir Charles Wilson's party from a very perilous position she fell into the Khalifa's hands again ; thirteen years later Lord Kitchener's gun-boats recaptured her, in the course of that hurried expedition up the White Nile to settle matters with Captain Marchand at Fashoda. What things she has seen, that dishevelled *Safiyeh* ! If her mouldering timbers could speak they could tell some tales worth hearing.

It is one of the romances of Khartum ; but all Khartum is a romance. Its wide streets, its forts and barracks and palaces, its groves and gardens, its mud-walled suburb villages, its two great confluent rivers, the dusty plain that stretches round it to the hard blue sky, bear witness to a chapter of history none the less marvellous because it is recent. A generation ago the whole vast Sudan was a sort of outlying Turkey. The ' Turk ' misruled in calm *insouciance* ; Egyptian pashadom buttoned its frock coat ✓ round its pockets at Khartum, and shared its gains grudgingly with officialism at Cairo ; Egyptian conscripts kept guard sulkily in the provinces, dreaming of the wheatfields and water-meadows they would never see again ; the slave trade went on briskly under the eyes of plundering ruffianism which took toll of the grain and ivory, the gum and the women, in the name of the Khedive. The empire

which Mehemet Ali founded seemed no more evanescent than many others in the East : it was abominable barbarism at bottom, but it had the externals of civilisation. The telegraph wire went striding down to the Equator ; military bands were playing Austrian dance music outside the officers' messes at Wadelai and Lado. Who could imagine that raiding Arabs and tribes of African blacks could overturn all this elaborate edifice ? But it collapsed, so to speak, in a night. A strange magnetic impulse brought these scattered, helpless peoples together about Mohammed Ahmed, the Mahdi, and Egyptian rule shrivelled up in a blast of flame. Few things are more remarkable in their way than this swift linking up of an oppressed heterogeneous population by the bond of a common Islamism ; few more deplorable than the ruin and desolation that followed the coming of the Dongola Messiah.

It was a reproduction of those convulsions and cataclysms, of those displacements and migrations and colossal butcheries, we see moving dimly through the darkness of past centuries in the pages of Gibbon. We had it under our eyes ; we have the results, the survivals, before us in Khartum to-day, and in Omdurman. The towns are full of memorials of that brief crusading fury of Moslem puritanism, of the long carnival of blood and rapine that followed, of the heroic struggles to stem the tide, of the final, disciplined, deliberate effort to beat it back, of the steady, successful labour to repair the ravages. We have forgotten much of the story. We live too fast in these days to keep our memories green. But in the Sudan capital it is not easy to forget : the associations of that

stirring recent past are before you everywhere. Even the tourist cannot miss all of them.

You may go out to the battlefield of Omdurman—which here they call Kerreri—with one of Mr. Cook's drago-  
mans, or, as I did, with a native officer who had been through the fight, and hear over again the details of Kitchener's great victory. Not long ago the ground was all white with unburied skeletons, and dervish skulls, and even dervish *jibbahs* and spears were to be had at will. Now most of these relics have gone, and though there are a few dry bones lying conspicuously in the sunshine, there is some doubt whether they are not the mortal remains of camels and oxen, thoughtfully placed *in situ* by the donkey-boys for the benefit of inquisitive and acquisitive visitors. Perhaps there is no more reliance to be placed on the testimony of the donkey-boy himself, who, on being questioned, will tell you that he was himself in the battle. He was a Sudanese slave of the Baggara, he says, who was given a gun and taken into the fight, and crawled away wounded (he shows you a conspicuous scar) to Omdurman when it was over. You supply him with piastres and receive his story with due scepticism. Yet it may be true. Khartum and Omdurman are full of the living remnants of Mahdist triumph and Mahdist oppression, now engaged in quite peaceful avocations.

In that Government dockyard I have mentioned I noticed a little old man with a shrewd bronzed, semi-European face and an iron-grey moustache, working assiduously at a drilling machine. He was a Cypriote, and was a mechanic in the Government arsenal when the

Mahdists came. Skilled artisans being wanted, his life was spared; after a disciplinary interval of chains and prison, they set him to labour in the Khalifa's workshops, and there we found him when we took over the plant and business. Now he drills and hammers for the Sudan Government, and gets his wages regularly, which was an advantage he did not enjoy when he was drilling and hammering either for the Khedive or the Khalifa. He had to become a Mohammedan, and they gave him a forlorn captive negress (nominally a Mohammedan too) as a wife. I did not ascertain what had become of the lady; but the man himself has reverted to the faith of his fathers.

People had strange religious as well as matrimonial experiences in the Sudan while the Khalifa ruled, and since. There is, for example, Signora X, who now presides over the household of an Italian tailor in Khartum. I became acquainted with this artist in the course of an attempt to get certain ink stains, produced by an erring stylographic pen, removed from my trousers. In the temporary absence of her husband the Signora confided to me portions of her biography. She was born in Marseilles, and came to Egypt in the flower of her youth as a governess in a family of position, where her charms captivated an officer of rank in the Khedive's forces who married her. Here I think she must have embroidered a little; I suspect she was only a lady's maid and her husband no more than a corporal. She followed this warrior to the Sudan, and was herded into the compound at Omdurman, in which they placed all the women young enough to be worth keeping, the day after the taking of Khartum. One of

the Mahdi's fighting emirs claimed her as the prize of war, and proposed to add her to his harem; but she contrived to appeal to the Mahdi, who had decreed that European women with resident husbands should not be made over to Moslems. Unhappily the Signora's Egyptian spouse had disappeared, having been no doubt killed; but one of the brothers of the Austrian mission kindly allowed her to become his wife *pro formâ*, and this situation subsisted during the Khalifate. After 1898 the proper ecclesiastical steps were taken to annul the nominal union, and she joined her fortunes with those of the Italian tailor, whom death had relieved of a Sudanese wife imposed upon him (deeply against his will, the Signora averred) during his days of servitude and Mohammedanism. Or, again, you ask a question concerning the pleasant-faced native 'boy' who ministers to you when you are lunching at a friend's table. Your host requests Abdullah to tell his story. He does so, and you learn that his father was a Baggara Arab, that he was taken young to be water-bearer to the Khalifa himself, that he was captured by Sir Reginald Wingate's men not far from his master in the last fight of all, when the Pretender and his chosen lieutenants perished. They took the boy and sent him to school in Khartum; and now he deftly pours soda-water for the unbeliever, as though no weapon more lethal than a corkscrew had ever swum into his ken.

There are other and sadder memorials. In the beautiful new palace of the Sirdar, which has risen from the ruins of the old one, they take you into a ground-floor corridor, on the walls of which is the tablet: '*Here Gordon died.*'

The palace is built on the site of its predecessor, though its plan and arrangement are different, and the actual staircase on which the hero fell has disappeared. But a little above the spot is a new staircase, sweeping up in a handsome curve from the gardens to the broad verandah on the first floor, on which the principal rooms of the present residence open. As we stand on the second step we must be very near the actual space in which the tragedy occurred on that night in February 1885, when the dervish horde, fifty thousand strong, made its final swoop upon Gordon's disheartened, decimated, famished garrison cowering behind its ineffective walls. With one rush the feeble ramparts were carried and the Mahdists were slaughtering the Egyptians like sheep. Gordon had gone up to the roof of the palace, where day after day he had watched for some sign of that belated, slow-moving army, whose advance guard, after its bogging with the sands and the cataracts, was even then so close. Seeing that all was over he put on his Pasha's uniform, girded on his sword, and calmly stood at the head of the staircase awaiting what should befall. Through the palace grounds, trampling over his own flower-beds and rose-bushes, came the shrieking fanatics, brandishing their great spears.

The Mahdi, it is said, had given orders to spare him ; alive Gordon was worth more than dead. But the howling mob, maddened by their orgy of blood, did not stop to answer the hero's disdainful challenge. They threw themselves upon him ; pike and two-handed sword stabbed and hewed ; the head was cut off and the body was hacked to pieces, there, on the blood-stained steps, close by where

we stand. Somebody tells the story again in quiet tones ; before us lie the lawns and rustling sycamores of the gardens, sleeping under the silver rain of the southern stars ; behind us the broad, lamp-lit terrace, where gay little after-dinner groups of men and women are chatting and laughing. It is one of those contrasts between the present and a past so little remote that we seem to touch it with our hands, which make your first few days in Khartum so like a dream.

Indeed, as I look back upon those days my mind retains a mingled impression of scenes and memories almost equally vivid : of a beautiful city, green and white in the midst of the grey desert dust ; of sunset in a superb pageant of rose and lemon, yellow and violet, glowing upon great lake-like reaches of gleaming water ; of pleasant villas set back behind trees and flowers ; of date palms bending their gracious heads above the golden bells of the tacoma and the crimson clusters of the poinsettias ; of a busy bazaar and market full of cheerful, laughing negroes and lithe brown Arabs, keen-eyed and straight ; of stalwart Sudanese soldiers in white uniforms and Egyptians in khaki, disciplined and respectful ; of many Englishmen and a few Englishwomen, all young, all well dressed, apparently all good looking ; of a whole world of active, vigorous life, moving upon a background of shadows. Such was my vision of Khartum, as I came to it at first, haunted by those memories from which Khartum itself has emerged. For it is only the sentimental traveller who has time to indulge in retrospective meditation here. Khartum does not meditate over the past. It is far too well occupied with the present and the future.

## CHAPTER III

### THE GROWING OF KHARTUM

YOUR first emotion over Khartum yields to a sentiment of surprise as you begin to look around you, a surprise abundantly justified when you recall the recent history of the place. Fifteen years ago, when it fell into the hands of the victors of Kerreri, Khartum was a heap of ruin and rubbish. Founded by Mehemet Ali in 1834, it had been a town of some importance and pretension as the centre of Egyptian rule in the Sudan. For that reason, as soon as Mohammed Ahmed, the Mahdi, got possession of the town he set about to destroy it utterly. The public buildings were burned, the private dwellings, mostly of mud, were dismantled, the inhabitants, or such of them as had escaped massacre, were commanded to transfer themselves to Omdurman, some three miles away on the opposite bank of the Nile. This village became an immense human warren, and, under the Khalifa, it was pretty nearly the largest town, measured by population, in all Africa. Within sight of its festering alleys Khartum crumbled to dust in the sun. When Kitchener entered it, on September 3, 1898, to hold the funeral service over Gordon and hoist the Two Flags on a wrecked battlement of Gordon's Palace,





FIELD-MARSHAL VISCOUNT KITCHENER OF KHARTUM, G.C.B., O.M., ETC.

*Reproduced from a painting by the Hon. John Collier by arrangement with The Fine Art Society.*



it was lifeless and vacant. An entirely new city had to be created.

So far this was an advantage. The builders had no hampering vestiges of the past to deal with. They were not encumbered by the hopeless ground-plan of an Eastern town, nor were their efforts after light and sanitation thwarted by the existence of a nest of twisting lanes and interlocking courts. They could start fair and lay out their streets and open spaces with a mathematical symmetry for which municipal reformers at home sigh in vain. This is typical of much else in the Sudan. Its administrators are more fortunate than those who are concerned with countries thickly grown over with the tradition and inheritance of the past, such, for instance, as India and Egypt. War and revolution had cleared the ground for them, and they could lay their own foundations and work from them. Khartum reveals the results of a bold and far-sighted ambition. Its second founders were convinced from the outset that they were the holders of no mean city. Though it is so new and young, it bears the aspect of a capital; it seems to be preparing itself for a great future. I confess that when I considered the situation of Khartum, and the swiftness with which it had sprung up out of the dust of its own decay, I expected to find it makeshift and provisional. I figured it to myself as a sort of frontier camp, or, at the best, like some of the civil stations in India where everything has a hasty appearance, as if prepared for people who are not life-long residents, but only temporary sojourners under alien stars. But there is nothing of that transient feeling about Khartum; it has

no rawness, despite its youth, and, though still unfinished, it has a settled air, as if it were the work of men who realised that they were planning for the future.

It lies in the midst of a brown and yellow wilderness, which we do wrong to call desert, since it needs but water to reclothe it with a garment of verdure. The water is there in the two mighty rivers—the Blue Nile, blue with the scour from the Abyssinian hills, and the White Nile, whitened by the flood from the lakes of the Equator—that mingle their streams at this point. The water is there, but it is not easy, for political and other reasons, to filter it over this thirsty land. The city of Khartum, however, is allowed to take its toll, and it shows the result in a wealth of greenery, of bloom and foliage, and rustling branch, which delight the tired senses after the glare and barrenness of the long, hot journey from the north. All along the river front and in the gardens behind it, and especially in those of the Palace, the slender, willowy date palms bow their stately heads like tall young princesses, as if in acknowledgment of the nosegays of red and yellow blossoms, which the parkinsonia, the poinsettia, the mustard tree, the sisiban, the flowering thorn of the Sudan, and other lesser shrubs toss to their knees. The streets have been planned, as I have said, with a generous amplitude, and, though there are many vacant spaces in them still, they give promise of becoming handsome boulevards with time. Enterprising Greeks and venturous Italians have established thriving shops, which give to the main thoroughfares a busy and mercantile appearance.

Behind these streets is the quarter of the natives, and

it is a native quarter cleaned, regulated, and deodorised. The houses are of mud or mud bricks, like those of Egypt, but they are spaced out with a vigilant regard to sanitation and a conscientious neglect of their owners' feelings on the accumulation and disposition of superfluous dirt. In this part the Government, mindful of the spiritual needs of its subjects, has built a handsome mosque, and, careful of their material wants, it has provided a great market, where are rows of booths and shanties, and where camels and donkeys, tinpots and native *damur* cottons, and many other vendable things, are bought and sold under the strict supervision of certain Coptic and Egyptian clerks accountable to the *mudiryeh*, which is the provincial and municipal administration combined. Trade is brisk and varied. I saw a stall largely devoted to the sale of braces, though I cannot conjecture the use of those articles to people who do not wear trousers. To the tourist who visits Khartum this market is a place of joyous resort. Here to his heart's content he can snapshot such subjects as he will not find during his holidays in Egypt—negroes lavishly displaying limbs of polished ebony, fierce Arab tribesmen hung round with cutting weapons who have driven their gaunt, striding, desert camels from far up the country; giant Shilluks from the Upper Nile; savages of all sorts from the dark recesses of Africa towards the West Coast and the Congo. Women are numerous, some in veil or yashmak, others in various stages of semi-nudity: in the Northern Sudan there are still more women than men, thanks to the activity of the Khalifa in killing off the adult male population. These may be the *reliquiæ Danaum*, but they show no trace of

gloom. They are a cheerful, good-tempered, chattering folk, especially the Sudanese. The Arabs are more dignified and reserved, and in their brown keen faces and the easy grace of their walk you seem to detect something of the manner of a conquering, directing, race. They do not forget that they used to be the masters and the negroes their servants. 'Who are these?' I say to my Arab dragoman, indicating a group of negresses squatting round open trays of Indian corn and millet. 'Those slave women, sah,' replies Abdul, with scorn. As a matter of fact, they are not slave women now; but a few years ago they were. Many thousands such were found, husbandless and ownerless, when we marched into Omdurman. Many of them live in a couple of native villages in a sort of enclosure or reserve just outside the town of Khartum.

Black or brown, semitic or negroid in blood, these people seem to have an excellent understanding with the latest rulers whom the chances of history have imposed upon them. Furious fighters as some of them have been, they give one the impression of a docile, easily-governed folk. Unless all appearances belie them they both like and respect the men from the distant North who are set in authority over them. They are 'casual' towards the Greeks, familiar rather than friendly with the Egyptians; but towards the English their demeanour is reverential. When a native mounted on a donkey passes an English gentleman, even in the streets of Khartum, it is etiquette for him to dismount from his beast and salute; it is also correct for the Briton to acknowledge the salutation with punctilious courtesy. So it used to be in India when there were only

sahibs in that land, and in Egypt, too, I believe, in the pre-Cookian days. In the Sudan even now they are beginning to distinguish between the mere tourist and the important official resident who wears the gilt crescent on the front of his pith helmet; presently the European may find himself treated as brusquely by brown elbows and toes as he is in the streets of Cairo and Bombay. Meanwhile, the majority of the Sudan natives are still in the unsophisticated stage; and the travelling Briton, who is less than nobody in his own and most other countries, can taste for a moment the unwonted sensation of belonging to a superior order of beings.

The good manners of the Sudanese cannot, I think, be set down to our credit; they are naturally polite, as, indeed, are most of the Oriental and primitive peoples. But there are other things we have been teaching them during the past twelve years, and they have been learning their lesson with gratifying rapidity. The *condominium* of England and Egypt has been exhibited in an administrative partnership. The official hierarchy is mixed; in every department there are English chiefs, with native subordinates, from somewhere down the Nile. So far, work requiring some intelligence, as well as elementary education, has had to be entrusted to the *Misraim*, the Copts and Mohammedans from the north, with some little assistance from the handy Greek, the useful Syrian, and the adaptive Armenian. But the new rulers of the Sudan hold that its own population should be enabled to provide the requisite skill and brains, as well as muscle, without drawing upon an alien element, which is not

altogether happy in these tropical regions, and often stands the climate badly. You will remember—Mr. Kipling has endeavoured to impress it upon the public mind in some oft-quoted verses—that even before Lord Kitchener had completed the work of conquest he set about the task of education. He thought that as we were proposing to extinguish the staple trade of the country which was fighting, we ought to create a few others. So his lieutenants and coadjutors set to work to turn the Sudanese into efficient members of a pacific society. The children of the Arab warriors and their black dependants are being sent to school, and are taught not only reading and writing but also various industrial arts, with the result that the Sudan will soon be able to find itself in mechanics, blacksmiths, carpenters, and artisans of all kinds, without assistance from outside; and presently also in architects, surveyors, engineers, doctors, schoolmasters, officials, and clerks. The muscle and physique of the negro, combined with the alert intelligence of the Arab, should contribute all that is needed. Already there is abundant work, at wages which would not sound wholly contemptible in the East End of London, for both kinds. The Government railways, shops, and dockyards employ thousands of men, and an industrial city, still newer than Khartum, has sprung up on the opposite side of the Blue Nile. Passing through these workshops, filled with whirring machinery, one saw Sudanese fitters and enginemen and boat-builders and riveters toiling briskly, under the direction of a few skilled foremen from the Clyde, the Tees, or the Don. All honour, by the way, to these canny Scots and quiet,



clean-faced young fellows from the North and the Midlands. The Sudan owes much to them.

At the far end of the long river front of Khartum, beyond the Palace, and the club, and the houses of the European residents, and just within the enceinte of barracks and defensive works—for Khartum, remember, is a fortress and place of arms—stands the Gordon College. It is an imposing building, in solid brick and stone, with wide corridors and cool, academic cloisters. This is the seminary of the higher education for the Sudan, and here the young Sudanese, who has learnt the elements in the primary schools, may carry his studies further by the aid of Arabic-speaking teachers, under the general superintendence of certain young or youngish gentlemen who have acquired proficiency in cricket and other ingenuous arts at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The boys are a mixed lot. One was pointed out to me as the son of an Egyptian clerk in the War Department; another was the child of a former bitter and formidable enemy of ours—a great and prosperous slave trader; a third was the son of one of the Khalifa's famous emirs, a foeman who proved himself worthy of our steel; two more were closely related to the false Prophet himself. Some of the boys had marched across from the Cadets' College, a few yards away—a sort of Sudanese Sandhurst—where the sons of officers in the black battalions and some others, mostly belonging to the first fighting families of the country, are qualifying for the military career. The Commandant takes an especial pride in his cadets, and has brought them to a high state of efficiency. He was kind enough to parade them for

my inspection, and a smarter lot of young soldiers I have not often seen. The boys take a passionate delight in their studies ; when they are not in the class-rooms or on the parade ground they sometimes play football ; but their favourite amusement is to drill one another, or practise their gymnastic exercises, or read military text-books. Thus is the inherited warlike instinct turned to good account. Before long the Sudanese contingent will be able to find its subalterns and non-commissioned officers without drawing upon Egypt.

Throughout the Gordon College there is a similar practical aim. The Director of Education has very wisely determined that a high literary culture is a luxury with which for the immediate future the Sudan can dispense. The young Sudanese is not encouraged to read Burke and Mill, and Herbert Spencer and Bergson, nor is he induced to browse vaguely over English literature and modern politics. That peculiar intellectual stimulus so liberally purveyed to the youthful Bengali is denied him. I did not hear the boys recite any English poetry, for they do not learn English poetry, which would certainly confuse and probably upset them. But I went through the drawing office and the surveyor's class, and saw young students, working out plans with metre-rule and T-square, and calculating quantities with a neatness and precision which would do no discredit to Great George Street. The students learn sufficient English for all such purposes ; not enough to denationalise them or cause them to forget that they are the Arabic-speaking inhabitants of a Mohammedan country. Instead of qualifying his pupils

to become disappointed office-seekers or active political agitators, the Director endeavours to produce a steady stream of young fellows, with the elements of a sound technical training. It seemed to me that he had chosen the better way ; and I even thought that some more highly developed communities might learn something from the educational experiment which is being conducted in the heart of Africa.

Khartum, however, is doing more for science and learning, and education in the highest sense, than this. The most notable building in the place—in some respects the most notable building in the Sudan or in all North Africa—is the Wellcome Institute. Here, thanks to the enterprise and liberality of Mr. Henry S. Wellcome, the head of the famous firm of manufacturing druggists, there are well-equipped laboratories and consulting-rooms in which a staff of bacteriologists and medical experts is engaged in examining the problems of tropical vegetation, germ-life, and disease. Results of the utmost value may be expected from their researches, which may end in extirpating or bringing under control the worst of the maladies which have hung like a blight over the vitality and the progress of the sun-lands. It is the beginning of a work comparable in importance to that of the great Portuguese travellers and explorers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Prince Henry the Navigator, Vasco da Gama, and Bartolomeo Diaz laid open the coasts of Africa to the exploitation and commerce of Europe ; but through all the intervening centuries the interior of the Dark Continent has remained inhospitable and deadly. It seems as if modern science and hygiene

may once more restore it to civilisation and render it habitable and wholesome for the northern races. And in this great peaceful reconquest of the South the Wellcome Laboratories of Khartum will be in the vanward files. If Britain had done no more in the Sudan than to provide a secure centre for this scientific work, we should have justified our efforts to get back to the Upper Nile.

## CHAPTER IV

### OMDURMÁN

THE transmutation of Omdurman is as strange in its way as that of the sister city across the Nile. Omdurman has had a curious history. Some thirty years ago it was an unimportant native village. When Mohammed Ahmed, the Mahdi, had swept up all the Sudan, save only Khartum, he made Omdurman his camp, where he assembled his armies for the siege of the last stronghold of Egyptian rule. After the fall and destruction of Khartum he turned the camp into his capital, and brought together a vast concourse of his friends and subjects. The policy was continued by his successor, Abdullah, the Khalifa. That sensual and suspicious tyrant would have liked if he could to collect the entire population of his dominions about the walls of his own residence. No one knows how many people there were in Omdurman fifteen years ago. I have heard the number put at half a million, or even eight hundred thousand. It is an immense place still, straggling some five or six miles along the river bank ; but two-thirds is empty space, though its population now is well over sixty thousand. Under the Khalifa's regime of blood and famine the inhabitants of the Sudan had decreased by at least seventy per cent. The figure seems incredible ; but the best authority on the

subject, the Sirdar, who knows everything about the Sudan that is worth knowing, regards it as an unduly moderate estimate. When we came into possession the eight or nine millions of the Sudanese peoples had been reduced to less than two ; and perhaps a quarter of them or more were gathered under the Khalifa's eye, in the nest of reeking lanes round the barracks where he kept his servants and his women, and the great enclosure in which he held his prayer meetings.

There were willing and unwilling tenants in the houses and huts of Omdurman. Many thousands were the Khalifa's janissaries, the dervishes of the Baggara and other fighting Arab tribes, on whose spears his power rested. These men lived at free quarters, plundering the negroes, and making booty of the cattle and corn and women of those who were suspected of disloyalty to the Prophet. Others were the warriors of rival Arab clans who had been brought into Omdurman so that they could be watched and guarded. Here, too, were all the European and Egyptian prisoners whose lives it had been deemed desirable to spare. In a little house adjacent to the Khalifa's lived Slatin during the ten precarious years of his captivity, sometimes petted by the capricious tyrant, sometimes insulted and bullied, but always, in spite of his forced conversion to Mohammedanism, treated as a slave and aware that his life hung by a thread. Now he is Sir Rudolf von Slatin Pasha, K.C.M.G., C.V.O., C.B., Inspector-General of the Sudan, the second greatest man in the country, next only to the Sirdar. You may meet the gallant Austrian officer riding his pony through the streets of Khartum,

looking not at all as if sixteen years of his life had been passed in exile and captivity, amid trials and dangers enough to shake the nerve of any man. And in Omdurman, or, perhaps, at a pleasant afternoon party under the trees of the Palace Gardens at Khartum, you could till lately have seen a very tall old man in a rough brown cassock, girdled with cord, a man with a long beard, a face all lined and seared that was a history in itself, and deep earnest eyes with a glint of humour in them. This was Father Ohrwalder, who likewise was one of the Mahdi's captives, and suffered many things in the prison-houses of Omdurman, before he escaped through the skilful contrivance of Sir Reginald Wingate. When the end of the dervish rule came, Father Ohrwalder went back again, not to a palace or to high office, but to live simply in Omdurman and to work among his 'people,' some of them Christians, who had shared his own captivity. Everybody liked the good priest. Moslems made way for his tall figure as he passed through the bazaars; he was friendly with the Greek priests and the Coptic ecclesiastics; with the chief of his own Austrian mission as well as with Bishop Gwynne, the genial and popular head of the Protestant community in the Sudan, himself the friend of men of all religions and of none.

Omdurman was like Peking in that it was a town within a town. There was a kind of 'Sacred Forbidden City,' a walled enclosure in the core of the huge unregulated mass of mean buildings, which was appropriated by the Khalifa, his dependants, his personal followers, and his Baggara prætorians. In this stood his own house, a somewhat pretentious edifice, fitted with a bath-room, mosquito

curtains, carpets, brass bedsteads, doors of inlaid wood, and other luxuries; the houses of his sons, his arsenal and armoury (where you may still see an odd collection of miscellaneous armour and weapons, from mailed helmets of crusading pattern to Tower muskets and Remington rifles taken from Hicks Pasha), his treasury, and his harem; here, too, was the Mahdi's tomb, which Kitchener deemed it politic to destroy; and the great mosque, and the gallows. One part of the Khalifa's house has been converted to the use of the present administration of the town. On the ground floor I saw a couple of rooms very simply furnished with a writing-table, a deck chair, a shelf with a few books, a camp bedstead and metal tub, and the other modest articles of an Englishman's toilet. These were the quarters of the junior civilian, fresh from Oxford, who was assisting the Mudir of Omdurman and learning from him how to govern natives. It made one reflect a moment on the odd revenges and juxtapositions of history to hear the young gentleman's name. For this youthful Sudan civilian was a son of Mr. Asquith, the liberal Prime Minister who owed his rapid advancement in official life to the favour and high regard of Mr. Gladstone, that other great liberal statesman whose action in sending Gordon to Khartum was the indirect cause of the founding of Omdurman.

Another portion of the Khalifa's abode has been converted into the residence of the Mudir, the governor. The position, at the time of my visit, was filled by Captain Young, a very able officer lent to the Sudan service by the British Army; and Mrs. Young was then the only English



lady in Omdurman except the wife of the officer commanding one of the Sudanese battalions. English ladies are rare in the Sudan ; the officers stationed up the country are, I believe, not expected to enter the matrimonial state without the permission of the Sirdar, and even in Khartum itself ladies are few. They make up for the paucity of their numbers by being exceedingly charming and more hospitable, even to the passing globe-trotter, than that peccant person usually deserves. After a morning in Omdurman I lunched with great satisfaction in Mrs. Young's shady dining-room ; and my enjoyment of this agreeable repast was increased by an ever-present sense of incongruity. I could not dismiss the thought that these pleasant, English-seeming apartments, with their quiet, home-like air of comfort, were, in fact, those in which Abdullah had carried on his orgies and taken counsel with his trembling satellites. As I sat on the broad verandah, with its rugs and tea tables, I had before me the dusty plain where the Khalifa assembled his fanatics and worked them up to the right pitch of more or less genuine enthusiasm. My eyes could scan the spot where he held his daily revivalist meetings, his daily floggings, his not infrequent hangings. The civil *gaffir*, or watchman, who held my pony at the gate, might have been one of Abdullah's victims, or one of his executioners, a few years ago.

The Mudir devoted more hours of a busy day than I had any title to expect to showing me round Omdurman. Shrunken as it is from its former proportions, it is a large place, and takes a long time to see. We rode through street after street, and lane after lane, mostly occupied by

small bazaar shops, doing a brisk business. Omdurman is the mart and *entrepôt* for a wide tract of north Central Africa, and natives come from great distances to sell and buy here. You can find good opportunity for studying the different types and nations, from the Levantine, in black trousers and pith helmet, who was born, perhaps, by the shores of the Bosphorus, to the Bahr-el-Ghazal negro, in a loin cloth, who first saw the light not far from the Equator. I was introduced to certain of the local manufacturers. We went to the quarter of the silversmiths, where grave-looking Arabs sell heavy bracelets and anklets of hammered metal, and little trays and ornaments neatly woven in silver wire. They are good handicraftsmen, with their primitive tools. but they have no originality or sense of design. On the other hand, they can copy a model with exact fidelity ; and Captain Young showed me various articles accurately imitated from the European patterns which he had supplied. In a small back yard we found the establishment of a local miller, a man of substance, though his plant consisted of a couple of grindstones turned by a patient camel, which walked round and round all day in a little covered shed. At Omdurman they weave an excellent cotton cloth called *damur*, which is very light and strong, and more porous than duck or crash ; it is much liked by European residents in the Sudan for suits of summer clothing. We visited one of the local cotton mills where this cloth is woven. The owner was a woman, and she had half a dozen female assistants and one old man in her employ. This man sat on the ground with his legs tucked into a hole under him and drove the

shuttle through the sticks and strings of a flimsy loom, such as you may see anywhere in an Indian village. The proprietress herself twisted the yarn with a spindle, which she operated with a marvellous and baffling dexterity. She took the thing between her two brown, skinny, little palms, and rubbed it up and down for a moment, and it became alive and went on spinning and spinning and spinning with a perfectly uniform motion; and the hank of yarn came out and grew longer and longer, and was spun into a thin fine thread and never broke. How it was done you could not tell, for if you took the bobbin yourself and tried to spin it you could not keep it going for half a dozen turns, and the thread snapped off almost at once. The craftswoman smiled, and took the machine from you, and did the trick again as easily as before. It is a queer tool, the Asiatic or the African hand. Its possessor, as a rule, has so few others that he has learnt how to do all he wants with this one.

We went round the quarter of the grain-sellers, the bazaar of those who sell potter's wares and earthenware of all sorts; we inspected the vegetable market, and the booths of the butchers. Everybody, of course, knew the Mudir and his Egyptian assistant, the Mamur or sub-magistrate, and everybody was polite, attentive, good-humoured, without obsequiousness or servility. The Sudanese does not cringe or crouch even to the man he gladly recognises as his superior; he stands up and looks him in the face. It was the day appointed for the trial of a steam fire-engine which Captain Young had imported: a necessary apparatus in these clustering rows of huts of dried brick and

sun-baked wood and straw. The furnace was lighted, and long jets of water were spouted into the air, to the keen delight of a great crowd of men and women and bright-eyed youngsters who watched the performance. It was all very interesting ; but as I went the round I was haunted by a vague sense that there was something missing, something I was unconsciously expecting and did not find. I discovered what it was when we came to the quarter of the butchers. Therein I saw meat weighed out and sold on cleanly slabs of zinc, which slabs, by the edict of the Mudir, are flushed and scraped daily with as much care and nicety as if they adorned the shop-front of a West-end poulterer. Then I perceived what was lacking to the *sukh*, which is the market-place, of Omdurman. The familiar odour of the Orient, unforgettable when once it has assailed your nostrils, was absent. Here was an Eastern bazaar, without the Eastern smell, that pungent, racy flavour compounded of sun-dried filth and close-packed humanity and the miscellaneous products of many animals. The life and colour of the sun-lands were there ; but not the dirt-heaps before the open doors, the prowling dogs rooting in garbage, the mired and feculent ways. Omdurman is genuine Africa ; but it is Africa deodorised, cleansed, regulated, made safe and wholesome by firm and patient hands. When you recall George Steevens's appalling description of that place as it was when we took possession—mounds of festering rottenness, stench that turned the soldiers sick, dead bodies of men and buffaloes putrefying in the lanes—you feel that its inhabitants have some reason for gratitude towards their present rulers.

## CHAPTER V

### ANGLO-SUDANESE SOCIETY

THE winter visitor to Khartum comes away with a somewhat exaggerated belief in the amenities of Anglo-Sudanese life. He must be hard to please if he has not enjoyed his trip. The railway journey may have been a trifle long and dusty, even though mitigated by first-rate sleeping cars, a restaurant *wagon de luxe*, and excellent baths at the half-way station of Abu Hamed to wash the desert dust off the voyager. But the tourist, especially if provided with a few introductions, finds everything delightful. The climate fills him with enthusiasm, as well it may, for in December and January it would be perfect, save for an occasional sandstorm. The sun shines hotly all day from a cloudless sky, but a far greater heat could be endured in this dry, exhilarating atmosphere; there is always some breeze stirring, and the mornings and nights are fresh and cool, without the nipping chill that is apt to try the liver and lungs after sundown in the winter of some other tropical countries. It seems good to be alive in these bracing mornings, as you ride along the river bank, under the palms, with the red and yellow blossoms glowing on one side of you and the great white river gleaming on the other; or at night, after a pleasant dinner party, as you stroll

back under the golden southern moon floating through the purple velvet of the sky.

Then there is so much that is novel and still unhackneyed. Even the small discomforts of existence are enjoyable. There are few carriages in Khartum, except those belonging to the Palace and a governess-cart or two. The tourist must go about on the back of a donkey, or in a rickshaw, drawn by the same useful beast. The donkeys are not always up to the best Egyptian standard, and they are often provided only with the stirrupless native saddle, which is a wooden framework, with a sheepskin thrown over it. Consequently, locomotion is sometimes slow, and the hotel rickshaws would be outpaced easily by the average seaside perambulator. The residents keep their own donkeys, which are a much superior breed, or ride sleek Arab ponies, and in the plentitude of their hospitality they will often let the visitor have the loan of one of these animals. They make him welcome to their houses, and lend him steam-launches, guides, sailing-boats, and other luxuries, and show him all the things worth seeing, and generally put themselves out for this passing sojourner to a quite unwarrantable and unexpected extent. Presently the miscellaneous trippers—the Briton doing the Nile in a hurry, the American, the German—will pour in. Then there will be cabs and motor-cars and many hotels, and donkey-boys, unsophisticated no longer, and a horde of the pestering touts who make Cairo hideous; and then, I suppose, Khartum society will grow reserved and inaccessible. Meanwhile, it is still new enough to retain the pioneering tradition; it still feels itself a settlement of the

English in a distant land ; and it is still pleased to see the stranger from 'home.' It is particularly pleased if that voyager happens to be feminine, and young, and good looking ; but even to the middle-aged male visitant with some credentials, it is ready to open its heart and its doors.

All these things naturally predispose one to a favourable estimate of Anglo-Sudanese society. It is indeed a very pleasant and attractive body of people who assemble in the Sudan capital in the winter months, whom it would be difficult not to like. Something of the brightness of the clear oxygenated air has communicated itself to the residents, who have tempered the national stiffness with a certain Southern vivacity. Then it is a society of people in the prime of life and health. Everybody in the Sudan is young or youngish. There are very few Englishmen in the whole territory over fifty ; most are well under forty, many below thirty. Officers in this service do not have to wait till they are grey and bald before obtaining positions of responsibility and power. They are commanding regiments or governing provinces at an age when in England they would be helping to drill a company or sealing documents in Downing Street. The Englishman who wears the Khedivial badge is too scarce and costly an article to be wasted over mere routine. He joins the service at five-and-twenty or so, and after a very short apprenticeship he is placed in some post of importance, where he has to exercise his own initiative and direct many native subordinates. The Sudan may not have more than ten years of him altogether, and it cannot afford to let him spend

too much time in learning his business. It takes him young and it means to make the best of him before his youth has gone ; it is no country or climate for the old.

To the advantage of youth it seemed to me that Sudan society added a quite exceptional allowance of good looks. This may be an accident ; I do not suppose that the qualifying examination for admission includes a beauty competition. But it is not altogether fortuitous. The Government insists on a high standard of health and physical fitness in the soldiers and civilians it employs ; and nearly all of them are tall and strong and cleanly built, and have a wholesome and athletic appearance. As for the ladies, I do not know why they should have more than the common share of personal attractiveness, unless it is a case of natural (very natural) selection. I have, indeed, a suspicion that when the young officer communicates his desire to commit matrimony to the Sirdar that shrewd and kindly autocrat expects to have the portrait of the lady submitted to him as well as her *dossier*. But I hasten to add that I have no official warrant for this suggestion. It is no more than a theory of my own, formed when I surveyed the very becoming feminine ' gallery ' at the Sirdar's review of the Egyptian and Sudanese troops of his garrison.

Well, sunshine, open air, good health, abundant exercise, and plenty of hard, but thoroughly interesting work ought to make people good-humoured. Nobody has time to loaf or mope in Khartum ; and nobody is idle. Everybody, on the contrary, is extremely busy, for the field is large and the labourers few ; and if the harvest is to be gathered



in season and the due amount of 'leave' obtained in the year, the business must be put through with energy. There is no room for 'slackers' in the Sudan, and no tenderness for them. Public feeling is altogether against this class of offender, who soon learns to amend his ways, or, if incorrigible, is quietly sent elsewhere. What strikes one most is the extraordinary alertness of these young officers and officials, the keenness with which they pursue their work, the absorbing interest they take in it. They find time to play, too; there is polo or tennis going most afternoons, some cricket, football for the British battalion, a little shooting of sand-grouse and gazelle and bigger game, bridge at the club, tea parties and dinner parties in the winter months, which is the Khartum 'season.' But all these are incidentals. Nobody is sportsman enough to live for sport in the Sudan; the social amusements are a mere passing episode of the cool weather. The real interest is the work. Nobody minds talking 'shop' in the Sudan, for often there is nothing else to talk about. Besides, they like it.

'It is a new toy for them, this Sudan,' said a clever lady to me in Khartum. These young fellows have thrown themselves into the task of ruling, administering, educating, drilling, policing, civilising their miscellaneous millions, black and brown, scattered over a sub-continent, with the same light-hearted earnestness which you find in the subalterns of a native Indian regiment or in the ward-room of one of his Majesty's cruisers. They do not assume any excessive air of seriousness, but, on the contrary, take everything with a kind of schoolboy gaiety; but every

man's heart is in the job, and particularly in his own share of it. One tall, smooth-cheeked youth kept me up half a night to discuss the special qualities and peculiar merits of certain machinery entrusted by the Public Works Department to his charge. Another, a bimbashi of the Camel Corps, occupied many hours of a long railway journey in impressing upon me the value of camelry, properly drilled, in the scheme of things. His heart was with the camel; I never heard so much good said for the ungainly creature before. But the Came. Corps, you see, was this young officer's affair, and he took a deep professional pride in it. I remembered how I went on board a two-funnelled steam-launch at a naval review, and remarked to the infant in command: 'This is one of the fastest boats in the fleet, isn't she?' 'She's the fastest of them all,' said the boy. 'I thought,' I replied, 'that the *Tetrahedron's* pinnace was faster.' The boy bounced with indignation, and turned to the bearded quartermaster at his side. 'We can go half a knot better than they, can't we, Wilkins?' 'I should think we could, sir, and a knot too if we liked.' That is the spirit of the Navy; it is the spirit that also prevails under the Two Flags.

I have a respect for the British regimental officer, especially when I see him outside the Metropolitan police district, where he is usually at his worst; but I should not like to assume that his average quality could be correctly gauged by the examples one meets in the Sudan. As a fact, these are all picked men, and they are not unconscious of the circumstance. The Government insists on mind as well as muscle. It will have its young men

healthy and strong ; but it wants them to possess a fair allowance of brains and the ability to use them. No officer can be seconded for service with the Egyptian army who cannot produce the highest testimonials from his military superiors, and he must pass a rather severe qualifying examination in addition. The same rule applies to the young civilian nominated from the universities. The novice is given a reasonable time to master Arabic, which is not an easy language, and if he fails to attain the requisite standard he is returned whence he came.

Many other things he has to learn, and he contrives to learn them. The tradition in the Sudan is in favour of the exercise of the intelligence. The two men who have had most to do with the destinies of the country so far—Lord Kitchener and the present Sirdar—have shown that high intellectual interests are not inconsistent with hard fighting and the winning of battles. Sir Reginald Wingate, like his former chief, but perhaps in a greater degree, is a scholar, a linguist, a student of antiquities and history. But he had to do his share of rough and perilous soldiering work, though the public knew little about it at the time, being just then otherwise occupied. After the great battle of Omdurman in September 1898, George Steevens, who told its story in his vivacious prose, went home, the other able correspondents went home, most of the 11,000 British troops went home, even Lord Kitchener went home. There came the friction with France, and then in a little while the growing quarrel with the Boers, and we all forgot the Khalifa. But that inconvenient person had got away after his Baggara had been mown

down in heaps by the maxim and rifle fire at Kerreri. He assembled another army, 7000 strong, and a year after the great victory Sir Reginald Wingate was in hot pursuit of him. There were no British soldiers at Ghedit, where the final battle was fought: only a few British officers and some 2000 native troops. It was not very far from the scene of Hicks Pasha's defeat; and at one moment it looked as if there might be a repetition of that disaster. For Sir Reginald Wingate was greatly outnumbered, and his troops in their final dash had to march nearly two days without water, with the risk of finding the wells occupied in force by the enemy. Yet the hazard had to be run; for if the Khalifa had been allowed to get away then the tribes would assuredly have assembled round him again, and the conquest of the Sudan would have had to begin *de novo*. Fortunately the Khalifa had not seized the wells, but the peril was not over. The dervishes, wiser than at Omdurman, made a night attack on the British *zariba*, and it was awkward work to repel the rush of the spearmen in the dark. But the Sudanese and Egyptian soldiers stood their ground, the attack gradually died away, and Wingate's men advancing drove the dervishes before them. In the centre of the field they found the body of the Khalifa. Before him lay a line of his chosen guard of riflemen, swept away by a blast of fire which converged by some lucky chance upon this spot in the darkness. Every man died where he stood, with his musket at his shoulder. Behind his escort Abdullah had seated himself on his carpet, with his emirs about him; and here they met their death with the calm and silent dignity



*Photo by Elliott & Fry.*

LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR FRANCIS REGINALD WINGATE, K.C.M.G., ETC.

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of the children of Islam when it is the will of Allah that the end shall come. Many evil deeds were done by Abdullah the Khalifa; but he died better than he lived. And his Africans were faithful to him to the last, as African troops have so often been faithful in defeat to the chief who has led them to victory. As the tale of Ghedit was told me, I thought of Hannibal's Old Guard of Numidians, dying grimly under the swords of the legionaries, in that battle at Zama which sealed the fate of Carthage two thousand years ago.

But the final blow at the Khalifa was struck, as I have said, by one who was a student as well as a soldier, a man of books and ideas as well as a man of action. There is enough of this spirit in the Sudan to keep it from that deadness to all intellectual interests which does unhappily sometimes oppress a British community, predominantly official and military, in the outlying parts of the globe. But then, also, you must recollect that the British bey or bimbashi in the Sudan is much more in touch with 'home' than most of those who serve the Empire in distant regions. He gets his three months' clear 'leave' every year, so far as the exigencies of his duty permit; which is enough to enable him to reach England and freshen himself for eight weeks or so under a Northern sky. In India, even now, people still talk of 'Europe' and 'Europeans,' not of England and English; they feel themselves so far away from the continent of their nativity that minor distinctions are merged. In the Sudan there is no such suggestive nomenclature; they would stare at you if you spoke of a European policeman or a European soldier.

They are at home too often to talk the language of exile. This ample allowance of holidays is one of the attractions of the service ; it is also one of the things that lead the winter visitor to exaggerate those attractions. He does not see Khartum in the hot weather, when all the ladies have left, when the thermometer is at 120 degrees in the shade, when a piece of metal in the daytime cannot be touched without burning the fingers, when storms of red-hot dust are driving over everything. Still less does he realise that Khartum, with its nice houses and gardens, is merely the administrative and military centre. The hardest work of the country is done away in the provinces, in Kordofan, in the Bahr-el-Ghazal, almost to the Equator, or far up the Blue Nile towards the Abyssinian frontier, where men are toiling under a vertical sun, sometimes amid swamps, deserts, or fever-haunted bush. No club for them, no tea parties, no Palace, with its informal little court, sometimes no white companion to speak to for months at a time ; and that in a climate which, pleasant enough as it may seem in December, with a good roof above you and an ice-machine handy, is uncommonly trying without such amenities in the month of August. I have heard it hinted that in Khartum and in Cairo the officials are rather too generously served in the matter of leave ; but nobody denies that the men up the country need all they get and deserve all they can take.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCERNING POLITICS AND PERSONS

THE Government of the Sudan is an anomaly within an anomaly, as I was forcibly reminded one bright morning in Omdurman when I watched a battalion of the Egyptian army on parade. The sun glanced on a long line of swarthy Arabs and absolute negroes, arrayed in uniforms which only the genius of Anglo-Indian military tailoring could have devised; three or four young Englishmen in brown helmets and khaki rode along the ranks; the band was drumming and trumpeting vigorously to the tune of 'Men of Harlech'; the colour party bore a green and gold flag with the Khedivial crescent. Suddenly the colonel rapped out half a dozen sharp orders in—Turkish. Not in English, you perceive, which is the language of the officers, not in the colloquial Arabic, which is the language of the men; but in Turkish, which is as much a foreign tongue to all grades as Chinese. And it was brought home to me by this curious linguistic performance that I was under the shadow of the Sultan, in a land which is still, according to vague political fiction, linked on to that queer conglomerate, the Ottoman Empire.

Egypt is not an independent country, still less, I need hardly say, does it 'belong' to England; it is a province

of Turkey, and its ruler is theoretically the Viceroy of the Sultan, who has kindly permitted some British troops to 'occupy' the country temporarily to assist in maintaining order, with some British officials to help the Egyptians in the business of government. In this condition of dependence, formally on Turkey, practically on Great Britain, Egypt has a half-share in the Sudan, England having the other half. It is a *condominium* regulated by the agreement of 1899, which declares that the English and Egyptian flags shall be used together throughout the territory; that the military and civil control shall be vested in the Governor-General of the Sudan, who must also be the Sirdar of the Egyptian army, and cannot be removed by the Khedive without the consent of the British Government; that the 'capitulations' and consular jurisdictions are not in force as in Egypt; and that the import and export of slaves are absolutely prohibited. The Sudan is divided into fourteen provinces, each presided over by an English Mudir, or Governor, responsible to the Governor-General, who is nominally responsible to the Khedive and the King; actually responsible to nobody, unless it be the British Agent in Cairo, who is, in theory, one of the foreign Consuls-General, and in reality the representative of the British Government, which controls the Government of Egypt.

It is a situation distinctly mixed when one tries to put it upon paper. In effect it is simpler than it looks. The truth is that the Sudan is a vast territory, inhabited by African natives, administered by English officials, with the assistance of Egyptian subordinates, and defended by a force of Egyptian and Sudanese troops under

English command. A single battalion of the British 'Army of Occupation' is garrisoned in Khartum. But in this town and in Omdurman and elsewhere in the Sudan are stationed four-fifths of the Egyptian army. There are some cavalry in Cairo, chiefly to do escort duty for the Khedive, three infantry battalions in Upper and Lower Egypt, a few guns, and military police. The rest of the Egyptian army—infantry, mounted men, and artillery—are beyond the frontier. There is an Egyptian War Office in Cairo, but it has not much to do. Most of the business is conducted in Khartum. The Commander-in-Chief is there, the Headquarters' Staff, the military secretary, and adjutant-general. It is in the Sudan that the Egyptian army is trained, for it is in the Sudan that it is most likely to have to fight, if any fighting comes to be done. The duty of looking after Egypt devolves mainly upon the small British force which is called the Army of Occupation—so called because we are only 'occupying' Egypt, just to see that things go right, in a quite casual and temporary way, meanwhile obligingly assisting the Egyptians to govern themselves in a decent and tolerable fashion.

In the Sudan, however, we have no need to keep up the fiction of being 'advisers' to native administrators. Englishmen are running the territory without disguise, to the great advantage of its inhabitants. To all intents and purposes, these provinces are under British rule. The military and civil hierarchy is entirely English in its higher grades; the subordinates are mostly Egyptian, but their nationality is only, so to speak, incidental; many, in fact, are Syrians, Greeks, and Levantines, and some are Sudanese

natives. Egypt at present furnishes the best available supply of intelligent Arabic-speaking persons, with education enough to become company officers, minor magistrates, railway officials, post-office employés, and the like. But they do not stand the Sudan climate very well, and they are not particularly happy in the country. They are being supplemented, and perhaps in time will be supplanted, by the young Arabs and young negroes whom we are training at the Gordon College, in the military school, and in the technical workshops. There will be Sudanese captains and subalterns, Sudanese schoolmasters, *kadis*, and clerks, Sudanese surveyors, irrigation officials, and tax collectors, and they will gradually replace the Egyptian functionaries, who are in reality almost as much foreigners in the country as we are ourselves. In time, also, it may be possible to dispense with the conscripted fellahin of the Lower Nile valley, who fill the cadres of the Egyptian regiments, leaving the defence of the southern territory entirely to the black battalions made up of voluntarily enlisted natives of the Sudan. The majority of their company officers and non-commissioned officers are now Egyptians; but the sons of the fighting chiefs and other scions of the 'first families' of the Sudan are being made ready to take these positions. Then we shall have a Sudan army exactly analogous to that of India—commanded by English generals and colonels and majors, with natives of the soil in the ranks and in the intermediate grades.

Egypt, meanwhile, had to foot the bill, and some Egyptians, especially those who contributed to the Nationalist newspapers, complained bitterly of the burden. In practice

it was not very onerous. When the Sudan was reconquered it was recognised that for several years this devastated and depopulated tract could not be expected to pay its way, and that the deficit must be made good from the Egyptian revenues. This was a mistake, due to the customary tenderness of all British Governments for the British taxpayer. We should have put ourselves in a stronger position if we had become responsible, jointly with Egypt, for the deficiency; and the liability, as it turns out, would have been light and transient. The Sudan now is paying its way and requires no external assistance. Its Financial Secretary, Colonel Bernard, a military officer whom Lord Kitchener 'discovered' and turned into a highly competent Chancellor of the Exchequer, has been reducing the deficit year by year. In 1898 the annual revenue was £E35,000; by 1906 it has risen to £E804,000; in 1912 it was £E1,710,000. The contribution by the Egyptian Government in the last-named year was £E335,000; but against this was to be set off a return payment of £E172,000 for maintenance of the army in the Sudan, so that the net cost to Lower Egypt of the Upper Provinces is only £E163,000. But in the current year (1913) this charge disappears altogether, under a new settlement of the financial relations between the Cairo and Khartum Governments. By this settlement, the contribution of Egypt to the Sudan Exchequer and the payment for the maintenance of the army are abolished, on condition that the Egyptian Government hands over to the Sudan the customs duties on goods destined for the territory collected in Egypt. Thus the Sudan is now self-supporting. Its revenue and expenditure,

if all goes well, will balance without external subventions. But even if Egypt were still called upon to contribute a hundred thousands or so per annum it would not be an excessive amount to pay for the maintenance of a settled government along the whole course of the Nile, right up to its sources, and for the removal of the menace which hung over Egypt so long as the southern territories were in a turmoil of warlike barbarism. For the present Egypt secures repose and immunity; and in the future she will double her irrigation supply, and add many millions to the value of her lands, by those great engineering works which can only be undertaken by a government having full control of the upper waters of the two great rivers which mingle at Khartum to pour their life-giving fluid through the lower valley. For the first time in history a civilised Power can deal with the Niles, and their tributary streams, as a whole. Egypt, which thirty years hence, thanks to the engineers and administrators of the Sudan, may be twice as rich as she is at present, need not grudge her contribution towards the cost of the process in its initial stages.

The present task of the English rulers is to maintain order, heal the wounds caused by the Mahdist fury, and restore civilised conditions of life. Create, perhaps, would be a better word than restore; but it must be remembered that we have some vestiges of an old civilisation to work upon. Modern scholars and historians dismiss the idea that these Central African regions were never anything but a mere welter of savagery. We know now that Ethiopia shared in the culture and in the social development of ancient Egypt, as its monuments show; and we know,

too, that this old Nilotic civilisation lasted on in the upper regions long after it had succumbed in Egypt to the attacks from the north and west. Christianity assimilated, but did not destroy it ; for centuries after the Arabs had overwhelmed Egypt there was a Christian empire in Africa, cut off from the north by the Moslem wave, with its churches, its schools, its monasteries, its walled towns, its industries, and its well-organised society. As late as the fourteenth century these Ethiopian States maintained their individuality, nor were they finally engulfed in the Mohammedan tide till the seventeenth. Up till that time—and even later—there were the relics of an indigenous civilisation, which had in it, perhaps, the germs of something higher than the Asiatic Orientalism with its bad European veneer, introduced by the Turks and Arabs. The conquests of Mehemet Ali did more to demoralise than to raise the Ethiopian races. There were military stations, barracks, forts, steamers, the telegraph ; but the people were plundered and preyed upon by ruffianly soldiers and corrupt officials, the flourishing caravan trade was broken up, and wholesale slave-hunting was encouraged. The ‘Turks’ had rendered their own tenure precarious by their oppression, even before the pseudo-Messiah united all the elements antagonistic to them by the bond of a common fanaticism.

In that period of disruption and unrest which eventually brought us upon the Nile strange things happened and strange figures appeared. I had been lunching at Khartum with a high official of the Government in one of those charming villas on the river bank. ‘Don’t go,’ said the host, as we were rising to take our leave ; ‘Zubeir

Pasha is here, and I dare say you would like to see him. Certainly we would like to see him. What would you say if Godfrey de Bouillon or Bertrand du Guesclin strolled in for a chat over the teacups? To see Zubeir Pasha face to face was as if some long dead and buried adventurer had come to life out of the pages of the history books. His name was well enough known to the British public through the newspapers and the parliamentary debates of the Gordon period; for this old man, who lived right down into the second decade of the twentieth century,<sup>1</sup> had played a great part in Sudan affairs long before the Mahdi rose, and might have played a greater part still had Gordon been allowed to have his way at the last. He was an Arab of the Berber region, who plunged into the wilder parts of the Sudan many years before the 'Turk' had been shaken out of the tropical provinces, while Ismail Pasha's regiments were still patrolling the country, bullying the tribes, levying contributions, pretending to suppress the slave dealers, and meanwhile taking toll of their illicit gains. In this welter Zubeir was at home. He was energetic, capable, ambitious, with abundant courage, and no scruples to spare; a keen trader, an excellent organiser, with some talent for soldiering and leadership. He built up a great personal and commercial influence in the Sudan provinces. He traded, he fought, he brought the tribes together, he made a sort of confederation which included Darfur, Kordofan, and the Bahr-el-Ghazal and the Khartum district; he was the most powerful man in those provinces. Then Gordon, in his crusade against the slave trade, came into conflict with him; his son was

<sup>1</sup> He died at Berber in 1913.



killed by Gessi, one of Gordon's lieutenants ; Zubeir himself was seized, exiled to Cairo, and forbidden to set foot again in the Sudan. But his influence had not left him ; and when Gordon went out on his fatal mission he urged that his old enemy should be brought back to aid him in the work of pacification. ' Send me troops or Zubeir.' The Imperial Government refused. Zubeir was kept in Cairo, and afterwards enjoyed the hospitality of England in Gibraltar. Eventually Lord Cromer caused him to be released, pensioned, and returned to the Sudan. He lived patriarchally amid a whole tribe of his kinsfolk and descendants, near Khartum, drew his pension, managed his great estates, and was on excellent terms with the authorities, albeit he had a still unsatisfied claim for, I think, a matter of four millions on account of the damage done to his property in the time of the sequestration.

He was, when I saw him, a brisk, hale, vivacious old gentleman, with a twinkling brown eye, a short grey beard, and a kindly manner. Four score and one were the years of his life, but he was alert and vigorous. He scrambled upon his donkey unaided, and scrambled off again like a schoolboy when somebody expressed a desire to take a snapshot of him. He was very communicative, and did not in the least mind being questioned about his past career and his private affairs. ' Gordoun Pasha,' he said, was the best Englishman he ever knew ; he never believed that Gessi had Gordon's authority for killing his son Suleiman. He denied that he was a slave trader ; he found the trade going on when he took to organising the provinces. Topics even more delicate he was willing to discuss. He was asked

how many children he had had in the course of a much-married life. He could not say; there were some twenty-six alive. And wives? One does not usually put that question to a Mussulman, but Zubeir was a man of the world. He had had sixteen wives altogether, he believed, but it had pleased Allah to take several of the ladies from him. He was still engaged in supplementing the deficiency; only last year he had taken to wife a girl of his own tribe, the good-looking and intelligent Jaalins. Wasn't he a little old for matrimony? some one mildly hinted. Not at all, responded the gay veteran; on the contrary, he thought that the marrying of wives tends to keep an elderly person young. Certainly he tested his own prescription faithfully, and it seems to have agreed with him. Thus did this fierce old fighter end his peaceful days, seeking the delights of domesticity, cultivating his gardens, making friends with the new rulers who were bringing peace and order into the wide sun-baked lands through which he had ploughed his stormful, man-hunting, filibustering way. Comfortably enough he reposed under the shadow of the *Pax Britannica*. this lean, brown, lively veteran, who might, one reflected, if things had fallen but a little differently, have founded an empire, or have died in a dungeon, like many an Eastern adventurer before him.

## CHAPTER VII

### SOME SUDANESE PROBLEMS

'WELL,' I said to the courteous official who was trying to get some business done for me in Khartum, 'I suppose; since this is Saturday night, I must let the matter stand over till Monday.' 'Not at all. Come to my office to-morrow morning and I will arrange it for you.' 'To-morrow! But you forget that to-morrow is Sunday. Surely you do not go to your office on that day?'

'Certainly I do. My office is open on Sunday mornings. We take our holiday on Friday. This is a Mohammedan country, you know.'

And that was another new light to me. As a rule, it may be said of the Englishman in the remote parts of the earth, *cœlum non animum mutat*: he changes his climate, but not his habits. So to hear that he went to work on the Sabbath and rested on the Friday was as startling as if one had learnt that he was prepared to sit down to dinner without a dress coat or, at the worst, a dinner jacket.

The task of the Sudan administrators, as I have said, is that of creating, or reviving, a civilisation out of chaos. They have many difficulties, and one great advantage. The ruin wrought by the Mahdist movement was so complete that they can start with something like a *tabula*

*rasa*. A society and a civil polity had been totally wrecked ; only the foundations were left, and the new rulers had a fairly free hand to rebuild the structure as they pleased, within reason. There is a large field for experiment and for bold innovations, which could not be attempted in older and more complex communities with a highly organised structure and an unbroken tradition.

Some fundamental considerations had, however, to be taken into account. One of these is the existence and prevalence of the Mohammedan religion. The Sudanese profess the faith of Islam. Many of them, especially the negroes, are very bad Moslem ; but they are not on that account the less fanatical, and we cannot forget that our presence in the country is due to the most striking Islamic revival of the nineteenth century. In the Sudan, as well as in Egypt, the Mussulman religion is still living, and its hold is as strong as ever. Its votaries believe not only that there is one God, but also that there is only one faith ; those who do not accept the teaching of the Prophet may have many virtues, but they cannot stand on the same footing as the true believers. We have to contend against an undoubted prejudice. As Englishmen, we may be respected or even liked ; as Christians, there is a feeling against us which is very difficult to overcome. The Egyptian of the old regime, the hated and oppressing 'Turk,' was at least a Mussulman ; we are 'Nazarenes,' and it is not a point in our favour. 'Ah ! if you could only be Moslem,' said an old Arab Sheikh to a British officer, with whom he had been spending a long day of travel and sport, 'how glad we should all be !'

Such a sentiment demands tender handling. Lord Kitchener determined that his new Sudan should not be troubled by religious dissension. He impressed it upon his lieutenants and coadjutors that they were dealing with a Mohammedan community, which, having a quite, respectable religion of its own, was not to be regarded as a fair subject for proselytism. Nothing, he believed, would do more to set Moslem parents against education than the notion that it was to be employed as a means of turning the children from the faith of their fathers. Consequently, the instruction imparted is strictly secular. Conscientious Mohammedans can send their boys to the Gordon College, the primary schools, and the technical classes, with a complete conviction that no attempt will be made to undermine the foundations of their faith. The obligation rests alike upon the Protestant and the Catholic clergy, who are both enjoined against giving religious teaching, except, of course, to the members of their own communions. One of the most useful institutions in Khartum is the school for girls, which is much appreciated by an increasing number of Mohammedan mothers. But the pupils are taught nothing which would shake their belief in the doctrines and customs of Islam; and no Mohammedan husband, who in due course marries one of these young ladies, will find that he has unwittingly acquired a convert to Christianity.

On the same ground missionary effort is not encouraged; indeed, over a great part of the territory it is absolutely prohibited. After the reconquest some of the missionary societies, British and foreign, thought that a great door and

effectual was opened in the Sudan, and were anxious to send in their agents. But Lord Kitchener put his foot down at once. An able and zealous young clergyman came out from home to establish an Anglican mission in Khartum. 'No,' said the Sirdar, 'this is no field for missionary enterprise. But I should think there would be abundant scope for your energies among your own countrymen here. You can stay and convert *them*, if you like. But there must be no attempt at proselytism among the Mohammedans.' The embargo extends to all the northern and more civilised provinces of the Sudan, and includes all those in which the Arab population is most numerous, from the Egyptian frontier to Fashoda. It is only in the Equatorial provinces of the Far South that the missionaries may teach their religion, and make converts if they can. In these districts we are concerned mainly with true African negroes, who are practically heathens, and have hardly been touched by Mohammedanism. With them the *ulema* and the minister have an equal chance; and if the latter can teach them the Bible before the former gets at them with the Koran, the Government at Khartum makes no objection. And with them, it may be added, the missionaries do make some progress; with the Mohammedans, even without the administrative veto, they can do little or nothing. The Mussulman world is rather less likely to become Christian to-day than it was 300 years ago.

Another matter in which it is necessary to move with a good deal of caution is that of slavery. Legalised slavery ceased to exist with the annexation. No man is entitled

to make any human being his property in the Sudan any more than in England, or to constrain him to labour against his will ; and any person held as a slave can, if he pleases, claim immediate manumission. The buying and selling of slaves is prohibited and severely punished ; there is a special slave trade department, with its own police, engaged in the repression of the practice, which, however, is far from extinct in the remoter districts. Domestic and agrarian slavery is dying, but not dead. Many thousands of slaves have asserted their right of emancipation, and converted themselves into free labourers, much stimulated thereto by the excellent wages which any able-bodied person can obtain in the Government workshops, on the railways, and in private employment. The Khalifa left us a legacy of a horde of female slaves when he bolted from Omdurman, and these were all manumitted, not in every case to their own advantage, for, after all, it was somebody's business to feed them as long as they had owners. That illustrates one of the difficulties that beset the process of abolishing slavery in a community long accustomed to this ' peculiar institution.' Peculiar or not, it has existed in Africa and in Asia from time immemorial, and society has been built up round it. To overthrow it in haste necessarily produces grave economical disturbance. The landowner finds himself deprived of the means of cultivating the soil, and the labourer sometimes discovers that he has exchanged a stable and secure existence for one that is uncertain and precarious. He may even learn in some cases that the ' cash nexus ' by which he is bound to an employer, only anxious to make the most of his labour, is a harsher tie

than that which linked him to a master who had some interest in keeping him contented and healthy. Slaves in Africa, as in Asia, were, as a rule, treated with kindness, though no doubt the most fiendish cruelties were perpetrated in the process of obtaining them for the market.

With the slave trade we can have no compromise. But with the emancipation of the slaves actually held as servants or dependants we need not hurry matters unduly. A good deal of social disorganisation has already been caused, and it will take some time to settle itself. It is most felt by the powerful land-owning and cattle-owning Arab tribes, who have been accustomed to rely on their negro serfs for the cultivation of their fields and the care of their flocks and herds. The chiefs of these clans are still highly important and influential persons, and we do not want to rouse their opposition unnecessarily. This history of the past conveys a warning. There is no doubt, I think, that Gordon's impetuous crusade against slavery had much to do with the final rising against Egyptian rule. If there had been no Gordon there might have been no Mahdi. To the general resentment which the Khedivial officials excited, Gordon added the opposition of all the vested interests. His furious onslaught upon slavery was regarded as an attack upon private property in one of its most respectable forms. And these property owners, great chiefs with a bevy of spearmen at their backs, were powerful then, and are not powerless now. So it may be hoped that no impatient pressure from home will induce the Sudan Government to move otherwise than gently and cautiously in this delicate business.



Three things the Sudan needs above all others if it is to become rich and prosperous: Better communications, more water, and abundant labour. Given these things, and with its fertile and varied soil, its fine climate, and its vitalising sunshine, it will export great quantities of grain and cotton. Under the old Turco-Egyptian regime it was lamentably deficient in all the three essentials. Roads it had none, beyond the few made about the towns of the north and the camel tracks through the deserts. For centuries it has done without wheeled transport of any sort; such commerce as it had was carried on the backs of camels and donkeys, and the shoulders of men. By this means the caravans traversed the roadless deserts, and somehow contrived to keep up communication right across the fiery continent from the Atlantic to the Indian Ocean, and from Morocco to the Equator. Where time is of no object, marvellous distances can be covered by the legs of men and of animals. The African is a tremendous walker, if you give him time for his journeys. At Suakin I met a man who had walked all the way from the West Coast. He was going to Mecca, and had, so far, been seven years on the route. At a plantation on the Nile, near Berber, my attention was directed to certain of these fellatah, as they are called, natives of Nigeria, who were working their way, in a similar leisurely fashion, towards the Holy City, and would no doubt get there in time, if they did not happen to die first. But this pedestrian method is unsuited to modern trade. The caravan is out of date.

It is being superseded by the railways, which the Sudan Government is building. In these enterprises it has

exhibited a most creditable energy, and a lofty confidence in the future of the country. Of the line from Wady Halfa to Khartum I have already spoken. From Khartum the Sudan Government railway has now been carried to Sennar, two hundred miles up the Blue Nile, a town which had once a great trade till it was captured and destroyed by the Mahdists. On the way it passes Wad Medani, a large native town with streets of straw-roofed African huts, and a 'Palace,' with fine gardens for the Governor of the Blue Nile province. At Sennar the line turns westward and crosses the White Nile by a great steel swing bridge, wrought by skilful hands in the English north country. Thence it runs on to El Obeid, in the heart of the Kordofan province, a place as remote and inaccessible a few years ago as any spot on earth. Wild tribesmen, spear-armed and riding bullocks, come in from the wastes, but they are on business bent. They have discovered that there are merchants in the old capital of the emirs who will give them good prices for their gum, and grain, and hides, and sell them coloured calico and other products of civilisation. They understand the railway and are beginning to travel by it to Rahad and Kosti, the Nile port, and other local centres to which their occasions call them. Before long, I dare say, we shall find them suitably arrayed in tweed trousers and bowler hats running down for a week-end at Khartum to do the cinema-theatres. At present they are still primitive and picturesque, and keenly appreciative of improved possibilities for trade.

From El Obeid the railway will in due course penetrate still deeper into Central Africa, and perhaps eventually join

hands with a French railway from Timbuctoo and the West Coast, or with an English railway from Northern Nigeria. Long before this connection is achieved the direct north and south line will have got on to Gondokoro, where in due course it will meet the Cape-to-Cairo line and the Uganda railway, and so carry us, if we please, to the Indian Ocean or the goldfields of the Transvaal.

Another extension is projected from Sennar to the Abyssinian frontier, through the fertile district between the Blue Nile and the Atbara. Already there is a westward extension, much lower down than Khartum, branching off from the main line to Egypt near Abu Hamed into the Dongola province as far as Kereima. Here are the pyramids and temples of Merowi, important and interesting, but not to be compared with those other temples and pyramids at Merce higher up on the railway, which are being unearthed by Professor Garstang. This was the ancient capital of Queen Candace, with the Temple of the Sun, and the great Temple of Amon, and other monuments of the flowering period of Ethiopic civilisation. At the junction of the Atbara with the Nile begins the railway to Port Sudan, of which more will be said later. The railways and the river steamers will put most parts of the territory in direct communication with the sea, and so with the great trade routes and markets of the globe.

But if the Sudan is to load the trucks and freight steamers with sacks of wheat and maize and gum and bales of cotton, it must have water. It is nowhere a quite rainless country; but, until the equatorial province is reached, it does not get enough moisture from the heavens to produce crops,

Most of the northern part looks to the eye like arid desert, bare and brown or staring yellow ; but it is desert which needs only water to bloom with verdure. And the water is there, flowing from end to end of the country along the broad channel of the Niles and their tributary streams. But Egypt has first claim upon the perennial waters of the Nile, and until her thirsting fields and gardens are sated the Sudan must touch nothing. Outside the flood season the entire Sudan is limited to as much Nile water as will irrigate a few thousand acres—a mere speck in her available millions. Not till the works have been completed which will increase the supply for Egypt will the Sudan be able to add largely to her cultivable area. Thus the fate of the two countries is linked together, and the fortune of the one depends upon the other.

Even for such crops and tillage grounds as she owns, the Sudan has too few hands. Labour is scarce and dear ; for what are two millions of people in a territory more than half as large as India ? And, albeit the Arab is earnestly devoted to matrimony and the Sudanese are prolific, it will be long before the depopulation of recent decades can be made good. The Sudan, in fact, wants men badly, and it does not at present see where they are to come from. There is talk of increased migration from Egypt ; but the Egyptian, except as trader or official, is not fond of the southern territory. The fellah would prefer to till land nearer his own home, and there will be plenty of scope for him there when the increased water supply reclaims fresh sections of desert in the Delta and on the middle Nile. But if not the Egyptian, who then ? Possibly some negro

tribes from the interior of Africa may move northward, but not much dependence can be placed on them. Sooner or later, I cannot but think that our fellow-subjects in British India will come in to fill the gap. From her teeming bosom India could spare a few million cultivators, and never miss them; indeed, they are straining to get away, and moving towards all sorts of places where they are not wanted or will do no good. In the Sudan they would find a climate to suit them; a (virtually) British Government to protect them, with no white British colonists to object to their presence; and a fair opening for their industry and their skill as husbandmen. For Indian Mohammedans the country seems specially suitable; and it might be worth while for the Indian and Sudan Governments to consider whether concerted measures might not be devised, in order to promote a moderate migration from a region where agricultural humanity is rather too thick on the ground to one where it is too sparse and scattered.

## CHAPTER VIII

### SIMPKINSON BEY

I AM afraid you are not interested, Captain Simpkinson,' remarked the vicar's wife, with a certain asperity.

'I beg your pardon,' said the captain hastily; 'I—I was thinking of something else for the moment.'

The 2nd Battalion of the Royalshire Regiment was At Home to its friends at its depôt in the highly respectable British garrison town of Cokechester. The 'County' was there, and the fringe of the county—florid local magnates, sporting solicitors, and land agents, anxious matrons keeping a careful eye on marriageable daughters, stout rectors, slim curates. The regimental band was beating out the famous regimental tune of the Royalshires on one square of enamelled sward; flannelled youths and short-skirted maidens were playing tennis on another; the servants were preparing tea and ices in the buffet under the long marquee. The vicar's wife had chosen this occasion to impart to the young officer—he was still young, though there were lines and wrinkles on his lean, brown cheeks—her ideas on the proper management of soup kitchens. But the captain's thoughts were far away.

As the good lady prosed on, under the mild sunshine of an English June, his mind wandered drowsily to a different

scene, and a hotter sky. The green turf and the red roofs of the quaint old town faded away. Before him a great space of dusty plain, baked and parched under the merciless glare, stretched away to where, in the dim distance, jagged spurs of rock stood black above the shimmering waters of the mirage. On the edge of the visionary lake a long string of camels stalked slowly across the horizon line. In the foreground the dreamer saw rows of mud huts, roofed with corrugated iron; in front was drawn up a company of soldiers, not the trim little red-coats of the Royalshires, but tall, lathy black men, in white uniforms, with Martini rifles and long, triangular bayonets. A couple of young Englishmen, in khaki, rode up and down. Presently the company sprang to attention, and rigidly presented arms; the while another Englishman, who was, in fact, himself, emerged from the largest of the huts, mounted a white Arab pony, and, with the adjutant at his side, and native officers and orderlies in attendance, rode towards a group of stalwart barbarians, with spears and turbans and flowing garments, waiting humbly on his pleasure. For Captain Simpkinson was Simpkinson Bey then, mudir of a province, with a Sudanese battalion at his orders; and the sheikh of a great tribe of the Baggara was craving audience, to learn his pleasure concerning a certain matter of cattle raiding, whereof some of the clansmen had been guilty.

The captain's errant thoughts went back to other scenes: to long marches through the desert when he was bringing up a convoy of camels from the coast, and, night after night, for many weeks, he camped, with his beasts and his Bisharin drivers, under the stars; to the time when a sudden rising

occurred at an isolated post far up in the province, and he pressed on breathlessly with a handful of his Sudanese on mules and donkeys, wondering if he should be, after all, too late to save the beleaguered Englishmen and Egyptians; to awful days, all alone in his tin-roofed shanty, with the thermometer at 120 deg. in the shade (if there had been any shade), and the *khamsin* wind blowing up clouds of red-hot sand; to brief, delightful holidays, when he was able to get down to Khartum, and enjoy a week of polo, and wear evening clothes, and sit long on the cool verandahs of charming villas after dinner; to busy mornings in his *mudirych*, where he worked in regal fashion, receiving reports, issuing commands, giving directions to a whole staff of assistants, subordinates, clerks, officials, the unquestioned autocrat of a vast district, with none greater than he, save the Governor-General 300 miles away. Now he was drilling his company of languid Tommies, and trying to satisfy the major and earn the approval of the colonel, and discussing soup-kitchens with the vicar's wife.

'You must be glad to have got away from that terrible country and be back in England,' said the lady.

'M—yes; awfl'y glad. No place like home, you know,' answered ex-Bey Simpkinson.

But he said it without conviction, and the vicar's wife was confirmed in the opinion that he was a dull young man.

In fact, it had been a good life while it lasted, if often a hard one. At five-and-twenty, a subaltern in the Royal-shires, of no particular importance in the scheme of things, he had managed to get seconded for service in the Egyptian army. Here he was at once a *bimbashi*, which is a major,



one of the four European officers in a Sudanese regiment, with mature native captains and lieutenants, be-medalled veterans some of them, who had served at the Atbara and Toski, obeying his orders. Being a smart young fellow, with a certain organising faculty, he was presently transferred to the administrative side ; and thus it came about that he found himself, at little more than thirty, a colonel (in the Egyptian army list), a bey, and the governor of a province twice as large as Wales. He had all sorts of duties and responsibilities ; he was commandant of the troops, head of the police, home secretary in his own cabinet, inspector of education (so far as there was any education), chief collector of taxes, and guardian of public order, law, and morals. Sometimes he pushed out with a party of his troops on a miniature campaign against slave runners or raiding tribes from the hills ; sometimes he went down to the frontier and engaged in delicate diplomacy with the officers of the sovereign state of the Congo. Captain Simpkinson chuckled when he recalled the mingled game of bluff and *finesse* they had played against one another out there on the remote border of the Lado Enclave, very far away from the Foreign Offices and the newspapers. But they were good fellows, that young Verhaeren and young Flandrin ; and the English and the Belgians had had some genial nights at bridge together after the day's wrangling was done.

But the full and busy years, punctuated with welcome intervals of leave at home, rolled out swiftly. Simpkinson Bey was only let on lease to the Sudan service. The British army, which graciously lends its officers to Egypt, requires

repayment of the loan ; in seven years, or ten at the outside, the seconded soldier is reclaimed. He may, if he chooses, and if a place can be found for him, pass permanently into the Egyptian Civil Service, in which case he retires from the British army, and abandons his pay and claim to further promotion. Otherwise he returns with the rank which would have been his, in the normal course of things, if he had spent his years of absence with his own corps. The result is occasionally a rather emphatic step downward in outward dignity and actual importance. A man may have been the ruler of a province ; he may have been a bey or a pasha ; he may have been the head of a department in the Khartum Government, virtually a kind of Chancellor of the Exchequer or Secretary of State ; or he may have been *kaimakam* (which is colonel), with a full battalion of 900 men under him ; perhaps even *el lewa*, or major-general. And after all this, he may come back to his regiment as a major, or even a mere captain, with other men to order him about, and only the dull routine of garrison duty to occupy him. Simpkinson Bey might have stayed in the Sudan administration if he had wished ; he had done good work, and they would have made room for him. But after ten years of dust and sun he was growing a little tired of the tropics ; he found himself thinking rather frequently of wet English lanes and tangled hedgerows, with certain blue English eyes and rose-leaf English cheeks also a good deal in his thoughts. So he 'chucked' the Khedivial uniform, and returned to the regiment, and the company, and respectable Cokechester ; and another young man harries the raiders in his stead and keeps the Dinkas in order.

If Simpkinson Bey never got on to the staff or obtained an administrative appointment while he bore the Crescent badge, but remained with his battalion, he would still have found plenty to occupy and interest him. The Egyptian army is like the Indian army, in that its European officers are in close and constant contact with their men. There are no English non-commissioned officers. 'Sergeant What's-his-name' has disappeared. The European drill instructor has gone, and the European subaltern; it rests with the colonel and the bimbashis, or majors (the English officer is a major, whatever his rank in the home service), to drill, train, and discipline the men with the help of the native captains, lieutenants, and non-coms. There is some difference in the nature of his task, according as the Englishman finds himself posted to one of the battalions composed of Egyptian conscripts or one of those recruited in the Sudan by voluntary enlistment. The work is easier and duller in the former case. The fellah of the Nile valley has no martial tastes; he is so little inclined to be a soldier that he tries various devices to escape service when the lot falls upon him in the annual balloting. Sometimes he borrows £20 from the Agricultural Bank or the Greek moneylender, on the security of his fields, to buy himself off; sometimes he has been known to snip off the top joint of his trigger finger. But in the ranks he does very well. He is patient, obedient, and teachable, a good marcher, and really fond of his drill, which he learns with a machine-like precision. He is very amenable to discipline, and gives comparatively little trouble in camp and barracks; so that it is deemed requisite to have no more than three European officers in

some of the Egyptian battalions, while four of them have only native officers, from the colonel downwards.

In the 'black' regiments there is always an English commandant and three or four English bimbashis. The Sudanese are more difficult to handle than the conscript troops. They are more excitable and restless, more impatient of routine, a little too fond of native beer, and the stronger liquors of the West, if they can get them, and altogether they demand more constant supervision, both in the field and on the parade ground. Yet I believe that the English bimbashi gets on better with his negroes and Arab tribesmen than with the Egyptians. There is a fine manliness and simplicity about these blacks; they are soldiers because they like soldiering (some of them have had no other trade), and they often develop a real affection for their officers. I noticed the difference between the two contingents at a review of the Khartum garrison, held before the Sirdar one morning. The 'Gyppies' made a fine show, for they marched past like a moving wall, every bayonet in its right alignment. For physique you would find some of the companies hard to beat. There is scarcely a stronger man on earth than the Egyptian fellah, with his wide, square chest, his long, sinewy back, and his wiry muscles, developed by forty centuries of Sandow exercises, performed with the spade, the hand-pick, and the *shaduf* or lever with which he swings the water up from the Nile. Compared with him the Sudanese often seems leggy and weedy, with shoulders too narrow for his height; and he does not march with the same accuracy. But the dash and spirit of the Sudanese companies were unmistakable; they had the martial bearing

of men descended from generations of warriors, as many of them are.

And then their music! By dint of infinite pains the Egyptian regimental bands have been taught the notes of the scale, albeit the Egyptian has no 'ear' or, at any rate, an ear of a quite different character from our own. He drums and trumpets in the same fashion as he marches—mechanically, though with a stubborn precision. But with the black it is otherwise. He has an ear attuned to our melodies and harmonies; the soul of music is in this savage, and you have but to teach him the use of brass and wood to bring it out. There is one specially selected Sudanese band at Khartum which plays with such expression and instinctive feeling as would give it a reputation, I believe, in any European capital. They perform anything well—Viennese dance music, comic opera tunes, the old Scottish melodies with the breath of the heather in them that make the Briton's heart beat a little when he hears them under an alien sky. And they have not forgotten the indigenous music. At the close of the review the massed bands of the Sudanese regiments played the columns past to their own tunes. It was a wild riot of barbaric sound, savage and confused, yet blended into a kind of unity. You heard the voices of the African forest, the wail of the desert, the shout of the battle, the laughter of the village: above all, the notes of the native drum with their suggestion of menace and mystery. The African can make the stretched skin speak, and its weird, monotonous voice excites him strangely. Therefore did Mohammed Ahmed Ibn Sayid, the Mahdi, warn his followers against this indulgence. 'Abstain,' said the puritan prophet, 'from all

amusements, for through prayers alone can this world be kept in peace. Abstain also from the pleasures of music, do not beat the big and small drums.' The Mahdi knew his people. He knew that the African tribesman, smiling, good-humoured, indolently sensual in the ordinary way, can be stirred to paroxysms of animal fury when the right stimulus is applied. That is what makes him a 'first-class fighting man,' on occasion, formidable but uncertain, and needing above all things sure leadership and careful handling.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCERNING WOMEN, SOLDIERS, AND CIVILIANS

OUR friend Bimbashi Simpkinson Bey has varied duties to perform in the Sudan, such as will not assuredly fall to his lot while he is with his regiment at home. In the Sudanese battalion these functions are more diverse and complex than in those composed of Egyptians. The fellah soldier, a conscript, and practically unpaid, lives in barracks as a bachelor; his wife, if he has one, stays behind in the village with her husband's family. But the blacks, who have enlisted as professional soldiers for long service, bring their women with them. There would be no reliance on them at all if they were separated from them: they would be useless for duty, and would probably desert. So the authorities make a virtue of necessity, and regard every married man as 'on the strength' of the regiment, so long as he is married in moderation. That is to say, each soldier may have a wife in the lines; if he avails himself of his privilege as a Mohammedan to have more than one, he must keep the supernumerary consorts at his own expense somewhere else. But the official partner is officially recognised; the soldier is granted quarters for her and an allowance towards her maintenance and that of her children.

The ladies, in fact, form part of the regiment, and may be said to be under military discipline. Neat rows of huts are built for them within the lines, which they are expected to keep clean and in good order under penalty. The colonel inspects the *haremat*, or women's quarter, from time to time, and comments unkindly on any exhibition of negligence or dirt. The women, however, may be said to have their own commandant, in the person of the *sheikha*, a female of discretion and mature years appointed to control their conduct, manners, and morals. If any tenant of the *haremat* is disorderly or disobedient, if she quarrels too frequently with her husband or her neighbours, if she neglects her children, or if her behaviour falls below the regimental standard of propriety, the *sheikha*, having reproved her with more or less effect, brings her to the orderly room and makes formal complaint of her delinquencies. The officer of the day makes grave note of the case, listens with attention to the accusation of the *sheikha* and the defendant's explanation, and takes such steps as the occasion seems to demand. As a rule the authority of the *sheikha* is vindicated, since this military duenna bears, so to speak, the King's commission. Sometimes a woman will be brought to the orderly room on the complaint of a neighbour, or a rival, or of her own husband; sometimes, also, a husband at the instance of his wife.

Delicate connubial questions may fall to be adjudicated upon by a youthful bachelor bimbashi, who in England might not be deemed an expert in causes matrimonial. But in the Sudan he is a man of the world, and his decisions are accepted with reverence.



‘ Oh, thou woman,’ says Sergeant Mohammed Yehya, as he leads the erring Zeinab home, having obtained a judgment of the court in his favour, ‘ did I not tell thee the bey would have no regard for the word of a light-minded female pig like thyself? Great is the wisdom of the Ingliiz!’

Nothing that I did in Omdurman interested me more than the visit I paid to the barracks of one of the black battalions at that town. It was the 10th Sudanese, which, under the command of its late able and popular kaimakam, Lemprière Bey, had reached a high state of efficiency; indeed, the 9th and the 10th Sudanese, I believe, are regarded as the two crack regiments of the Egyptian army. The barrack-rooms are long sheds, with a raised platform, on which the soldiers spread their straw mattresses. As we went round, each man, in full kit (for the regiment was preparing for parade), stood, like a black statue, in his place. The rooms were not quite so well furnished as if they had been in the Marine lines at Portsmouth, but as clean and tidy; and in this dusty land these men, brought up on dung floors in mud hovels, had been taught to keep themselves and their dwelling-places in excellent order. Fine, soldierly men were the Sudanese non-commissioned officers and the Egyptian captains and the lieutenants who accompanied us on our tour of inspection: one of these, a bronzed veteran whose broad breast was covered with medals, for he had faced the dervish spears in all the battles of Hunter’s and Kitchener’s campaigns. Some of the troops were to be conveyed across by steamer to Khartum. I watched them march down to the river and

embark, which they did with no more fuss and noise than a similar number of European soldiers would have made.

After, we went round the *haremat*, and I had the honour of a presentation to the head *sheikha*, and likewise to the subordinate *sheikhas*, each of whom is responsible for the discipline of a company. Some of these latter were a little shy; each of them, however, protested that her own company was one of exceptional virtue and decorum, and as much above the level of all the other companies as the 10th Sudanese were, speaking generally, superior to the rest of the army. The rank and file women, dressed in their parade robes of (mostly) clean white cotton, stood at the doors of their huts; and as we passed by the end of each row, the whole company emitted shrill cries in honour of the commanding officer. It is a curious sound, something between a scream and a whistle: the English officers call it 'lou-louing,' because of the syllable which is most distinguishable through the prolonged piercing howl. It has a rather mournful effect, but I believe expresses great exultation when given with energy, as it certainly was by these daughters of the regiment.

The first government of the Sudan was a government of soldiers. It began with a conquest, the suppression of armed rebellion, and the occupation of the conquered territory by an invading army, which had to organise an administration from its own resources. The officers of the victorious force supplied a contingent of officials, who transformed themselves promptly into provincial governors, tax-collectors, district magistrates, and inspectors. One was turned into financial secretary, another became Minister

of the Interior, a third Minister of Railways. The civil administration was necessarily subordinate to the military. In an Indian district the commissioner, a civilian, takes precedence of the officer commanding the troops; in the Sudan the mudir of the province, himself a soldier, is the commandant of the troops. For in some parts of the Sudan, it must be remembered, we are still a garrison rather than a government, and are by no means in a position to lay down our arms. That is one of the reasons why we must go cautiously and slowly, and why impatient persons at home must not insist on too many social and domestic reforms in a hurry, thereby repeating Gordon's mistake and playing into the hands of another not wholly impossible Mahdi.

The transition from military to civil rule was brought about gradually. As the soldier officials retired at the end of the term of service, their places were taken by civilians. There is now an Egyptian and a Sudan Civil Service, recruited from young university men nominated, on the recommendation of their academic authorities, by a Board of Selection. The selected candidate goes back to his college to study the Arabic language for the year; then he comes out and gets to work. There are many attractions in this service, including good pay, abundant leave, and a pension; and the Board of Selection has a legion of the prize young men of Oxford and Cambridge offering themselves for the few posts it offers annually. No doubt it succeeds in getting excellent specimens of our academic and athletic culture. As to how far these graduates are doing much better than the picked young soldiers they

are intended to supersede, it is as yet too early to say. Military opinion in the Sudan itself was, I fancy, inclined at first to be a little sceptical as to the merits of the young civilians. That, perhaps, is not unnatural; besides, Jones, of Balliol, and Smith, of Trinity, who attained the supreme distinction of a university Blue, and possibly also the minor honour of a First Class, may be disposed to give themselves airs at the outset. It does not last. They speedily discover that these unpolished products of the orderly room and the barrack square have learnt a good many things which are not, as yet, imparted beside the Isis and the Cam. The soldier training, for instance, teaches those humble but necessary virtues of order, punctuality, and discipline, which are, perhaps, as useful for practical purposes as the best public school or university 'tone.' If Jones, B.A., strolls into his office with a casual excuse half an hour after the appointed time he is apt to meet with small mercy from a military superior, who has learnt in the regiment that it is an uncommonly serious matter to be late for parade.

Such attainments as he does possess may also inspire rather less respect than they did at home; and they do not always impress his older military mentors. One of them, a veteran of thirty-seven, who held high office under the Sudan Government, had no esteem for the New Civilian, and imparted to me unfavourable opinions of this young gentleman.

'I am not a university man,' said this unbeliever, 'so perhaps you can tell me what they *do* learn at Oxford and Cambridge that can be of the smallest use to anybody?

When we get them out here we have to begin teaching them the simplest things, which we stupid British officers learnt before we left Sandhurst. We have to teach them manners. I didn't mind saying "Sir" to the colonel when I was a subaltern, but these youngsters don't know how to behave to men from whom they have to take orders. We have to teach them book-keeping, office accounts, map measuring, how to docket papers and draw up reports, the elements of land surveying ; surely, these are things that their school-masters might have taught them before they sent them out to us. Of course, they know all there is to know about Latin and Greek——'

'Of course,' I murmured.

'Yes, of course. But what on earth is the use of that *here*? The only foreign language we want, besides Arabic, is French ; and apparently these accomplished students have not found time to learn French. They can play cricket, I believe ; but that isn't much use in a country where there's no turf. They had much better teach them to ride decently, and to shoot, and give them some military drill, which, you know, we have to put them through when they have come out. It seems to me that their real education only begins when we take them in hand.'

It was perhaps unduly harsh criticism, and some of the grievances of which my friend complained have since been remedied. The educational deficiencies of the first batch of civilians are now supplemented to some extent during their probationary period by the authorities of Oxford and Cambridge. But since those seats of learning are laying themselves out to train the servants of the Empire they might

do more to fit them for their task. It is rather absurd that at four-and-twenty, after some fifteen years of elaborate and expensive education, Jones, B.A., and Smith, B.A., have to be put to school again in the Sudan. In fact, the youthful British civilian everywhere—not merely in the Sudan—is apt to be more schoolboyish than befits his years. At twenty-five the young soldier, if he is not a mere ‘waster,’ has had his eyes opened to the responsibilities and serious duties of life. But the graduate is still redolent of the classrooms and the playing-fields, of boyish studies and boyish pastimes. The Sudan, by the way, is pretty well supplied with university Blues, but they are not always appreciated as they deserve. Not long ago the most cœrulean of all Blues came out to the country. He had captained the eleven at Lord’s; he had played for England; he had made a great innings somewhere which caused the cricket reporters to grow breathless with rapture; his bowling had been analysed with mathematical exactitude, and the sporting papers kept libellous stereotype portraits of him ready for use. This hero was at his first afternoon party in Khartum, and a lady, a very young and pretty and sporting lady, was giving him tea. By way of making conversation she asked him if he liked polo; but he had to confess that he was an indifferent performer on a horse. Did he care for shooting? No; he was not a shot. Then, in the faint hope of finding some topic to interest him, she said sweetly: ‘Do you play *cricket* at all, Mr. Blenkinsopp?’ I do not know how Blenkinsopp took it; but if he was a young man of sense it should have done him a great deal of good. As a matter of fact these officials soon adapt themselves to the ways of

the country, and on the whole, I believe, are doing well ; and they are providing the Sudan with a capable and competent civil bureaucracy. The natives will have no reason to regret the supersession of the military administrators. But these latter deserve their gratitude—and the gratitude of their countrymen and the civilised world generally—for the manner in which they piloted the Sudan ship of state into smooth water during the years when it was rolling in the trough of the storm.

## CHAPTER X

### THE NEW GATE OF AFRICA

RATHER more than seven years ago an event occurred which was hardly noticed in the English newspapers, though few happenings of the time were of more importance with respect to the future.

In January 1906, Lord Cromer, accompanied by the Governor-General of the Sudan, by a bevy of officials, and by guards of honour of bluejackets, marines, and British and Egyptian infantry, opened the Nile-Red-Sea Railway at Port Sudan.

In January 1907, Lord Cromer's successor, Sir Eldon Gorst, visited the same locality to note what had been done in the interval. He declared himself amazed at the substantial and rapid progress which had been made under the direction of the British officers and officials who control the affairs of the Red Sea province.

The progress went on steadily and swiftly for the next five years; and in January 1912, the King and Queen on their way home from India, landed at Port Sudan, were received with due ceremony at that thriving town, travelled some distance up the country as far as Sinkat—once a place of unhappy memories in the days of the Mahdist fury—and there held a review of native troops and tribesmen,



in which representatives of all the local clans and peoples, Arab and negro, black and brown, Mussulman and pagan, were present. Then perhaps for the first time some consciousness of the work that is being done at this point on the Red Sea coast came upon those Britons at home who before that scarcely knew where Port Sudan was.

Not many people, unless they have actually passed through it, have any conception of the activity displayed in this remote corner of the territory. Until I went to Port Sudan myself, though I had heard a good deal about it in Khartum, I had no idea that the development of a great commercial emporium and port of call was being carried out on this remarkable scale. I expected to find a railway station, a few shanties, an improvised quay or two. I found, instead, imposing wharves and bridges of stone and iron, a range of massive warehouses, cranes and loading machinery, some fine buildings already erected, others in progress; streets, squares, and public gardens planned and partly laid out; a busy population of Greeks, Italians, Levantines, and other Europeans or quasi-Europeans, doing a lively trade; an excellent modern hotel, small but comfortable and well managed; and many other signs of activity and enterprise.

Eight years ago Port Sudan was not marked on the map. There was only a miserable native hamlet and the tomb of a local saint, which latter is now carefully conserved in the precincts of the new coal-tipping installation, just as the holy rood and pulpit of the old abbey may be found in the railway goods-yard at Shrewsbury. There were no Europeans and no trade and no ships nearer than the ancient

Red Sea port of Suakin, crouching behind its rocks and coral reefs, thirty-six miles farther down the coast.

Port Sudan is a creation of the railway, which branches from the main line to Khartum, a little above Berber, just where the Atbara, the first great tributary of the Nile, flows into that river. It is a railway that had been talked of for many years before it was actually put in hand. If the rulers of Britain had been rightly advised it should have been built nearly a quarter of a century earlier. There was much discussion as to the Suakin-Berber Railway and the Suakin-Berber route in 1884, when the relief of Gordon was being considered, and those who knew the country best held that the expedition should have gone that way. Lord Wolseley, for some reason, took a different view, and the Government, at his instance, committed itself to the gigantic boating trip up the Nile. Nobody, I suppose, now doubts that this was a grave error, for which we paid dearly. The mistake was partly acknowledged by its author, who, after the abandonment of Khartum, formed a half-hearted project to carry the railway from the coast to Berber. A highly expensive equipment of plant, rolling stock, permanent way, and locomotives was ordered at Woolwich and shipped out to Suakin. Vestiges of it may still be seen forlornly rusting in the scrub and desert; for England presently found herself in difficulties with Russia on the Afghan frontier, and in the war-scare the Suakin-Berber Railway was dropped and forgotten for many years. At length, in the fulness of time, it was taken up by the engineers of the Sudan Government and brought to completion.

Its terminus was changed. Suakin, the outlet for centuries of the pilgrim route from Inner Africa to Mecca, the last remnant of the old Egyptian dominion in the Sudan, on which the Crescent banner was kept flying all through the Mahdist insurrection, is a picturesque town with respectable traditions. But it has a hopelessly bad roadstead, encumbered by rocks and shoals ; and it has no fresh water save such as is brought in by skins and metal casks on the humps of camels. Instead of spending vast sums upon the attempt, which could never have been completely successful, to convert Suakin into a port more or less fit for modern shipping, the Government engineers preferred to deal with one that lay ready to hand. By the tomb of Sheikh Barghut they found a deep inlet from the sea, a splendid natural harbour, which ships can enter at all hours of the day and night, and in which steamers drawing 30 feet of water can be moored in safety. They christened it Port Sudan, brought the railway there—with a junction and branch line to Suakin—and deliberately set about to prepare the new *entrepôt* for the destinies that await it.

The work had to be done from the very foundation ; there was nothing to go upon. Port Sudan is the artificial creation of man's hands and brains, as Port Harcourt will be, the new harbour of Southern Nigeria, which will presently come into being on the other side of Africa. Even as the Nigerian fiord is to-day, so was the Red Sea inlet, when the pioneers came down upon it from the Nile : a place left through the centuries to unheeding Nature, which even savagdom had passed by. It was planted, staked out, settled, populated, as rapidly as any mushroom mining

or transport town in the Western States of America, and it has sprung up more quickly. But it is not the accidental result of a sudden rush, or the haphazard agglomeration of pioneers and prospectors. It is all the outcome of conscious design. Everything belonged to the Government, and everything has been done by the Government. The place has not grown, it has been made. It started, as towns do not usually start, with a regular plan and a definite scheme of construction and location. The engineers and surveyors and land agents of the administration took pencil and compasses and tracing paper in hand, and said: 'Here we will have our wharves; here our docks, quays, cranes, warehouses; here our public buildings; here our shops and offices; here our residential quarter; here our main thoroughfares; here our side streets; here our gardens and recreation grounds.' Some of those who are concerned with municipal affairs in other places may deem them fortunate in their opportunity. I served for several arduous years of my life on the committees of the London County Council, and at times, when we were puzzling over tramway routes and street improvements, I caught myself impiously wishing that another Great Fire of London might make a clean sweep of everything, and allow us to start fresh and fair.

I made my journey to Port Sudan by the Atbara route. You can go comfortably by sea—it is but two days from Suez, and there are regular services by the excellent boats of the Khedivial Mail Steamship Company and those of the Austrian Lloyd and the North German Lloyd—but I wanted to see what the Suakin-Berber Railway, that vision

of the Gladstonian years, had become in practice. And in practice I found it a wonderfully satisfactory thing, doing great credit to its constructors and to the officers of the Sudan Government Railway Department, by whom it is operated. The line is well laid, the engines are powerful and reasonably fast, and the train, with its sleeping cars and restaurant wagon, is up to the very highest standard of modern locomotive luxury. Indeed, I do not remember ever finding myself in more comfortable quarters on any railway, whether in Europe, Asia, Africa, or North America. The Sudan Express can quite safely challenge comparison with the best trains of the Continent, the United States, and India. The whole enterprise has been planned with a large ambition: the work of men who believe in the future.

You feel this very much in the town itself. The present bureaucracy and autocracy of military and civilian officers is lodged very simply by the waterside; but from their modest mess-house they can look across the harbour to the long and lofty stone warehouses, and the solid sea-wall of coral blocks on which the new wharves are built, and the gaunt skeleton framework of iron ribs and girders by which the colliers will unload; they can glance up the estuary to the point where the great bridge crosses it, a steel hinged bridge that can be lifted out of the way by the mere pulling of a lever so as to allow ten-thousand-ton steamers to pass up to the docks that will lie above it; or, again, they may let their eyes travel a little way seaward, and there, just at the root of the new mole and break-water, they can see the new *mudiryeh*, the residence of

the Governor, and the offices and law courts of the province, a handsome building with an imposing air of solidity and permanence. Port Sudan is waiting—waiting for the argosies of the world to discharge their cargoes on her quays, and meanwhile making ready to receive them with a fine display of all the most modern appliances for dealing with sea-borne commerce. It has cost nearly a million sterling, one way and another ; and one cannot but admire the courage of a young and far from wealthy Government, which has poured out this vast sum in the wilderness to bring its territories into touch with the great highways and thoroughfares of maritime trade.

Will this audacious confidence be justified ? Port Sudan has always had its hostile critics, especially in the Egyptian Press, who maintained that too much money had been spent in haste on a speculative enterprise. Whether the speculation would prove successful or not depended on the future productiveness of the Sudan. At first, though a good deal was coming in very little was going out. During the first ten months of 1906 the imports were valued at £312,000, largely Government material, railway plant, and machinery, while the exports only amounted to £40,000. But as the Sudan develops, the wheat and cotton, gum, maize, hides, coffee, and timber will be railed down to the Red Sea, and coal and European manufactured goods will come up in exchange. And that the Sudan, with its perennial sunshine and its vast area, will become one of the great agricultural-producing regions, those who know it best do not doubt : when the engineers have settled the irrigation question, and enabled it to take a larger supply of the fertilising water

which flows by its swamps and forests and thirsting levels on the way to Egypt and the sea. That consummation achieved, there will be millions of acres under wheat and cotton and *dhura*, and the storehouses at Port Sudan will bulge with bags and bales, and every shilling spent on them will be repaid many times over. So hold the official optimists, perhaps not unduly optimistic. And they point out that without its seaport the Government could neither push on with the irrigation works nor construct railways in the interior. The cost would be prohibitive if every ton of heavy material had to be carried two thousand miles from the Mediterranean, conveyed by railway to the First Cataract, breaking bulk there to be shipped on the river steamer to Halfa, and transferred to the railway again at that place. As it is, a cargo can be taken from Liverpool or Antwerp to Khartum (and presently to the Abyssinian border and the Equator) with only one transfer, at Port Sudan. In the future the Nile route will be used for passenger traffic and for the lighter and more costly articles. The heavy and bulky goods will come round by sea and the Atbara railway. 'Who knows,' said one young enthusiast, who had laboured in that moist and fiery air over the creation of Port Sudan—'who knows but that this place in twenty year's time may not be one of the great mercantile towns of the world, a second Buenos Ayres, perhaps?' 'Buenos Ayres?' I said. 'Yes; why not? The Argentine trade, I understand, can keep a city of over a million inhabitants in prosperity. But the Sudan is a bigger country than Argentina, and surely its agricultural prospects are as good.'

It is a sweltering little place, Port Sudan—with a trying

climate, damp heat in the winter, the glare of a sevenfold furnace in summer. It lies on flats of salt white sand and powdered coral, through which the estuary draws a broad ribbon of blue ; and it has its difficulties about water supply. But it gets its compensations, for it is on the edge of the mountain land. Northward and westward the plain is closed in by the olivine walls and dimly purpled ramparts of a mass of rugged hills, that rise in peaked ridges and broken sierras into the hard metallic dome of the African sky. The lower slopes are only a few miles distant, and on these, I take it, in the years to come the merchants and magnates of Port Sudan will have their villas and gardens, travelling down to their offices by motor-cars and fast electric tramways. Farther inland the mountains rise higher, and here the Sudan Government is establishing its Simla in the hill-station of Erkoweit. Up there, in his Alpine ch<sup>^</sup>âlet, amid the tinkle of running waters, and the sight of rock and fell and green turf, the tired toiler will be able to leave the tropics behind him for a space, and return to his labours, braced and invigorated, without the expense and the delay of the long journey 'home.' We are making the sun-lands habitable in these days ; and, thanks to modern science, modern transport, and modern medicine, Port Sudan will not be, even for migrants from Northern Europe, the place of intolerable exile and perpetual suffering such as its situation between the Red Sea and the desert would have made it in the past.



## CHAPTER XI

### STATE SOCIALISM IN THE SUDAN

WHEN I left England that fortunate country was in the whirl of a furious discussion over socialism and anti-socialism. Bound for the Sudan, I assumed that I was going 'to where beyond these voices there is peace'; and it is true I did not hear the topic mentioned in the territory. Yet, in some of its aspects, it was rather frequently brought before me, and I often found myself in contact with certain phases of the question which is agitating our domestic politics.

The original government of the Sudan is, as I have said, a government of soldiers. These gallant officers are not, I take it, political philosophers. Most of them I imagine to be Conservatives by tradition and instinct, disliking Radicals and Little-Englanders and Labour politicians. If they had any opinions on these subjects at home they were probably against 'nationalising' anything, against interfering with private enterprise, and against municipal trading. But in the Sudan they are not swayed by theories; and dealing with practical necessities as they arise, they have quietly adopted several large items of a system which some people wildly advocate and others angrily denounce in older and more advanced communities.

State Socialism is in a condition of vigorous activity in the Sudan. Some of its developments were inevitable. The Government, set up in 1898 in the wake of the invading army, found itself planted upon a ruin. Political institutions there were none; society was a chaos. The new Government had to be everything and to do everything. The most ardent individualist could not have wished to confine its functions to the maintenance of public order and the raising of revenue. There was no room for *laissez-faire* among a people just released from an armed tyranny and theocracy, who looked to the new administration for the first requisites of existence. The Government, before it had time to turn round, found itself embarked in business of the most varied kind. It was landowner, housebuilder, purveyor of food and clothing, storekeeper, railway manager, importer, retail trader, agriculturist, and tourist agent. If it wanted steamers to ply on the rivers it had to build and man them; if it desired to foster trade in the country it was obliged to supply the means of transport, if not actually to buy and sell the goods itself. And these things it could do with a free hand; for there were few vested interests which it need be afraid to traverse, and no prickly hedges of prejudice of public opinion to bar the way against bold experiments. Some of these it tried with the confidence born, perhaps, of youth, perhaps of a serene unconsciousness of their full import. For example, it instituted a Central Economic Board, intended to study the commercial situation, to assist traders in their transactions, to advise importers what to bring in, and generally to act as an Intelligence Department for industrial affairs. The members are high

officials in the administrative service, and the secretary is Mr. H. P. Hewins, the brother of the secretary of the Tariff Commission. One cannot help reflecting that in a somewhat more important industrial community than the Sudan we rather badly need a Central Economic Board, and are not in the least likely to get one.

The Sudan Government believes—I suppose it has had to believe—in the public ownership of public services and of various other commodities. It builds and runs all the railways for the excellent reason that if it did not there would be no railways at all. It found itself in possession of a fleet of gunboats and dispatch vessels, and it uses them not only to carry mails and officials, but also to transport passengers and the goods of the general trader. It lets out steamers for hire, and competes with Messrs. Cook in providing for pleasure parties on the Upper Nile. If you want to 'do' the equatorial region comfortably and combine a little shooting with a glimpse of primitive Africa, you can apply to the Commander-in-Chief of the Sudan navy, who will be willing to lend you, at a moderate price, one of the Government steamers, with a crew complete. The Government owns the ferries, which are the only means of communication between the three sister towns on the Blue and White Niles. It refused the offer of a company to build the tramways between Khartum and Omdurman—in Egypt the tramways and the light railways are in private hands—and built the line itself and operates it. Another company would have liked to supply the town with water, but the Government would not have that either, and preferred to be its own Water Board. It also provides

electric lighting, though whether private enterprise would have been willing to take up this business I do not know.

But it is in its dealing with the land that the state socialistic policy is most marked. A great deal of the extra-urban soil of the Sudan belongs to the Government in default of other ownership. There was a tendency to assume that this amount was larger than it is; but, as the country quieted down, numerous owners who had disappeared during the troubles of the Mahdist period put in their claims, and many complications ensued. Thereupon an elaborate settlement investigation was instituted, and is now proceeding. When it is completed, it is supposed that good legal titles will be established to most of the land actually occupied or under some sort of cultivation. In any case the Government will be a very large landowner, and it holds all the so-called desert areas—which will not always be desert—much of Khartum and North Khartum and Omdurman and the whole of Port Sudan. In dealing with these lands, the Government has set its face against complete alienation. It objects to sell freeholds, and prefers to grant leases for a comparatively short term of years. The idea is partly to discourage speculation and partly to secure for the State the 'unearned increment' of urban properties. Not long ago a wealthy syndicate in Cairo made an offer to develop some large blocks of vacant land in Khartum. The Government declined to sell, though it was willing to grant leases, which were refused.

The Sudan was threatened with a minor land boom like that which was followed by so disastrous a collapse in Egypt. Much speculative energy was ready to be

directed to the new territory, and in one or two cases some lucky persons did contrive to bring off highly profitable deals. There is a certain site in Khartum which changed hands at £20,000, having been bought two years earlier for £1200 ; a few years before that, so I was ruefully assured by the individual who refused the bargain, it was offered for £40. But the Sudan authorities have failed to discern any particular advantage in such transactions, and they discourage them. They profess themselves anxious to admit the genuine settler who wants the land for agricultural purposes and intends to develop it himself ; but the financier, who merely 'sits on' an estate in order to sell it when its price has gone up with the general rise in values, they would like to keep away as long as possible. In the towns they think the fee simple of the land should be held by the State for posterity. There are to be no millionaire landlords, drawing steadily increasing rents for ever from the Park Lane of Khartum and the Regent Street—when it gets one—of Port Sudan.

It is a bold policy which, to me, at any rate, seems the right one, particularly in its urban aspects. But I have heard it a good deal criticised, not always favourably. Some of its own subjects, and some of those who are rather anxious to become its subjects, complain that the Sudan Government keeps too much in its own hands, and allows too little scope for private enterprise and initiative. There is the charge commonly, and often justly, levelled against every manifestation of state socialism : which is that it tends to give undue power to officialism, with the result of checking progress and deadening commercial activity.

One very able business man, who has himself a large pecuniary interest in the Sudan, condemned the system unsparingly. A young and poor country, he maintained, could only be brought forward by introducing capital from outside ; and the administrative policy, he insisted, was obstructing this fertilising inflow. He assured me that plenty of money was available for investment in the Sudan some years ago, but the attitude of the Government was so unfavourable to investors that very little was done. He held that the refusal to sell freeholds was an error, for nobody would risk his money, when the future was still so beset with uncertainty, on a mere leasehold title. Nor would companies embark on trading ventures with a government, always ready to enter into competition with them, and able, moreover, to compete at a great advantage, owing to its possession of the means of transport and communication.

He pointed to the condition of Port Sudan, which I had not long quitted. That town, as I have said, has fine public buildings and Government warehouses. The works have attracted to the spot a considerable number of traders and shopkeepers of diverse nationalities. There are Greeks, Italians, Egyptians, Arabs, Abyssinians, Syrians, and others. The place looks lively enough when you walk through it at evening, with its bazaar, its brisk cafés, its pushing little shops. But the straight roads, wider than Northumberland Avenue, the cross streets intersecting them at right angles, according to the excellent Government building plan, were fronted by one-storey shanties of wood or cheap plaster. Hardly anybody thought it worth while to put up a substantial edifice of brick and stone. Why? My

friend insisted that it was because the Government would not sell the sites. The Greek and other immigrants, he said, wanted a security which they could mortgage before they would sink their money in expensive buildings. A short lease was valueless to them for this purpose, and they would not hazard capital over it. I have heard the same explanation given by others, and I believe that, in part at least, it is correct ; indeed, I understand that the uncompromising refusal to sell freehold sites will probably not be persisted in.

One cannot but sympathise with the Sudan Government in its dilemma : on the one hand, it is anxious not to deprive the State of the property it holds in trust for future generations ; on the other, it is confronted by the risk that the future generations may not come into being at all, unless a few people can see a chance of themselves growing rich rapidly or laying up treasure for their descendants. Thus do the old questions reappear in the newest societies ; and thus are administrators in tropical Africa finding themselves perplexed to find a practical solution for problems over which we are still theorising in Europe. After all, I suppose the Norman barons were only land speculators of a sort in the conquered and disordered Anglo-Saxon shires ; and the adventurous Hellenes and Syrians of the Sudan may become the founders of the great landowning aristocratic families of the coming centuries. History has a way of working itself out on extremely threadbare lines.

## CHAPTER XII

### A NOCTURNE

WHEN I left Port Sudan I came back over the railway to the Atbara, and then some way up the Khartum line as far as the small wayside station of Zeidab: having been invited to visit a cotton plantation, which was at that time about the most important example of agricultural development on a large scale visible in the Sudan. The railway is on the east bank of the Nile; the estate on the west, some miles higher up. I was to alight at Zeidab station, where I was to be met by my hosts and provided with a boat to cross the river and conveyance on the other side.

The south-bound express bustled alongside the little platform, and left me standing there with my luggage piled in a neat mound: nobody seemed to be expecting me. The stationmaster had only a few words of English and I only a few words of Arabic; but with the help of this limited vocabulary I was enabled to understand that a hitch had occurred in the programme. Owing to some mistake in transmitting or reading telegrams, my friends at the plantation had been led to believe that my train would not arrive before midnight, whereas here it was in the afternoon. What was to be done? The stationmaster, the post-office clerk, an intelligent young Egyptian,



the two Arab porters were sympathetic ; but it did not appear that they could give effectual aid. If I had been at a Scottish railway station somebody would have said to me within the first five minutes : ‘ Ye’ll maybe no’ get away from here the night.’ As it was, the unwelcome truth was broken to me in the Oriental manner by stages. I told the stationmaster to send a man across to the plantation. He salaamed, and gave voluble directions to an interested negro, who departed with every appearance of alacrity. Then he brought me a wooden kitchen chair from the whitewashed room in which he slept and issued tickets, and I sat down on the platform and waited.

After half an hour or so I asked the stationmaster to expedite the proceedings. He gave instructions to another native, who sprinted off at a very fair hundred yards pace. Another half-hour elapsed, and I called upon the official to report progress. He shouted, ‘ Achmet ! Mahmud ! Osman !’ and various natives emerged from nowhere in particular and dashed away into space. I inquired how long it would take these athletes to reach the plantation, and how they proposed to get there ; whereupon it was gently hinted to me that there was not the slightest chance that they would get there at all, because there were no boats on that side of the Nile. In effect, the whole company had gone no farther than the river bank, about a quarter of a mile distant, where I presently found them standing in a group to watch for the arrival of the boat from the opposite bank. I demanded, angrily, if they saw any signs of this vessel : for it was growing dark by this time, and my unaccustomed eyes could distinguish nothing.

They peered intently into the shining levels and long trails of shadow, and reported that the felucca had put off, and was, in fact, in sight. When would it make the landing? After a spirited debate it was decided—though, I think, only by a narrow majority—that the relieving expedition might reasonably be expected in forty minutes. Thus encouraged, I went back to the platform and my kitchen chair and dosed uncomfortably.

Forty minutes passed, fifty, an hour. There was no sign of rescue. I roused myself and looked round. The stationmaster's room was closed, and the post-office; the entire place was empty save for myself, and dark except for an oil lamp burning dimly on the platform. I made noisy researches and uplifted my voice. At last I stumbled upon one of the Arab porters, rolled up asleep in the dust behind the station. Him I shook into consciousness, and sent wrathfully for the stationmaster. That officer was as polite and benignant as ever. I inquired whether the boat had arrived. He referred the question to Achmet, who transmitted it to Mahmud, who passed it on to Osman and to another man who emerged suddenly from the unknown. They all with one accord declared that no boat had come, or was likely to come. Then I asked desperately: Why on earth did they tell me they had *seen* it on the way an hour ago? More debate, turning, I believe, on the point whether the previous resolution had genuinely expressed the sense of the meeting, or whether it had not been illegally carried by the casting vote of the chairman. Eventually I had to come to the conclusion that there was no possibility of getting away till the plantation boat should appear about

midnight or later, and that I might as well reconcile myself to spending the next six hours of my life at Zeidab station. There was nowhere else to spend the time; there was no village, not even a house, visible; the nearest hotel, as I was aware, was about 200 miles distant.

I went into the stationmaster's room, made him put a lamp on his rough deal table, got out a book, and proceeded to make the best of things. My hosts were genuinely concerned at the position, and so guiltily apologetic that my ill temper was mollified. The stationmaster and the post-office clerk walked in every few minutes to say: 'You all right, my mister, boat coming 11 P.M.' Achmet and Mahmud and Osman stole softly in and out on their bare feet, and leaned against the wall, gazing at me, and smiling soothingly when they caught my eye. I got on very well with these good fellows, especially with Achmet. We conversed chiefly by means of dumb show, and I discovered that he was an Arab of the Jaalin tribe, twenty-two years of age, married, and the father of two sons. He was tall and lithe, with well-cut features, and his smooth walnut-coloured cheeks were scored with cross cuts like those honourable scars which a duelling German student bears. In Achmet's case they were tribal marks, and they were set off by the pleasantest of smiles and the shiniest of white teeth. He was a notable contrast to his colleague, a soot-black negro, as well as to the pale Coptic clerk, and the little, scrubby, fussy, well-intentioned Egyptian stationmaster.

Presently I was conscious of hunger. I remembered that it was many hours since I had breakfasted in the train

beyond the Atbara, and that the comfortable dinner for which I had reserved myself at the plantation house was clearly not for my taking. I made pressing inquiries after food, and was told there was none to be had. But I pointed out to my entertainers that obviously they must eat something, and that a little of that, whatever it was, would do for me. At this the deputation retired and conferred earnestly in the darkness. Presently the Coptic clerk returned and said they were going to kill a hen for me. I remembered now that I had seen some skinny, consumptive fowls scratching feebly about the station yard, and I could not reconcile myself to assimilating one of these martyrs, red from the slaughter. I therefore declined the carnivorous banquet, and suggested that, since there were hens, there were, perhaps, eggs. The proposal was accepted, and my soul leaped within me when the station-master proffered tea and bread and butter. Presently those viands appeared. The eggs were the size of marbles, and as hard; the bread was a leathery brown substance composed of *dhura*; the butter, made of buffalo milk, betrayed its origin; but the tea was grateful to a tired and thirsty drinker, and I have enjoyed some meals less in Pall Mall. Achmet and his friends gazed on me solemnly as I ate, and, I believe, congratulated themselves with the thought that a violent, and possibly dangerous, lunatic was being fed into comparative calm.

But their manners were perfect. I was, I felt, much *de trop*, for I was keeping them awake for hours after the stationmaster would have been asleep on his *angarieb* of string, with his staff snoring in some corner rolled up in

their cotton wrappers. Nobody, however, gave a sign of boredom or hinted at retirement. On the contrary, they remained awake and attentive, and gave me to understand that the presence of a wearied, impatient, bad-tempered Briton was really a distinguished honour, for which they could not be too grateful. Every now and then somebody went down to the waterside to obtain tidings of the felucca, and came back with the entirely apocryphal information that the missing vessel might be sighted at any moment. I had got long past believing them by this time; but I appreciated the chivalrous courtesy which induced them to keep my spirits up by artistically contrived falsehoods.

In the end the felucca did arrive, and they put me and my luggage aboard with care, plunging bare legs manfully in the cold, moonlit waters. Zeidab is far beyond the tourist sphere, so nobody asked me for *bakshish* or seemed even to expect it. The stationmaster was with difficulty prevailed upon to accept payment for the tea and marmoreal eggs, and Achmet and his friends received their *douceurs* with the gentlemanly unconsciousness of a well-bred English butler after a country-house party. We shook hands warmly all round, and they stood long and looked after me as we floated slowly into the darkness.

My relations with Zeidab station were not quite finished. After two interesting days on the estate I had to catch the train for my return journey from the same place. Now, the express from Khartum for Egypt passes Zeidab at 5 A.M. To start at three in the morning is uncomfortable anywhere; and my hosts told me that the better way was to leave the previous night, cross the river, set up a camp-

bed on the east bank near the station, and sleep there till the train came. Even so was it done. After dinner I was put into the felucca again, with my belongings and my friend's Indian servant to look after me; the lateen sail was hoisted, and we glided down the silent river. Those who know the Nile only from the decks of the admirable steamers of the Sudan Government and Messrs. Cook, or even from the roof of a fine tourist dahabiyeh, do not drink in the full spirit of voyaging on that immemorial stream. For that, you must travel by night, in the high-prowed sailing boat with the bending bamboo mast and the great three-cornered sail, with no electric light and no noisy fellow-passengers. I lay under the boom half asleep, while the Arab boatmen moved softly on bare feet and spoke together in whispers. There was hardly a sound save the faint sigh of the sail, as it shook in the fluttering wind, and the muffled moan of mast and spars. Like the ship of a dream, our bark drifted down the strange river that looks as no other river of this earth looks at night, with its flood of silver bordered by banks of ink and funereal trees. By day the date-palm of the Nile waves a graceful head above a slender stem, tall and stately as a young princess; at night it is a grim, dark skeleton, with all its tossing fronds frozen into stiff black arms and gaunt pointing fingers.

Our keel slid softly into the mud, and I was carried by strong brown shoulders ashore. I chose a convenient spot, under a big sycamore tree, and here they spread my camp bedstead and laid on it a fur-lined sleeping-bag. It is one of the pleasures of a warm climate that you can enjoy sleeping in the open with only the sky and stars above you.

But for those who commonly lie beneath a roof of whitewash, that blue-black ceiling of the tropic night, hung with lamps of gold and silver, may be too splendid for sleep. For myself, I lay long awake and watched the constellations till long past midnight ; and awakened again early, and gazed through my light screen of branches, until the false dawn stole timidly in, robed in pearly grey, and then flushed rose-red, like a bride, to meet the fierce caresses of the sun. Whereupon I looked at my watch, and called loudly to my Indian attendant slumbering under a contiguous bush, bidding him rouse the station people and make ready to depart. It was well I did so ; for, albeit my railway friends had promised to ring a bell when the train left the previous station, half an hour distant, they did as a fact delay that signal until the express was all but upon us. On time, and its divisions, the African intellect is still, for the most part, vague.

## CHAPTER XIII

### A SUDAN PLANTATION

THE estate of Zeidab, to which I was inducted after and between the incidents described in the last chapter, proved very well worth visiting. It was here that I made my bow to King Cotton in his North African domains; a great potentate whose sway extends from this point down the Nile to the Mediterranean, though his seats of power at present are mainly by the lower reaches of the river. But the time may come when he will wax mighty in the Sudan also, and when tens of thousands of black labourers will be pulling the woolly pods from millions of acres of cotton bushes to feed the spindles whirling hungrily under the tall chimneys of Oldham. The British Cotton Growing Association has paid commendable attention to the Sudan: though its first overtures were not very warmly received, and some of its principal promoters were more inclined to throw their weight and influence upon the western, rather than the eastern, side of the African Continent. But there is room for the Sudan as well as Nigeria; and if the former can produce cotton in large quantities it will not want for markets. Sir William Garstin thinks that at present wheat must be the staple crop, and that cultivators for some time should devote their main attention to this. But cotton is so much



more valuable that if there is water available one cannot doubt that it will be produced in conjunction with, though not to the exclusion of, bread-stuffs.

There is fine cotton and wheat land all about the Atbara region from Berber upwards, and that part of it near the Nile has a welcome air of fertility and verdure as you come to it after passing through the desert country, whether your approach is made by the north from Wady Halfa or from the east by Port Sudan. Palms and acacias and cactus hedges and fields of that emerald-green clover, which is the Egyptian substitute for grass, greet you as you approach the Nile. The district was well cultivated before the Great Depopulation, as the ruined villages and the acres of roofless huts in Berber attested. The capacity of the soil and the scarcity of hands to till it suggested the idea out of which the Zeidab estate has developed. Some nine years ago Mr. Leigh Hunt, an American, came into the Sudan with the ingenious project of taking up a concession of cotton-growing land from the Government, and importing negroes from the Southern States to work it: conceiving, I suppose, that it would be equally beneficial to the one country to acquire these coloured gentlemen and for the other to get quit of them. We were all on the crest of the Americanisation craze in those years; the Government jumped at the notion, and the New York millionaire—I do not know whether Mr. Leigh Hunt came under that description, but at that time all American financiers were millionaires to the excited British imagination—obtained his concession and set to work. The scheme, however, was not very successful in its original shape. Those who know the American

' buck nigger ' best would hardly, I think, desire to see him planted down among a primitive people like that of the Berber province. Very few American citizens came, and those who did were of small use as agriculturists, and were soon sent back again.

The Zeidab estate changed hands. Mr. Leigh Hunt made over his concession to an association called the Sudan Plantations Syndicate, which has a good deal of London and South African capital invested in it, and an uncommonly shrewd managing director in the person of Mr. D. P. McGillivray, an energetic Scot, with a successful business record behind him in Egypt. The property has succeeded in paying excellent dividends already, and it will continue to do so if proper management and hard work can avail. It is, at any rate, a striking object-lesson in the agricultural possibilities of this part of the Sudan. The original concession was for an area of no less than 30,000 feddans (Egyptian acres), but the syndicate when I visited it was only dealing with about 13,000. They have to pay the land tax on all the land they are bringing into cultivation, and they do not see their way to work all their property until their water supply can be increased. Here, of course, we are in a rainless district ; the grower is absolutely dependent upon the Nile irrigation.

Now the Nile rolls past the lands of Zeidab, turbidly rushing up the banks and over them in flood time, and flowing in ample volume during the remainder of the year. But that great store must be tapped sparingly and under due restriction by the riparian tenants. Egypt has the first claim upon the liquid treasure, and will not allow the

supply to be attenuated before it reaches her own fields. During the flood there is more water than is wanted, and anybody is free to take as much as he requires. This open time has lasted from the middle of July to the end of January, and in those months, technically of flood, though the flood has gone by well before the end, the Sudan as well as Egypt has unlimited access to the fertilising fluid. Since my visit to Zeidab, the open time has been extended for one month, so that the water may now be drawn from the Nile in unlimited quantities for irrigation purposes till the end of February. This is a very welcome indulgence and greatly appreciated by the cultivators of the dry lands of Upper Egypt, Nubia, and the Sudan.

After the 'flood' season is over at the end of January (or now February), the farmer is left to the 'perennial' water of the Nile, white water which by this time has lost most of the rich mud brought down from the Abyssinian hills. This perennial water is carefully guarded lest the amount should run short before the next flood; and for the whole of the immense Sudan there was allotted no more than the quantity sufficient to water a bagatelle of 10,000 feddans. How little this is will be seen from the fact that the Zeidab estate alone was taking 40 per cent. of the total, having 4000 acres under cotton, for which its tenants need, or at least prefer to get, the perennial water. The remainder of their land they must keep under crops which do not require irrigation before the middle of July, and can, therefore, be left to the flood water when it comes down.

There are other smaller estates in the Berber province,

in English or native hands. The patriarch Zubeir Pasha, of whom I have already spoken, was a large landowner here and elsewhere, farming extensively, with a whole staff of agents, sons, sons-in-law, and nephews to help him. But I preferred to visit Zeidab, as being, I believe, the largest concern of the kind in the Sudan, and managed according to all the latest scientific and economical ideas. There was at any rate plenty to see and much to wonder at. Considering that the estate had been taken in hand barely three years before, and had not been in full working order for much more than twelve months, the results attained were remarkable. The place had an air of settled and established prosperity; one might have supposed oneself in some old plantation in India, or even in Louisiana, rather than in a district which five years earlier was running to waste, and five years before that was a ravaged wilderness. The house in which the managing director lives is a substantially built, whitewashed, brick edifice, rather reminding one, with its thick walls, two-storeyed verandahs, and lofty rooms, of those solid bungalows which the old-time merchants used to build in Southern India; and there was almost a Madras compound of blossoming trees and flower gardens round it. Leading up to the mansion is a whole street of stables, storehouses, residences for the engineer, manager, doctor, surveyor, and other officials, and a nice wide white street, with young trees planted along it. The fellahin and cultivating tenants live all over the estate and about it: some in mud-walled villages built by the Syndicate itself, with as much attention to regularity and sanitation as the conditions allow; some

in the half deserted hamlets dotted over this country ; some in tents and thatched huts or *tukuls*, which they put up themselves in a corner of their field. I went into one of these residences. It was the merest shanty, of sticks and dried palm leaves, with absolutely nothing in it but a few cooking pots ; yet outside were some full bags of the owner's cotton, which I was assured were worth not less than £20 as they lay.

One of the conditions on which the Plantations Syndicate holds the land from the Government is that of providing 30-inch pumps to draw up the perennial water from the Nile and distribute it over the land by means of a system of canals. On this estate they work at an advantage over some others farther down the river ; for their level is low, and it is seldom necessary to lift the water more than two or three metres. Lower down, in Upper Egypt, at the great estate of Kom Ombo, near Assuan, I saw a magnificent pumping apparatus, which is raising water nearly sixty feet, and pouring it into a huge network of watercourses, including one great artificial stream some thirty miles long. It is a wonderful piece of engineering and agricultural science, but it involves, of course, a vast expenditure, and it could only be undertaken by great capitalists, able to sink their money and wait for the return. At Zeidab, however, it seems they did not have so long to wait. They have got their irrigation system complete, one main channel intersecting the property at the highest level, and dropping its waters into a series of secondary and third-rate canals, which again are drawn off into the numerous minor runlets and rills that pass

the vivifying fluid into every farm and through every field. The cotton crop was mostly over at the time of my visit ; the barns were full of the cotton wool, ready to be carried across to the railway and sent down to Port Sudan. The young wheat was well forward, and very beautiful it looked, rippling into waves of green over the level meadows. I am not an agricultural expert, but I was assured by a visitor who is, that for its stage and growth this wheat was as good in quality as any he had seen anywhere. The cotton is not, I believe, quite up to the standard of the best grown in Lower Egypt—no cotton in the world is equal to that ; but it does not fall so very far behind, and enables the Syndicate and its tenants to sell at a price which gives a very fair return on their outlay.

The Syndicate farms some of the land itself and sells or lets the rest, and maintains the pumping-station and keeps the irrigation system in order and under proper control both for its own farms and those of the tenants. It is a hard, healthy, energetic out-of-door life for the handful of young Englishmen and young Scotsmen who run this little colony, where already there are some thousands of people living. Tenants are coming in to take up the land ; Arabs and Sudanese from the Berber district and Dongola, fellahin from Nubia, a few shrewd Greeks and others from Lower Egypt, even an Englishman or two, who see the possibility of making money in the new country.

Adult male labour was scarce in the locality ; as you went through the villages you saw many women and children and few men. For the people here are of the same race as my friend Achmet of Zeidab station ; they

are Jaalin Arabs, and the Jaalins were the victims of the Mahdist fury, at its worst and bloodiest when it was just tottering to its fall. The Jaalins were a high-spirited and rather haughty tribe, who thought much of their pure Arab descent, of the prowess of their men in old frontier wars, and the honour of their women. They despised the swarthy semi-negro dervishes from the South, and submitted to the Mahdist rule with much impatience. In June 1897, when the tramp of the Anglo-Egyptian battalions was heard beyond Dongola, and the desert railway was pushing on, the Jaalins revolted against the Omdurman tyranny. Mahmud, the Khalifa's fighting emir, swept down upon them with a horde of dervish spears and rifles. The Jaalins, completely outnumbered, retired into Metemneh, fortified the place, and held it till all their ammunition was exhausted. Then the Mahdists broke in, and an orgie of brutal massacre and mutilation ensued. Two thousand of the fighting men were butchered as they stood ; others had their feet or hands cut off. The chief, Abdullah, was taken to Omdurman, and left, walled up to the chin, till he died of hunger. The dervishes devastated the whole Jaalin country, killing, plundering, and maiming. You met few middle-aged men in the Jaalin villages ; only young men, who were boys eleven years before, veterans who were old even then, and women and children. When you remember how the brave Jaalins were treated by the Khalifa's savages, you have a certain satisfaction in the thought that if we were just too late to save them, we were able to avenge them ; and you feel that among the swathes of dead lying on the field of

Kerreri a year later there must have been a good many who deserved their fate.

These Jaalins are among the most attractive of all the Sudan peoples—good-looking, good-natured, dignified, humorous, and thoroughly likeable. On the first evening of my stay at Zeidab we went for a drive along the wide, sandy road which runs through the estate northward to Khartum. It was made by Kitchener's army in '98, and the bones of the oxen killed for the bivouac fires were still whitening by the wayside. As we scuttled along behind two fiery little Abyssinian mules, through meadows dotted with clumps of trees, which in the gathering gloom looked park-like and English, we met an upstanding Jaalin driving a fine young bull. I asked my companion to question this native for my instruction. The Arab, with a broad grin and a roar of hilarious recognition, explained that he was the man who very nearly, but not quite, beat my friend at putting the stone in some sports which had been got up on the estate in the summer. The Jaalin children are as delightful as they are numerous. When I went into one of the villages with my camera a whole covey of them tumbled out of one of the huts, clamoured about me, grouped themselves to be photographed, and chattered and pushed at one another like young sparrows. The boys were naked, brown, shiny, laughing little fellows, as impudent and knowing as London gutter-children; there were one or two small maidens, with bead necklaces and rudimentary skirts, much more demure and composed than the lads, whom they ordered about rather haughtily, even as Gwendoline commands Billy in Hoxton. There was also a baby, who put



his fingers into his eyes and wept aloud when he saw me directing a strange implement upon him ; and was comforted by his elder sister and admonished into silence, and, I have no doubt, informed that if he failed to be good directly the ugly man would have him. The young Arabs and I made so much noise that the mother of some of them (she was surely too young to own the whole brood) came to the door of her hut. This daughter of the Jaalins sustained the tribal reputation for good looks. She was tall and straight, with large eyes that shone like black gems in the clear brown oval of her face. In drapery of dark blue, with one shapely, silver-ringed, arm thrown up above her head to shield her from the smiting sun, she stood framed in the doorway regarding our doings with grave and gracious indulgence. Before this noble type of antique, primitive womanhood one felt somehow ultra-modern, crude, vulgar.

'You had better not photograph *her*,' said one of my companions. 'These Jaalin women are particular.' I had no such intention. I should as soon have thought of taking a snapshot at the Duchess when she stands at the head of the staircase to receive her guests in her own house. No 'great lady' of our West could have been more calmly dignified than this Arab woman of the people. Will her children and her children's children be like her, when they have been sent to our schools, and acquired a taste for cheap finery, and learnt to 'hustle,' and grown fidgety and self-conscious? Shall we end by turning them into bad imitations of the neurotic town-bred boys and girls who crowd our picture shows? We have saved them from the spears of the savages and the stripes of the pashas ; but to what

ultimate destiny are all these Eastern folks tending whom Europe has snatched into its swirl of 'progress' and unseeing change? Who shall say? Well, at least it is something to have redeemed them from slavery and slaughter, to have given them a breathing-space before the New Era sweeps them along its tumultuous ways.



*Photo by Elliott & Fry.*

SLATIN PACHA, G.C.V.O., ETC.



## CHAPTER XIV

### LAND AND WATER

IN my visit to the Zeidab plantation something of the importance of the irrigation question, which is the question of questions for Egypt at all times, was borne in upon me. As you descend the course of the Nile you see this more and more at each stage, until the Delta itself is reached. And if you have come from the Sudan, you are also in a position to grasp the great cardinal truth that the key to the water-gates of Egypt is in this territory. Whoso controls the Sudan has the power to affect intimately the vital destinies of Egypt, to make it rich and prosperous, or to reduce it to scarcity and, under certain conditions, to starvation. All this on account of the geography and the hydrography of the Nile, which is the most wonderful river in the world, regulated by a natural mechanism unequalled in its delicacy and grandeur. And the power-sources and main working stations of this magnificent machinery are in the Sudan. Egypt lives on and by the results.

Four hundred and fifty years B.C. Herodotus said that Egypt was the Nile and the Nile was Egypt. Twenty-three centuries later a great English engineer put the same thought into different words. 'Egypt,' says Sir William Willcocks, 'is nothing more than the deposit left by the Nile in flood.'

The wider part of the country where it spreads out into the fan-like Delta has been made by the river itself as it disgorged the silt from its two mouths and pushed back the sea. The remainder is a ribbon of cultivation between the deserts, a ribbon kept green by the mud and waters of the Nile. Cut off this supply for a single season and the entire population of Egypt would be in the grip of famine ; curtail it to any serious extent for a very few years, and the strip of cultivation would disappear, and the Arabian desert and the Sahara would come down everywhere, as they do even now in places, to both banks of the river. For the most fertile agricultural region of the earth is only redeemed from being itself barren desert by the gifts of the Nile, and the skill, more or less in different ages, by which the bounty of the great stream is used.

The phenomena connected with the Nile inundation have been known and utilised in Egypt since the beginning of recorded history. For seven thousand years at least men have been watching and noting the flow and fall of the water and ripening their crops by its fertilising deposit. King Menes is said by tradition to have begun the system of basin irrigation, and he is supposed to have lived about B.C. 4400. Ever since (and probably before) Egypt has not only lived on the Nile flood, but has endeavoured, with more or less success, to regulate, economise, and direct it. No river has been so closely studied as the Nile, or handled with such consummate mastery and resourcefulness. The greater Pharaohs of the middle dynasties, the Ptolemies, the Romans, brought to bear upon its problems an engineering capacity which we can envy. Of the behaviour of the Nile,

when it emerged below the Second Cataract and through all its course downwards to the sea, they knew as much as could be learned by the most careful observation. But the remoter causes were still hidden from them. It is only since a civilised government has been in power along the whole of the upper waters, and since the entire length of the river has been traced to its source, that we can in part account for that majestic periodicity, and those occasional variations, which have amazed and bewildered so many generations. Only since Britain has been at work in the Sudan have these age-long problems come near solution: thanks to the efforts of men like Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff, Sir William Garstin, Sir William Willcocks, Mr. Webb, and the other great engineers and administrators of the Egyptian Public Works Department.

The Nile, as we now know, has its true source in the Victoria Nyanza, that vast natural reservoir kept full by drenching equatorial rains and the rivers of the Central African highlands. It plunges over the Ripon Falls into its second reservoir, Lake Albert, and thereafter, as the White Nile, flows steadily northward, leaving Uganda to pass into the Sudan. In these days we may almost claim the Nile as a British waterway. In no part of its course of 3700 miles does it touch territory which is not British or under British influence. Seventy miles after leaving Lado, the Gazell river runs, or rather crawls, into the main stream, which here breaks up into many channels, filters wide over the country in spongy swamps, and winds and creeps deviously through beds of tangled vegetation, the famous Sudd barrier. A little farther north the White

Nile spreads into Lake No, a shallow lagoon ; then the Sobat river joins it, and it runs in a broad, equable stream, with little fall, to Khartum, where its turbulent partner, the Blue Nile, flings itself into its placid bosom after a downward rush from the alpine heights of Abyssinia. It is from this impetuous marriage that the land of Egypt is born. For the Blue Nile, scouring the volcanic detritus from the mountains, brings the rich red water that leaves the fertilising deposit. It is helped by its younger brother, the Atbara, also of Abyssinian descent, which joins the family two hundred miles farther north. About 65 per cent. of the flood water that passes the great dam at Assuan comes from the Blue Nile.

This Blue Nile, fed by the rains and melting snows, begins to rise early in June ; and is in full tide, together with the Atbara, in the latter part of August. The river continues to rise through Egypt till the middle of September, when it remains stationary for a fortnight or three weeks. Then a fresh rise occurs in October, and the Nile is at its height, and then it gradually sinks back. The flood season is technically over at the end of January, by which time most of the ' red ' water has gone by. Through the spring the river continues to fall, and is at its lowest in the early summer, when the flood comes down again to replenish it. And so, century after century, the stately movement has gone on ; and century after century the Egyptian peasant has waited for the spreading of the waters to bring life to his arid fields.

But the process, though perpetual, is not constant. The rise and fall vary from year to year ; and this variation is



all-important for Egypt, and has been, and always must be, the subject of the most anxious solicitude and calculation. Shakespeare, who knew everything, knew this :

They take the flow o' the Nile  
By certain scales i' the Pyramids ; they know  
By the height, the lowness, or the mean, if dearth  
Or foison follow. The higher Nilus swells  
The more it promises : as it ebbs, the seedsman  
Upon the slime and ooze scatters his grain,  
And shortly comes to harvest.

There is an almost technical accuracy in this language. If the Nile rises twenty feet or less there will be famine in Egypt, and great scarcity if the rise is no more than twenty-three feet. A twenty-five feet rise is still insufficient for the higher levels, whereas anything between that figure and about twenty-six feet and a half will give satisfactory irrigation everywhere. A rise much beyond this level is a dire misfortune. It means the bursting of dykes and dams, the flooding of the whole country and many villages, the destruction of houses and cattle, and often much loss of life. No wonder the water gauges have been anxiously watched. There are no objects in Egypt to my thinking much more interesting than the Nilometers, the graduated scales cut on stones or natural rocks on the river banks, by which, for thousands of years, the rise of the water has been measured and by which it is still measured to-day.

For seventy centuries, more or less, they have been watching the Nile flow ; it is only in our own times that it has become possible to control it, and the control will grow more stringent year by year as we lay hands more firmly

on the Sudan. For seven thousand years Egypt lived and was born anew each season by the system of basin irrigation. When the flood came down in the late summer and autumn it was allowed to flow over or through the banks into basins, enclosed by dykes, and communicating with each other and the Nile by a system of canals. The water, highly charged with the fertilising deposit, stood on the land for a month or six weeks ; then it was allowed to drain back into its parent stream, leaving behind it the rich brown mud on which the fellah cast his seed. No ploughing was needed ; no manuring, for the deposit itself was sufficient. Under the old native dynasties, and the Greeks, and the Romans, and the Caliphs, the whole country was cultivated by this system, and it supported ten or twelve, or, as some hold, twenty millions of people. Only one crop a year could be grown ; but it was that bounteous crop of wheat, varied by lentils, clover, and maize, which made Egypt the granary of the ancient world.

But the basin system required good government to police the dykes and watercourses, and keep the river banks in repair. Under the Turks and Manluks it gradually fell into disorder. By the beginning of the nineteenth century large areas had been abandoned, and had gone back to salt and sand ; and the population of Egypt had dwindled down to a couple of millions. Then came Mehemet Ali, the Albanian soldier of fortune, who was the true founder of modern Egypt. That ruthless but highly capable despot conceived the idea of supplementing the immemorial cereal harvests of Egypt by the more profitable cotton plant. For cotton the annual inundation is not sufficient ;

the crop requires water at other seasons than that of the flood. Mehemet Ali's engineers began constructing broad and deep canals, which would hold the Nile water through the year, and allow it to be poured over the land when wanted. This is the system of perennial irrigation, inchoate and rudimentary till the British occupation, brought to full development and perfection during the past twenty years. It is the greatest of all the tasks which Englishmen have accomplished in Egypt. The engineers of the Public Works Department have been busy converting the basin areas into those of perennial irrigation, cleaning out and deepening the old canals, and threading new ones through tracts which have gone back to desert or have never yet been reclaimed. The basins exist no longer in Lower Egypt, and they are fast being superseded in the upper part of the country. One result is that the land of Egypt has been enlarged by tens of thousands of acres; and the extension will continue. The new Egypt is, to a great extent, the creation of the hydraulic engineer; and if that useful person can only be provided with sufficient water he can go on adding fresh accessions of territory. It is a question not of land, but of water. The land is there in practically unlimited quantities. The water is not unlimited; and the problem is so to deal with it that the largest possible proportion shall be spread over the soil when the soil needs it, instead of draining away wastefully into the sea. The perennial canals, combined with the great dams and weirs, which store up the fluid when the Nile is high and allow it to run down gradually when the stream is low, have gone far to furnish the solution. They

have enabled the winter crops of wheat, barley, beans, lentils, and vetches to be followed by summer crops of the far more valuable sugar-cane and cotton.

Thus not only has the area of cultivable Egypt been extended, but its value has been increased. Rents have more than doubled in the last dozen years, and in some cases they have trebled and quadrupled. Many acres of land, which fifteen years ago was barely worth £5 an acre, changed hands in the boom that preceded the collapse of 1907 at £30, £40, £50, and upwards. If the gold-mines of the Rand had been discovered under the soil of Egypt they would scarcely have added more to her wealth than the labours of a handful of British engineers and officials since the great schemes of Sir William Garstin, Sir William Willecocks, and Sir Benjamin Baker were developed. The capital value of the country has been raised by tens of millions, and once more it is able to support a population not far below that which inhabited it in the palmiest days of the Pharaohs. The dream of Mehemet Ali has been fulfilled: Egypt is helping to feed the cotton mills of the world.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE BRIDLE OF THE FLOOD

THE irrigation of Egypt is a vast and complicated business. In some respects it is the largest enterprise undertaken by man upon the surface of the globe ; for when it is completed, as it will be some time, by the head works at Lake Victoria and Lake Albert, it will mean that over a length of 4000 miles human agency is at work, adapting and modifying the forces of Nature to serve its own ends and minister to its needs.

The problem of the Nile has become more complex in recent years since the old basin irrigation has been superseded. When Egypt was mainly a corn producer, this system answered its purpose admirably ; for the country then lived on the Nile flood, and the energies of its people were mainly devoted to utilising the flow to the utmost and restraining it within bounds when it ran to excess. Beyond that it could not go. If the rise was insufficient in any year, Egypt for that year suffered and starved ; if the rise was too great the *corvée* of the peasants was embodied, and all hands went to the dykes to raise and strengthen them. The superfluous tide, doing much or little mischief, as the case might be, coursed away eventually to the sea. It could not be stored for the next year, which might, perhaps, turn out to be one of scarcity.

With Mehemet Ali, the system of perennial irrigation came in. Deep canals were dug to hold the water through the summer, in order that the cotton and sugar-cane plantations might be kept moist when the flood had gone by. It became eminently desirable to regulate the stream of the river, so as to have a supply available at all times, and so that the deficiency of one period might be made good out of the superfluity of another: hence the project of holding up the Nile water by means of dams and barrages, and letting it down gradually upon the land when needed. Seventy years ago, Mougel Bey, a French engineer in the service of the great Viceroy, designed the barrage fifteen miles north of Cairo, with the object of controlling the Nile at the Delta bifurcation, and diverting the flow of the Rosetta and Damietta branches into canals by which all Lower Egypt could be irrigated. Mougel suffered the fate of those who serve Oriental despots: he fell out of favour, he was not allowed to complete his great work, and he himself, after the British occupation, was found living in extreme old age and dire poverty at Alexandria. The barrage was nominally finished, after Mougel's fall, by *corvée* and military labour; but its workmanship was hoplessly bad, its plan was defective, and it was quite incapable of being used. It lay rotting and rusting, till the English came and brought into Egypt skilled engineers, trained in the Indian school of irrigation. Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff and his assistants took the weir in hand, repaired and enlarged it, fortified it with solid masonry and concrete, and made it capable of holding up thirteen feet of Nile flood. Three main canals were constructed to draw off the water and spread it over the

Delta provinces. The works have been paid for many times over already, by the increased value they have given to the lands of Lower Egypt and the rise in the tax which the Government is able to levy upon them.

Before this restoration was completed it had become clear that the Nile water must be impounded and stored much higher up, if the whole of Upper as well as Lower Egypt was to be treated under the perennial canal system, and made suitable for the cultivation of sugar-cane and cotton as well as cereal crops. In 1890, Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff appointed a commission, with Sir William Willcocks as its president, to study the question of establishing a great reservoir on the Nile. The commissioners reported in favour of damming the river at the First Cataract, just above Assuan; and a later international commission, composed of Sir Benjamin Baker and a French and Italian colleague, sent in a recommendation to the same effect. It was accordingly decided to build barrages at Assiut and Esneh to regulate the flow, and to create an enormous reservoir or lake by a gigantic dam of masonry above the Assuan Cataract. The firm of Aird & Co. agreed to construct this for about £2,000,000 sterling. Egypt was too poor, or rather too much tied up by financial obligations, to find this large amount of capital at once; but Sir Ernest Cassel paid the contractors as the work went on, and received bonds from the Egyptian Government, which have to be redeemed by sixty half-yearly payments of £78,613. The Assuan dam and the Assiut barrage, and their subsidiary, works had cost about £6,500,000 up to the end of 1908; and Sir William Garstin estimated that as a result the annual rental value of lands

in Middle Egypt had increased by £2,637,000 and their sale value by £26,570,000. So this great engineering triumph may be said to have repaid its cost already.

But the original designs of Garstin, Willcocks, and Baker had to be modified by a curious outbreak of æsthetic sentimentalism. The dam, as projected, would have held up water enough to cause the complete submersion of the beautiful temples at Philæ, with their pylons and courts and colonnades. The archæological and antiquarian societies of Europe were inflamed at the thought of this sacrifice; and there was a loud outcry set up by some who knew and valued these monuments, and re-echoed by many who till that time had never heard of them. Some of the engineers proposed that the difficulty should be met by raising the temples on piles clear above the highest level of the reservoir, while others suggested that they should be removed bodily and rebuilt elsewhere. Finally, a compromise was adopted. The dam, originally planned to be 100 feet high and to keep back 85 milliards of cubic feet of water, was lowered by 26 feet, and it was nominally capable of holding up only 35 milliards of cubic feet, though, as Sir William Willcocks contends, it was able to resist the pressure of double that quantity. The temples were not drowned out; but every year at high Nile they were converted into islands, with their basements and the lower parts of their columns flooded. The engineers maintain that the process has done them more good than harm; for the buildings, which were fast falling into decay, have been propped and underpinned, and their annual washing is even said to bind and consolidate their foundations.



The sentimental agitation seems to me to have been honoured with much more attention than it deserved. I yield to nobody in regard for the monuments of the past, and would not needlessly disturb a single stone that has been hewn by the hands of the dead; but, after all, we are concerned with the present, and we cannot sacrifice the interests of the millions of Egyptians, living and to come, in order that a few genuine students and a considerable number of idle tourists may gaze unimpeded at some interesting, though not supremely important, examples of Ptolemaic art.

In any case, the lover of the æsthetic has his compensation in the charm of an imposing and significant contrast. The temples rise like islands out of the broad sheet of water—the huge artificial lake into which this reach of the Nile has been converted by the dam. The stone colonnades, looking more Greek than Egyptian in their lightness and grace, are beautiful in their way; but there is a beauty of another kind—the beauty of stern majesty and purposeful strength—in the mighty bar of granite that lies athwart the river and curbs its pace or holds the tremendous energy of its impact in suspense. When I visited it, some of the sluice gates were open; and from the vast white face of the wall of stone there roared a dozen cataracts of sparkling green, which seethed into foamy billows, and danced into snowflakes of spray among the rocks below the fall. It is a thundering head of water, when they let it go, that will rattle ton-weight boulders round like pebbles of the sea-beach. But with the pull of a few levers in the power-house they can close all the gates; and then the

3000-mile flow of the river is arrested, and it laps peacefully against the barrier, a wide and tranquil pool. If the dam gave, there is water enough in that huge reservoir to drown all Egypt, and whirl its cities and villages away like straws. But Sir Benjamin Baker's massive rampart, ribbed upon the solid rock of the river bottom, will hold for ages; so, at least, the engineers contend, despite the fact that some eminent Cambridge mathematicians have worked out calculations intended to prove that this dam, and all other dams and weirs and similar works, have been constructed on faulty data. But one is inclined to think that the engineers know their business better than the professors.

The Assuan Dam was begun in the summer of 1898 and finished in June 1902. As then left, it was  $1\frac{1}{4}$  miles long, 125 feet high at its deepest part, 81 feet wide at the bottom, and 23 feet at the top—wide enough for a good roadway and a line of rails for trolleys. Between the water-level above and below the dam there was a difference of 67 feet. There are 180 sluice-gates, and when they are all open they will let the flood through at the rate of 500,000 cubic feet per second. The reservoir above, or rather the Nile lake 100 miles long, would store 1300 million cubic yards of water, which sounds a perfectly appalling quantity. While the dam was being made it was of course necessary to keep the Nile navigation open, and a canal, sufficient for the passage of large boats, was cut through the rocky hill on the west bank of the Nile—the hill of living granite from which the great shafts and monoliths were hewn for the temples of Karnak and

Thebes. One such may be seen only half torn from its bed, defined by the double tier of square holes mortised in the face of the cliff. Wooden wedges were to be driven into these slots, and water poured upon them till they swelled and the rock cracked under the strain. Our engineers, who cut and squared and lifted their own masonry with hardened steel chisels and steam machinery, were amazed at this evidence of laborious, persistent, indomitable effort. In this wise were the mammoth temples builded, the mighty columns and pylons quarried, carried, shaped, set up, by master-workmen who had perhaps only tools of bronze at their command, and ropes, and beams, and wooden levers, and thousands of straining oxen, and tens of thousands of patient human hands. But at Assuan the busy hands were suddenly stilled, perhaps by war, or dynastic revolution, or a barbarian raid, or it may be the bankruptcy of the contractors; the tools were thrown down, the workers fled, the work was left unfinished as we see it, with the cuts and borings in the rock as clean and sharp as though they were made yesterday instead of forty centuries ago.

Egypt, to revert to a former statement, is the creation of the irrigationist, whether he works with the immemorial bucket and lever, unchanged on the Nile bank to-day since that of the earliest dynasties, or whether he uses the scarcely less ancient water-wheel, the hand-pump, or the perennial canal. By the completion of the Delta barrage, the construction of the new water-courses, and the storage of the waters in the Assuan reservoir, British engineers since the Occupation began have added new territory

to the country ; but the entire cultivable area is not yet provided for. All the available water is at present used profitably, and in the summer time, when the Nile is low, hardly a drop trickles away to the sea without having done its duty first upon the fields. It was found that the milliards of cubic feet of water, held up in the great reservoir, were still insufficient to moisten all the land which might be brought into cultivation. For some years to come it will be the task of our engineers to devise measures for increasing the supply. Since 1907, they have been engaged in repairing, in part, the mistake made in modifying Sir William Willcocks's original design in deference to the sentimental outcry about Philæ. The dam has been raised by five metres ; and if this involves a further submersion of the temples, it has more than doubled the capacity of the reservoir. The additions were completed in December 1912. When I visited the dam, the extension was in course of construction, and the resident engineer showed me round the works, and explained the ingenious devices by which a mass of new masonry had to be riveted to the existing structure so as to render it capable of supporting the additional strain. The increase of storage capacity will supply the perennial canals for some years ; but eventually even that addition will be inadequate, and more water will be wanted.

Where is it to come from ? The engineers answer that question by turning to the 'Anglo-Egyptian Sudan,' and then the full value of that dominion becomes apparent ; for Sir William Garstin and his coadjutors have been considering several audacious schemes for increasing the

quantity of water brought down to the cataracts by the Nile, and it is only on its upper courses through the Sudan that the river can be dealt with in this fashion. The volume of the great stream has already been frittered away and diminished long before it touches the Egyptian border. More than half the amount brought down from the equatorial lakes is wasted in the swamps and marshes of the Sudd region. Since the collapse of the Mahdist rule, British officers have been actively at work here. In the dockyard at Khartum, I saw the gunboats, equipped with big steel saws, which are used for shearing through the tangle of floating weed and reed and papyrus that obstructed, and almost blocked, the flow of the White Nile. The Sudd itself is not wasted: a German inventor has discovered a method of converting the dried blocks of vegetable debris into fuel, and a company is at work in the Sudan for carrying out the process. The Sudd had grown so dense, during the years of neglect under the Mahdist and the later Egyptian rule, that all communication with the upper waters of the Nile was cut off. To the immeasurable benefit of Egypt, the British occupation restored it. The true bed of the river had in fact disappeared; but in 1900, Colonel Peake forced a passage through a series of shallow lakes for 172 miles. Next year another 147 miles of fairway were reclaimed, and in 1903-4, the whole length of the Nile was laid open. Now, though still with incessant labour and vigilance, a passage is kept clear, so that the river is navigable as far as Gondokoro, and the volume of water brought down has largely increased. The sportsmen and pleasure parties,

who get glimpses of Equatorial Africa from the decks of the Government steamers, should give a thought to the resourceful energy which has enabled them to enjoy this comfortable journey.

But, though the Sudd is kept down, the White Nile still soaks its way through swamp and lagoon for nearly 400 miles, and the waste by absorption and evaporation is enormous. By closing all the outlets into the marshes, and widening and deepening the channel, much of this loss will be prevented. Sir William Garstin has even suggested a bolder project—nothing less than that of diverting the course of the river, so as to make it avoid the swamp region altogether, and turning it into a new straight channel 200 miles long. Long before that ambitious enterprise is attempted it is probable that another Assuan dam will be erected south of Khartum for the irrigation of the whole great tract of country above the First Cataract. Even more fascinating is the proposal, which will be carried into effect some day, for building a dam to regulate the discharge from the outlet of Albert Nyanza, and so to convert that lake and Victoria Nyanza into colossal storage reservoirs. ‘At the great lakes,’ says Sir William Willcocks, ‘with the sweep of a giant’s hand,’ the whole Nile system can be handled and controlled. ‘Lake Victoria,’ adds the same authority, ‘is the true key of the Nile, and whoever holds it has the destinies of Egypt in the hollow of his hand. Modern Egypt, with its cotton and sugar-cane crops, depending on the summer supply of the river, and its new perennial canals, is absolutely dependent on the equatorial lakes over whose outlets flies the flag of Great Britain.’

That is a conclusive answer, if there were no other, to the people who talk lightly of terminating the connection between England and the Nile Valley. England cannot withdraw from the scene, if only because the immense potential resources of the North African river basin cannot be developed to their highest capacity without her direction and control.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE CLIENTS OF COOK

AT Assuan, one finds oneself whirled tumultuously into the full stream of Egyptian pleasure-seekers. Some go by the Nile boat up to the temples of Abu Simbel and the Second Cataract at Wady Halfa ; a few take the train onwards as far as Khartum. But the majority are content to bring their southward journey to a close at Assuan. They sentimentalise over the submerged temples at Philæ and stare at the great dam ; the most of them spend a few days, or it may be weeks, sunning themselves on donkey-back or camel-back in the desert, boating on the Nile, wandering over Elephantine Island, or surveying that place of many memories from the terraces of the hotels.

One has many temptations to linger and ' fleet the time pleasantly.' From my window at the Cataract, I enjoyed a prospect which was a never-ending delight and interest. To watch the changing colours of the great river at my feet might of itself have been an occupation for an idle man's day. In the morning, before the sun had warmed it into translucency, it lay before one a sheet of oily brown ; it turned to a clear green-grey at midday, and settled into steely white under the cold luminosity of the moon. Before evening, the tourists, thirsty for tea after the jaunts of



the day, would assemble on the terrace to watch the tremendous pageant of the sunset. It is a thing distinctive and unique, that dying of the daylight in Upper Egypt, because all the colours of the changing sky are transmitted by the broad refracting mirror of the Nile. Fantastic and amazing are the variations of the ætherial tints as they quiver upon the face of the waters and drown in their depths. Like an army with banners, the long columns of carmine and orange march across the firmament, and wane above the rugged hills of the western bank into the mauve and violet of the matchless Egyptian afterglow; and the Nile is mottled in squares and patches of diverse hue. Immediately before us, it is a dull purple, in which the shadows of the rocks and the reflection of a passing dahabiyeh hang black. Farther to the south lies a space of glowing rose, then one of lemon-yellow slowly burnishing itself to gold. Mighty boulders edge into the stream, or fling themselves as rocky islets into its course, and force it to cream and splutter over the cataracts.

Opposite, we see the Island of Elephantine, with its Nubian villages nestling among the palm-groves: Elephantine, where once Juvenal, an unwilling exile, pointed wrathful hexameters against Egyptian superstition and Roman officialdom. But Juvenal, groaning for the club-life and fashionable society of the metropolis, was a mere upstart modern like ourselves. Austerer and more ancient memories face us at Elephantine. Those laughing American boys and girls in the sailing-boat yonder are putting across for the Nilometer, which was old when Strabo saw it. Presently, their dragoman will bid them notice the inscribed rocks

by the waterside, where they will see the cartouches and texts of Thothmes II and Rameses II, sharp cut into the imperishable granite three thousand years ago.

Egypt is the classic land of the tourist. Here, at any rate, he need not blush for himself as a *parvenu*. The late Mr. Thomas Cook, wood-turner, printer, Baptist missionary, and man of genius, did, it is true, re-open the Nile lands for Western and Northern holiday-makers in the nineteenth century. But his clients were only following a very ancient tradition. The Egyptian winter excursionist is of a venerable antiquity. He was perambulating the Nile banks long before the country that gave birth to Cook had emerged from barbarism. Even the globe-trotter, observing the curious details with an eye to publication, may be comforted by the thought that personages of the highest literary respectability were doing the same thing before Greece had grown old and while Rome was still young. The Father of History is his great exemplar. Herodotus, the first special correspondent, was filling his journalistic notebooks with points about Egypt even as his humbler successors are doing to-day. Strabo, another useful member of the craft, was occupied in similar fashion four hundred years later. He had an introduction to the officer-in-command at Assuan, who took him out for a drive in the desert, and showed him the sights of the locality, and brought him back to dinner, and, I dare say, spent the evening with him discussing the detestable condition of home politics and explaining to his civilian visitor that the gross incompetency of the Roman war office was simply ruining the Service. *Plus ça change plus c'est la même*

*chose*, at least in Egypt, where one counts by centuries as elsewhere by years. And my own belief is that centuries hence, when the Turks have gone from the Mediterranean, and when the English occupation is no more than a scratch on the historic record, the tourist from lands afar will still come to spend joyous winters in Egypt, will still loaf pleasantly up and down the Nile, will still grope his way into the tombs of the kings, will still stand awestruck before the mammoth ruin of Karnak, and will still be hauled by rapacious ragamuffins over the ledges of the Pyramid.

He was indeed very like ourselves, that ancient tourist, even in his vulgarities; and he went and scratched his name and his banal observations on the monuments, like any cheap tripper. Excursionists of the Greek and Roman times have left their mark all over the feet and legs of the majestic northern Colossus of Memmon at Thebes; and some Ionian mercenaries—a company of Greek ‘Tommies,’ homeward-bound from the Sudan—placed a notice of their journey on the polished granite of the great statues at Abu Simbel. But that which is common and ill-bred in the present is gilded by a ray of romance when it has been perpetrated long ago. For this antique cockneyism, we can only be grateful. Those Greek and Latin inscriptions at the base of the Colossus are too trivial to disfigure the monster. They do but add to its impression of permanence and power. Calm, immovable, enormous, gazing for ever in passionless meditation on the grey immensities of the desert, above the palm-trees and the villages and the transient towns, the great twin brethren sat as they sit to-day; and, at their feet, the little human insects from the

Ægean and the Adriatic crawled and chattered, as our great-great-grandchildren may crawl and chatter in the short to-morrow of eternity.

I do not think that the modern tourist, as a general rule, takes the antiquities too seriously. 'I am getting fed up with temples,' observed one gay youth, as we bucketed on our donkeys over this same monumental plain of Thebes. Most of the visitors, it is true, provide themselves with the volumes of Baedeker, Murray, or Flinders Petrie, and begin with an honest endeavour to assimilate those improving works; but after a time they get mixed up among the dynasties and the cartouches, and can hardly distinguish Queen Candace from Queen Hatshepu, or Amenhotep from Psammetichus. They are rather a jolly lot, who have come from the smoke of London, the chills of Berlin, and the wintry rigours of Chicago, in holiday mood, entirely resolved to enjoy themselves. Of modern Egypt—the real, living Egypt—they know even less than they do of that ancient Egypt which still lies half buried under the dust; but the Egypt of Messrs. Cook, the Egypt of the hotels and the palace steamers, the Egypt of the dragoman and the donkey-boy, the Egypt which dines and dances and holds gymkhanas, the Egypt which enables the Northern sojourner to bask and play in the sun—that they most keenly appreciate. They visit the monuments in parties and in the highest spirits. There are middle-aged ladies, who have never ridden donkeys since their childhood, and are proud of their success with these fiery animals; middle-aged gentlemen, exchanging jocularities with the guides; young folks of both sexes, much

occupied with one another. Five out of six carry kodaks, and photograph with indiscriminating assiduity.

For idle people who want to while away a month or two agreeably there is no pleasanter region than the Upper Nile, though most visitors, I believe, come away convinced that the climate hardly deserves its reputation. It can be bitterly cold in the mornings even at Assuan and Luxor ; and Cairo in January is sometimes as uncomfortable as London in November. But the tourist need not get up till the day is fairly warmed, and he is indoors long before the evening chill sets in. The temples and tombs at least furnish an excellent excuse for long rides and hilarious afternoons. The hardships of travel are unfelt, since the best Egyptian hotels are not easily to be beaten in any country for comfort and luxury. An admirable *table d'hôte*, the ministrations of a competent *chef* and *maître d'hôtel*, a good orchestra, a commodious lounge, a cosmopolitan society in the best of tempers, perhaps a dance, send the visitor happily to bed. Cookian Egypt is run on the probably correct assumption that most visitors are well provided with money to spend and all bent on amusing themselves. The severe voyager who comes abroad to economise has scarcely as yet found his way to the Nile ; though, towards the end of the season, strange cohorts of the personally conducted, doing the country at a moderate inclusive charge, descend upon the land. But to enjoy the winter Nile trip, it is better not to be too earnest or too thrifty. If you want to study the people or the monuments seriously, come earlier or later in the season, before the holiday horde has arrived or after it has gone away.

Egypt, then, for a certain number of weeks in the winter is a tourist land, and such, under all political and social vicissitudes, it is likely to remain. Whether this is wholly an advantage to the country may be doubted. The visitors bring in some money, but only a small portion is left to 'fructify in the pockets of the people.' Perhaps some two millions sterling are spent in Egypt each year between December and March. But of this sum the greater part goes to the tourist agencies, the steamship companies, and the great hotels, and returns to Europe as dividends and interest on the international capital by which these concerns are run. The salaries and wages paid to Swiss managers and German waiters scarcely add to the wealth of Egypt; nor the money expended in the fashionable shops in Cairo, largely owned by Greeks, Italians, and Frenchmen. There remains the harvest reaped by carriage proprietors, guides, dragomans, donkey-drivers, bazaar-vendors, and miscellaneous appropriators of baksheesh. Many of these persons do pretty well. A young dragoman at Luxor told me that he devoted the entire summer to study and meditation, and yet was able to make enough in the winter to maintain his wife and family in comfort. He had been drawn for the Conscription, and had promptly bought himself off out of his savings: no ten years' servitude in the ranks for this capitalist. But the men and boys who cultivate the tourist field are not the most estimable members of Egyptian society, nor are they improved by their contact with Western civilisation. Too many of the peasantry are tempted away from their villages by this easy method of earning money. The thrifty, laborious peasant

is converted into a tout and hanger-on ; he becomes extortionate and insolent, and has grown too lazy by the end of the season to return to the monotonous toil of his hamlet. He idles about all the summer, reserving himself for the excitement of baksheesh-hunting and hotel-haunting in the winter.

Old residents deplore the demoralisation produced by this annual gamble for piastres, and complain that it is aggravated by the careless bounty of the visitors, who treat the natives with a familiarity which they often abuse. One hears lurid stories in Cairo of the relations of some European lady-visitors towards certain of the picturesque Arab ruffians who swagger about in the capacity of drago-mans. No doubt these tales are greatly exaggerated ; but the lower-class native, accustomed for generations to be treated with utter contempt by his 'betters,' easily misunderstands a slight display of courtesy and interest. The donkey-boys, while they remain boys, are often brisk, ready-witted, and amusingly cheeky young rascals ; but, grown to man's estate, they become greedy and impertinent, and contrast disagreeably with the unspoilt fellahin, who are respectful, reserved, and not without a certain humble dignity. The visitor usually comes away rather unfavourably impressed by the Egyptian native ; but that is because he sees only the worst specimens of the population in their worst aspects. If he had any opportunity of making acquaintance with Mohammedan gentlemen of the old-fashioned kind, and not merely the smart young men in tarbooshes who read French novels and patronise the hotels, or if he took occasion to see the villagers in their homes and at their work, his estimate might be more indulgent.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE HILLS OF THE DEAD

THESE winter visitors to Egypt are, as I have endeavoured to explain, for the most part in a buoyant frame of mind. The gloomy grandeur of the ancient monuments does not greatly impress, and is far indeed from depressing, them. They have come to the Nile only incidentally to inspect temples and tombs ; their main quest is for a good climate and a good time. As to the former, they sometimes have to pretend pretty hard in order to persuade themselves that they are thoroughly satisfied ; for Egypt in December and January is not all warmth and sunny sky. They get their best time as a rule in Upper Egypt, when they have exchanged the relaxing air of Cairo for the bracing dryness of Assuan and Luxor. In the latter place, that centre of colossal ruins and amazing monuments, they can enjoy themselves very much ; and, if they do full justice to the excellent cuisine and other highly modern amenities of the hotels, they do not fail to pay their respects to the stupendous remains of Karnak, and make frequent pilgrimages across the river to the plain and necropolis of Thebes.

One might well come from the ends of the earth to Egypt, if Egypt had nothing else to show but these over-



powering vestiges of a vanished civilisation. There are people who find something barbaric in mere size. By this criterion the ancient Egyptians were barbarians; for in actual bigness most modern buildings are band-boxes by comparison with some of theirs. But I cannot agree that the temple of Karnak is imposing only by its magnitude, like an English railway terminus or an American skyscraper. When you stand inside the great Hippostyle hall, and let your eye travel about that wilderness of mighty columns and crushing beams, you are conscious of elemental power like that of Nature herself in her more prodigal moods of achievement. So does one survey the mammoth wedge of the Matterhorn and the splintered peaks of the Rockies. Carry the mind for a moment away to the works of classic or Gothic art: the Parthenon, in its white beauty; Chartres and Canterbury, with all their wealth of flying arch and fretted buttress and petrified embroidery, seem toy-like before the superb simplicity of those colossal lotus capitals that blossom above the swelling vastness of the columns. But Karnak, as we see it to-day, has the majesty of strength in desolation; conceive what it must once have been when every smoothed beam and polished shaft glowed with the colours of the desert and the sunset, with blazing red and vivid green and burning yellow; and when from every wall and roof there waved tapestries of blue and crimson and gold. In the masonry of the pylons at Luxor there are deep slots to hold the triple masts from which the long streamers floated—masts and streamers, I doubt not, as much greater than the poles and pennants before St. Mark's as the Karnak temple, with its mile-long

avenue of sphinxes, was greater than the Venetian casket of jewellery work. It was worth while to be a tourist in Egypt in those days.

Karnak and Luxor, the cities of the living, lie on the east bank of the Nile. On the west bank opposite is the City of the Dead. In the wide level plain by the river was Thebes, with its temples and streets, and its colonies of priests, embalmers, and mortuary-workers, and attendants of all kinds. Some three miles back, the desert plateau of the Sahara drops down in rugged slopes and banks, where 'the kings and counsellors of the earth' sleep in the 'desolate places' they hollowed for themselves among the rocks. No tourist omits to visit the Tombs of the Kings: it is one of the show-spots of Egypt; and here more than anywhere else, I think, the traveller loses by the conditions under which he usually undertakes the journey. For this pilgrimage to the last habitations of the buried Pharaohs, the holiday mood is distinctly inappropriate. The effect lies almost as much in the approach as in the funeral chambers themselves, and it is apt to be missed in the company of garrulous guides and noisy excursionists.

For myself, I went alone, and walked. Nobody ever walks in Egypt; and the hotel porter, when informed that I proposed to adopt that method of locomotion, regarded me with horror and contempt. I so far agree with him that I should generally prefer to be transported by a railway train, a motor-car, a horse, a camel, a mule, or a bicycle, rather than by that clumsy appliance the human leg, which has always seemed to me singularly ill adapted for rapid and convenient progression. But on this occasion; I did

well to go afoot. My solitary morning tramp across the Theban plain, and up into the Hills of the Dead, repaid the fatigue it involved. For a couple of miles or so the road passes through the villages, beside irrigation canals, and over the cultivated ground. Then the fields are left, and you wind your way up among the barren hills. I do not know any place that gives a more absolute impression of forlorn and lifeless solitude. It is desert not here lying before you in a vast expanse of air and radiance, but desert channelled into narrow gorges or tossed into rifted crags and cliffs of sand ; not a tree or a blade of grass or a rill of water to break the blank numbness of the dry and withered ridges. The path, threading upward through these desolate glens, leads at length to the foot of a bold mountain mass that throws its broad front and heavy sloping shoulders up to the skyline, and looks as if the world ended with its crest : for the ancient Egyptians it did, and, in a sense, it does so still. The mountain has only one side : it is the stairway to the upland plateau of the North African desert. You can climb to the summit, and then you find yourself on level ground again, the infinite level of the Sahara, that stretches for two thousand miles straight in front of you. You might ride, if you could carry food and sustenance for yourself and your beasts, for weeks and months, due west across that waste till you came almost down to the shores of the Atlantic. The ancients thought that the other world lay beyond this pathless plain, and they buried their kings and princes and nobles at its edge, that they might find the way from it to their last abiding-place.

In the heart of the mountain are the courts, the palaces, the mansions of the dead. The funeral procession wound up from the populous plains below by that same road I had traversed. Long corridors and passages were hewn in the everlasting stone ; at their inmost end a deep, square chamber, where they placed the sarcophagus of the king, and his mummy—perhaps, also the mummies of his queens, his sons, and his daughters. Then they walled up the entrance with great stones, and left Pharaoh to reign in his silent kingdom alone. The centuries came and went ; Egypt, Persia, Greece, and Rome passed away ; ‘ the drums and tramlings of a thousand conquests ’ echoed along the banks of the Nile ; and still Pharaoh slept in his palace of the underworld. In the tomb of Amenophes II, opened in 1899, you may watch his slumbers even now. The mummy is there in the stone coffin, where they placed it when the king died. It is easily visible, for the tombs are wired and lighted by electricity to prevent the discolouration of the walls and ceilings by the torches of the guides. Blackened and shrivelled, the corpse is recognisably human, perhaps even in some degree regal, with its stiff legs, its thin hands, the narrow, high forehead, the haughty firmness of the tight-closed lips and eyes. In the massive stone chest the king lies as they left him. All about him the figured walls of his maze of cells and galleries glow with the records of his triumphs and his deeds, glaring and staring at you, as when they stained and chiselled them 3000 years ago : Pharaoh, magnificent and vindictive, binding his enemies in ropes, dragging captive kings behind his chariot-wheels, building, smiting, sacrificing, destroying ; there

are the servants of his pleasures, the ministers of his power, above all the dreadful gods, his guardians, dog-headed fiends and vulture-headed monsters, who have taken Pharaoh unto themselves. A strange and terrible world this, that the explorers laid bare for us when they violated the hiding-places of the City of the Dead !

And yet it was not all gloom and wrath and savage magnificence. In the Museum at Cairo you can see the objects taken from the graves, notably the treasures found by Mr. Theodore Davis in the tomb of Queen Thya's parents. Mr. Davis is a wealthy and enthusiastic American excavator, who has laboured with tireless zeal to rob the hiding-places of Thebes of their secrets. The cases filled by his industry and liberality at Cairo are of extraordinary interest. There are beautiful inlaid coffers of sandal-wood and ivory; delicate alabaster vases, painted and gilded chariots, chairs and couches plated with gold, elegant and symmetrical as the best Louis Quinze work ; there, or in other apartments of the Museum, are exquisite rings and bracelets and brooches, gold rosettes to fasten my lady's dress, and gemmed tiaras for the coils of her dusky hair. The men who piled up the Pyramids, and forced myriads of straining slaves to drag immense stone coffins into the cavities of the hills, had a taste for art and beauty and luxury, too. They worked in miniature as well as on the grandest scale, and carved a jade scarab, no bigger than a plum-stone, or fashioned a necklace of amber beads to lie lightly on some soft bosom, a jewel to hang from a little brown ear, with the same sure workmanship and unflinching

skill with which they wrought at the great monoliths that stand solemnly among the lamp-posts of the Thames Embankment and the statuettes of the Place de la Concorde. Truly a wonderful people, with more mysteries to them than the antiquarians have revealed.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### CAIRO IMPRESSIONS

To many visitors, I think the first impression of Cairo must be one of disappointment. The untravelled tourist, trained to believe that he is here in the heart of the genuine, unadulterated East, is, no doubt, easily pleased. He is looking for local colour, and he gets it, mistaking the hotel 'Arabs' for genuine children of the desert, and photographing Coptic clerks and Levantine hawkers under the belief that they are representative specimens of the Moslem population. He has come to Egypt with a stock of preconceived ideas, and he takes some time to dispose of them. One of these notions is that it is always blazing hot in this quarter of the globe—a delusion from which he is sometimes roughly awakened by a severe cold or an attack of influenza. I went to a garden-party at Ghezireh one afternoon in January. It was dull and cloudy, with a fresh wind blowing, and most of the male guests were attired in dark tweeds or serge coats, with bowler hats or similar head-coverings. My sympathy was aroused for a new-comer from Europe, who had arrayed himself for the occasion in light flannels, knickerbockers, putties, and a huge sun helmet. In this respect the Teuton is a worse offender than the Briton. The latter has a natural dislike

for the unconventional and the *outré* in dress ; but the voyager from the Fatherland clings shiveringl\_y to his tropical garb and his helmet on days which suggest thick overcoats and the comforts of the fireside.

To the stranger, however, who knows something of the East, who has seen it in Persia, or India, or even Turkey, Cairo at the first view must seem a rather cockneyfied place. And to him who comes down, as I did, from the Sudan, it will appear that he has left Africa some way behind, and has stepped back into Europe. As I drove from the railway station on a dark evening, in a drizzle of rain, I thought to myself that if I had dropped down here from the clouds, I might well have believed myself in almost any great city on the other side of the Mediterranean. The tall, stucco-fronted houses with iron balconies, the wine-shops, the cafés, the tramways, the granite-paved roads, the frequent lettering in French and Italian, were full of Western suggestion. In Cairo, the visitor lives and spends most of his time in a quarter which is entirely modern and Occidentalised : a quarter of wide, new boulevards, high blocks of offices and flats, plate-glass shop windows, and huge, staring hotels.

New Cairo, like most of the Continental capitals from Christiania to Belgrade, aims at a bad imitation of Paris, and succeeds as well as the others. It is a little humiliating for *nous autres*, we English, to reflect that, in spite of all we have done in the world, in spite of our success, our energy, our material power, it is not our particular type of civilisation and society that our rivals, our clients, even our dependents, are anxious to copy. It is a case of *Græcia*



*capta* over again. Here, in Egypt, we are the victors and the rulers : we ' run the show,' politically and economically ; we dominate administrative and military matters ; we are the most efficient and potent influence in the country ; we are obeyed, and, on the whole, I think we are respected. But we have not insinuated our way into the Egyptian heart. We are not loved ; our habits, our customs, our ideals do not appeal to their sympathies. When Young Egypt casts its eyes outwards it looks to France. It reads French books, it likes to speak the French language, it sees French plays, it relaxes itself in what it supposes to be the French manner ; it cultivates, so far as it can, French society, masculine and feminine—especially feminine. When it takes a European holiday it does not seek the coasts of Britain : it finds our manners, as well as our climate, too chilly, and it does not care for our recreations. It prefers Rome and Vienna, and the Riviera, and, above all, Paris, and returns with ultra-Parisian tastes, which it endeavours, so far as possible, to gratify at home. The tragic shade of the captive of Sedan sometimes seems to me to haunt the Haussmannised avenues of modern Cairo. The Paris of Napoleon III was the Paradise which Ismail Pasha tried to reproduce on the banks of the Nile ; and he did not wholly fail, though he wrecked himself, and nearly wrecked his country, in the effort.

Of its kind, and for those who like that sort of thing, it is a fine town, this new Cairo, with its palaces, its legations, its handsome public buildings, its hotels, its theatres and cafés-chantants, its pleasant residential suburbs, and its general air of brisk activity. When I saw the city first,

it was supposed to be a little despondent financially. The Egyptian land boom had collapsed, and many people who were very rich on paper a few months before were economising and retrenching; and, moreover, Egypt had been adversely affected by the misfortunes of the European, and particularly the American, stock markets, and the hotel-keepers were sadly deploring the paucity of wealthy visitors during the present season. But to the outward eye there seemed no particular sign of depression. The great hotels gave their weekly dances, and the scene was gay with brilliant uniforms and jewelled shoulders; visitors and residents dined luxuriously in the restaurants and took tea on the terraces; the streets were thronged with lively crowds on foot; and in the roadways landaus and motor-cars jostled the broughams of Egyptian ladies, their faces visible under the thin gauze veil which Mussulman convention still demands from the one sex, even as it rigorously prescribes the invariable red tarboosh above the frock-coat or tweed suit of the most Europeanised members of the other.

The most attractive spot in modern Cairo is the outlet of the great iron bridge, which crosses the Nile near the Museum of Antiquities and the Kasr-en-Nil barracks of the Army of Occupation, where you may see T. Atkins, Esquire, leaning out of the windows in his shirt-sleeves, or punting a football about on the parade-ground. Not far off is the British Agency, which every cabdriver knew as 'Lordy Cromer's house,' long after Sir Eldon Gorst had come to sit in the seat of power. In the morning, the bridge is crossed by long trains of Arabs and fellahin from the

outlying villages, with loaded camels and donkeys ; in the afternoon by strings of polo ponies, and by fashionable carriages taking out ladies to pay calls upon their friends in the Ghezireh. This Ghezireh is the large island in the Nile where the English live when they can afford it. Here the more prosperous officials and professional men abide in spacious villas with pretty gardens, and here is the Khedivial Sports Club, where the British colony plays polo and golf and tennis in the afternoons, and holds its race meetings. It is a patch of well-to-do middle-class Britain with which Egyptian society has small part or lot.

This is new Cairo. The old Cairo exists, the Cairo of the bazaars, the mosques, the swarming Mohammedan population, the narrow lanes, and tall, overhanging houses, with barred and trellised windows. Some of it is a little cockneyfied too. The main highway, the famous Musky, is not what it was ; its shops are about as Oriental as those in the Tottenham Court Road, and many of the wares displayed might equally well be purchased in London, or New York, or Vienna. But it is still picturesque with its cosmopolitan and diversified throng : Greeks, Syrians, Copts, Arabs, Italians, Jews, Mohammedan peasants, Cairo tradesfolk and workpeople, fakirs, beggars, English officers in khaki, American girls, native women, black-robed and (more or less) veiled. Penetrate into the narrow streets leading to the right and left, and you may breathe a somewhat less diluted atmosphere ; but, even here, the Greek and Italian names over the bazaar booths are numerous, and in the very middle of one dark and malodorous lane, I saw a bold inscription to the effect that Dr. Somebody,

graduate of the University of Philadelphia, was prepared to supply patients with advice and medicine. Compared with the bazaar quarter of Indian cities, that of Cairo strikes one as a little dull and neutral tinted ; for the monotonous fez, and the dirty blue and black and white robes of the labouring people, are poor substitutes for the brightly dyed cottons and variegated turbans of Bombay, Delhi, or Jaipur. In one respect, old Cairo is Eastern enough : for filth and darkness it need fear no comparison. Its uncleansed lanes are slippery with mud or smothered in dust, and they are lighted ineffectively, or not at all, save by the faint gleam of lanterns from the open stalls. If you chance to get into one of these lanes on the night of a Mohammedan wedding you may see the whole place lit by a line of waving torches, dancing in the hands of a crowd of friends of the family, and the dark fronts of the houses illuminated by festooned red lamps, and then the scene is one of Salvator Rosa-like picturesqueness. But native Cairo did not strike me as a favourable example of municipal regulation ; and for a town which has lived for thirty years under the progressive hand of British officialism it is not quite what one could wish.

To the judicious visitor, the attraction of this city is neither its Western veneer nor its Eastern squalor, but its specimens of Oriental art in some of its most fascinating phases. The Museum of Arabian Antiquities is almost as interesting as the Egyptian Museum, where are gathered the mummies and sarcophagi, and other treasures, from the rifled tombs and temples of the ancient dynasties. Moslem art, in its flowering day, was never so ambitious or

imposing ; but it produced delicious mosaics, marvellously carved and fretted woodwork, splendid doors and lamps and caskets of chased bronze, and lovely glass in white as pure as the summer cloud and in blue as deep as the autumn sea. In among the narrow lanes and huddled houses you will come suddenly upon an old mosque, sometimes dark and dirty, but perhaps with a noble recessed doorway, or a beautiful cupola, resting lightly and gracefully on its throne, with its tall guardian minarets beside it. Those who think that Mohammedanism means necessarily stagnation and barbarism will alter their opinion when they have studied the mosques of Cairo and considered what Islam produced in its great periods of culture. The mosque of Sultan Hasan was completed in the year of the Prophet, 762, which is A.D. 1360, and it is not unworthy to rank beside some of the noblest of contemporaneous Christian cathedrals. When you look on the sumptuous decoration of its lofty and superb porch, on the splendid poise of its minaret, and the majestic arches which crown the recesses of its inner court, you may think that the architects of the Khalifate were fit compeers of the master-builders of the Western churches. The Egyptians have always regarded this mosque as the finest in the world, and they say that Sultan Hasan ordered the right hand of the designer to be cut off that he might not build another to vie with it.

The mosque of Hasan lies at the foot of the mass of rock called the Citadel. On the Citadel itself, in front of the walls and battlements of the mediæval fortress, there is a great modern mosque—the mosque of Mehemet Ali—visible all

over the city, with its huge dome and two conspicuous towers—no bad memorial of the bold adventurer who would have tumbled the Turk out of Asia Minor, and restored the Eastern Califate, but for the interference of the Western Powers. The Citadel is the last crag of the mountain ridge called the Mokattam Hills, which strides across the desert, and ends abruptly at the river plain whereon Cairo rests. A great city, seen from an adjacent height, is always impressive; the view of Cairo from the Citadel at evening is of unique magnificence, if only because of the pageant of strange colour that commonly follows the Egyptian sunset. The sea of flat, grey roofs, broken by domes and cupolas and turrets, lies under a veil of purple, shading away to smoky blackness on one horizon, and glowing in astonishing banks of orange and amber and crimson on the other. Across the gleaming streak of the Nile, the plain stretches in a band of green and then of level drab.

Suddenly, the eye as it travels westwards is caught by the two mighty wedges of the Pyramids, looming in dim immensity through the evening haze. Seen at close quarters and by day, the Pyramids look disappointingly insignificant. There are no buildings about them to give the scale, and, with their rough surfaces of dusty yellow, they are only two more big sandhills among the adjacent mounds and dunes of the desert. One thinks that their builders would have done better to plant them in the midst of a city whose edifices would have served to give the measure of the stupendous tumuli. We are constantly told that the greatest Pyramid covers exactly the area of Lincoln's Inn Fields. I some-

times wish it were *in* Lincoln's Inn Fields, thrusting its blunt point into the clouded sky far above the tumultuous roofs and climbing spires of London. As it is, you must be miles away to gain the full effect of the great barrows. You see them best in the stretch of desert on the opposite side of the Nile, between Heluan and Cairo, or from the ridge of the Mokattam Hills. Then you perceive that the monument of 'Cheops' and its fellow are only the culminating peaks of a chain—the Mont Blanc and Monte Rosa of a range of pyramids strung out for miles along the plain. Veritable mountains they seem as they rise boldly from the level ground. It is hard to believe that they are only some three or four hundred feet high, instead of as many thousands; or that these, among the greatest works of men's hands, are also the oldest that are left to us.

## CHAPTER XIX

### IN THE DELTA

To the tourist, Egypt is a land of tombs, temples, touts, and hotels, a land of desert and sun-baked sand. But there is another Egypt which the tourist does not know: the Egypt of the alluvial plain between Cairo and the sea, the Egypt of the agricultural villages where they grow the cotton crop, and of the busy provincial towns where they store and sell it. Tintah and Damanhur are certainly not so interesting as Luxor; but to those whose concern is with the present and future rather than with the remote past they are perhaps as instructive.

An excursion into the Delta is not easily carried out unless the visitor has relations with Englishmen or influential natives who have official or business interests in that part of the country. There are few hotels or pensions, no guides or donkey-boys, and no facilities for the pleasure traveller; therefore, for board and lodging and the means of locomotion away from the railway, the inquirer must be indebted to the good offices of friends. Properly introduced, he will find no difficulty in this respect; for hospitality is a tradition with the Englishman in the East as it is with the Oriental himself. The British element in the Delta is select rather than numerous; it consists of a few officials, inspectors,



irrigation engineers, and the superior staff of the banks and the great land companies which have bought agricultural estates, and are supervising and developing them. All these are in pretty close contact with the people, and they can tell you more about them, if they choose, than you will learn in the Cairo Government offices.

It was with one of these gentlemen, the manager of an Anglo-Egyptian land syndicate, an accomplished Arabic scholar, and a man who knows the fellah and the fields through and through, that I stayed in the heart of the Delta, and made some acquaintance with the people of Egypt who are, and always have been, the peasantry. The real Egypt is not the Egypt of the towns: these are largely alien settlements, with the European, Greek, Syrian, Amenian, and other extraneous elements disproportionately represented. The genuine native, the *autochthon*, born of the Nile silt, is a delver of the soil, as he was before the Moslem or the Romans came. His aspect when you come upon him at work in his dykes and ditches is startlingly reminiscent of the ancient monuments. In appearance, colouring, physical conformation, he is like the serfs of Pharaoh; he has the same high shoulders, he wears the same close-fitting skull-cap, he uses the same tool, the small curved adze, and scratches the soil with the same primitive plough drawn by bullocks. And no doubt his mud-walled huts and his tastes and habits and ideas have suffered no greater change.

An hour's journey by the main line that links Cairo with Alexandria, a short run on the excellent light railway system that spreads its useful network over the Delta, and a drive of some five miles, and we had reached the large,

square, whitewashed building where I was to stay. As we went along, I saw fresh samples of the real Egypt, and wondered more and more to find it so little like the Egypt of tradition and the picture-books. It had been raining heavily, and the primitive, unmetalled roads were sodden with mire. Those people who still believe the pleasing old myth of the geography-books, that Egypt is a 'rainless' country, should have been with us on that drive to see the horses smoking and straining in the effort to drag the clumsy *arabiyah* through a muddy compost that clogged the wheels and caked on the axles till at length the machine stuck fast and had to be extricated by a gang of toiling peasants with ropes and planks. They should have accompanied us the next day when we rode into Damanhur, with the ponies splashing to the stirrup-leathers in pools of viscous water. I have never seen a much muddier town than Damanhur was that day, and its conditions made one reflect alike on the Egyptian winter and the benefits of municipal self-government; for the place enjoys the advantage of a native municipality. But, in justice to the climate, let me add, I was earnestly assured that I had fallen upon an exceptionally bad spell of weather, and that the locality is not often visited by showers of such volume. Indeed, on my second day the sun came out, and it was bright and clear and even warm in the afternoon, though at night I shivered under my rugs and overcoats. I was in a flat and fertile land: a great level of bright green everywhere, intersected by raised dykes and straight canals crossing and re-crossing one another, so that wherever you looked there was the gleam of water. All over the fields, just raised above them on small mounds

so as to be clear of the flood in the days of basin irrigation, were dotted small villages with low brown houses, and here and there the white or yellow or faint blue cupola and minaret of a mosque. This Egypt! It might almost have been Holland, with the scattered palm-trees for windmills, and the gaunt buffaloes and rusty camels for sleek bullocks and heifers.

The estate I visited was typical in many ways of the changes that have passed over Egypt. It had belonged to—that is to say, it had been forcibly seized by—the Khedive, Said Pasha, the father of Ismail, and by him handed over to a Turkish officer about the Court. This landlord built the great white house on the demesne, and removed the villagers from a neighbouring hamlet, so as to have them near at hand. Their huts, with the barns and byres of the proprietor, were clustered untidily round the manor-house, which was raised, as usual, on its small patch of ground elevated above flood-mark. It had once been a place of some pretension, with an avenue of acacia-trees leading up to the doorway; but the Osmanli owners, busy in Cairo, neglected the estate, which gradually fell into confusion, and was being cut up among numerous struggling tenants, none of them doing too well, owing to the poor condition of the irrigation works.

Then came the English occupation and the new Public Works Department. The old canals were cleaned and repaired, new ones were made, and the property swiftly revived. The land became valuable, changed hands at higher prices, and attracted the notice of various speculators, who bought parcels of it and sold again at a profit. Greek

tradesmen and others from the towns were considerable holders or buyers. We passed a large farm on the road belonging to a merchant in Alexandria, which I was assured could not have been worth less, at the current valuation of land, than a hundred thousand pounds. It was a safe and lucrative proceeding to buy land in the Delta a few years ago. The astute operator waited till he was told by his agents that certain Englishmen, in shabby jackets, had been seen in the neighbourhood with measuring-chains and spirit-levels. That meant that the Irrigation Department was going to work on the canals. Then was the time to get credit from the bank and tempt the fellahin to sell at something above the market rate; and after that it was only necessary to sit on the land till the works were finished, and the value had trebled or quadrupled, and sell—if you could. It was a good game; but not a few people in Egypt are regretting that they ever took a hand in it. They committed the common error of holding on too long, writing up their assets gaily as nominal prices rose, but declining to realise. Then the crash came, and everybody wanted to sell at once, but there were no buyers, and the banks refused to give further credit; and thus it happens that there are still a good many persons in Cairo and Alexandria who were almost millionaires—on paper—a little while ago, and are very badly in want of ready cash at the present moment.

*Non raggionam di lor*—at least, not just now. The peasants, who bought land to farm, not to sell, were not much affected by the collapse, and the irrigation works are all to their advantage. As I went round with my friend

the expert, he pointed out to me how much had been done in the last few years to restore value to the soil. In the evil days when the basin system had been allowed to fall into disorder, and before the new perennial canals had been developed, a large part of this fertile Delta tract had gone back to desert ; for the land is good only on condition that it is looked to with close and constant attention. There are other countries where Nature repairs her own ravages without the aid of man. It is not so in Egypt, where the natural forces must always be diligently watched and controlled or they will do more evil than good. The Delta soil is impregnated with salt, which always tends to come up to the surface if the land is left fallow too long, or if it is insufficiently drained. Drainage is as important as irrigation, and so is the rotation of crops and the use of artificial manures, especially under the perennial system. When only the flood-water of the Nile was poured over the fields the rich mud provided much of the sustenance that was needed. But now that the thin white water is used as well, more artificial nutriment is requisite. The cotton culture, which adds so largely to the annual income of Egypt, involves some danger of reducing the capital of the country. Cotton is a very exhausting crop, and may impoverish the soil if it is not planted in due rotation with cereals and pulses, which put back some of the elements that the greedy little bush has withdrawn. This is of course understood by the great land companies, which farm scientifically, and pay much attention to rotation and drainage. Even to my amateurish eyes the difference between the progressive, and the stagnating, holdings was

apparent. There would be two blocks, practically identical in site and situation, lying side by side along the course of a canal, one occupied by the company and the other by native proprietors: the former was worth perhaps £100 an acre, while the latter was unsaleable at half that price.

The fellah, however, if not very eager to adopt modern methods, is, within his limits, a good farmer. A knowledge of the soil, of the seasons, of the habits of grains and roots and vegetables, of the efficiency of water applied to land, had been bred into him for generations. Indeed, one of my informants went so far as to say that what he does not know about these things, on the purely empirical side, is not worth knowing. He is not scientific, but he is a highly practical man, and he has been quick to seize the advantages conferred upon him by the Public Works Department. The irrigation officers are the only English officials with whom he comes in actual contact, and their activity he understands and appreciates. He knows well enough that they are the persons by whom the choked ditches have been cleansed and straightened and the new waterways dug, that they will see that he gets the supply of water to which he is entitled, and that they perform this service without being incited thereto by means of bribes. They know, too, that when the Department requires a draft of labour, men will not be impressed by force, and compelled to work without payment or reward. The duty of keeping the Nile banks and the irrigation dykes in order has been performed by forced labour from time immemorial. One of Lord Cromer's great reforms was the abolition of the *corvée*. Now the State, as an employer, pays its servants for their work. The

labour, however, is still not entirely free. When there is danger of a flood or the breach of an embankment a sort of *levée en masse* of the neighbouring villagers takes place. The men, with their spades and mattocks, hurry to the point of peril, and work as desperately as if they were throwing up entrenchments round a beleaguered city, while the women and children bring up faggots and earth in baskets. In such a case no compulsion is necessary; for all the peasants know well enough the results that will follow if the water overcomes the defences, and all are anxious to avert the calamity.

It is a poor little place to look at, the Egyptian village—a mere cluster of mud-huts thrown together promiscuously. Some of the houses are flat-roofed; but that kind of construction needs to be supported by timber, which costs money, and a great many of the huts have domed roofs, and look like rather large beehives. The villagers own huge flocks of pigeons, and keep them in squat, square towers, with battlement tops, which have quite a mediæval and fortified aspect. In front of the village there may be a small group of date-palms; there will, in any case, be a pond in which the inhabitants wash their clothes, their beasts, and themselves, and from which, unless they are near the Nile, they also draw their supply of drinking-water. To induce the people to refrain from emptying their refuse into this receptacle is one of the tasks of the sanitary inspectors. It is not an easy one: the fellah has been living for a few thousand years without paying any particular regard to sanitation, and does not see the necessity of it. Yet there is progress. I have heard that, in some of the villages threatened by plague, the headmen,

or *omdehs*, without any official pressure, have themselves insisted on the water being boiled before being used for drinking purposes.

But the fellah does not take to new ideas easily ; he has all the peasant's ingrained distrust of innovation, and a natural suspicion, due to many centuries of oppression, of administrative activity. Indeed, he is typical of the peasant type—slow, obstinate, suspicious, extremely shrewd in all matters that come within his comprehension, a bundle of prejudices and fanatical superstitions ; withal, an excellent fellow in many ways : temperate, sober, thrifty, and laborious, kindly in his domestic relations, and easily attached to those who treat him well. He has a sense of humour, and his sunburnt, anxious countenance, wrinkled by much thought about crops and floods and pennyworths of clover, will easily relax into a hearty grin at a good broad joke.

Squalid as his hamlet looks, and scanty as is the furniture of his hut, he is well off as things go in Eastern countries ; he has enough to eat and drink and to buy himself the simple clothes he needs and his few luxuries—such as bad coffee and cigarettes. He can get a living, though he works hard for it, and if he can repress the land-hunger which impels him to take more acres than he can work profitably, and so brings him into the clutches of the moneylender or the Greek, who makes usurious advances on the cotton crop, he may do well. Like peasant proprietors everywhere, he is too apt to borrow too freely and recklessly, and to mortgage his holding or his crops ; and it is to repress this tendency that Lord Kitchener's new Five Feddans



Law has been enacted, whereby the holder of less than five acres is prohibited from pledging his land as security for a loan, and cannot be sold up by his creditor. This legislation, imitated from the Punjab, has done well in India, and may be useful in preventing the Egyptian small holder from delivering himself into bondage to the local usurer or land shark. But the Delta farmer is not always a small holder, nor is he always as poor and humble a cultivator as the Indian ryot. He makes no outward show, but he is often a man of substance. Many a fellah who lives in a shanty with no more visible wealth than a couple of bullocks, a donkey, and some pots and pans, could dig up from somewhere a hoard of sovereigns and piastres. On one estate I visited, I was present at an interview between the overseer and a man who held a lease of 1000 acres at £5 an acre. A farmer who could pay £5000 a year by way of rent would be a person of some pretension in most countries. But this man was working like a peasant on his own land, and he was dressed in the same shabby dark-blue cotton gown as the fellahin. I heard another case of a land company selling an estate to a fellah for £40,000. When the documents were executed, and the time came for paying the money, the purchaser went back to his house and brought the whole amount in bags of gold loaded upon donkeys.

No one knows how many millions are hoarded and buried under the soil of Egypt. Slowly, very slowly, the fellah is beginning to learn that it is safe to be rich, that a man may save money without having his taxes raised upon him in defiance of the assessment, or without being compelled to disgorge to the local officials under the kourbash. He still likes to

keep his investments under his own hand, where he can find them when wanted; but this is perhaps rather from habit than reason; for he has discovered by this time that the era of arbitrary exaction is over, and that he has his 'rights' which do not depend upon the caprices of the Pasha or the relative venality of the nearest tax-gatherer.

He leads a dullish life in the village, with few amusements, save the Mohammedan holidays, an occasional wedding or funeral, and the long talks at evening, sitting on the ground with his fellows when the day's work is done. Physically, in spite of those insanitary customs which have been mentioned, he is finely developed, thin-flanked, broad-shouldered, straight-backed, with a wide, flat chest and sinewy arms; and the women, too, when you see them coming from the well at evening, with the great pitchers poised on their heads, moving lightfully and gracefully,

'With foot so firm

To crush the serpent and spare the worm,'

you think they might well be the mothers of strong men. Forty centuries of exercise in swinging up the water-lever and wielding the pickaxe have given the fellah a notable physique. In due course, the shaduf will be superseded by the steam-pump, and the spade by a mechanical digger, and the peasant will crouch all day long inside a close cabin turning taps and filling oil-cans. The water will be laid on in pipes, and the women, instead of walking like caryatids under their urns, will be bending over a stocking frame in a factory. Industrial civilisation, like other luxuries, is not bought without a price.

## CHAPTER XX

### MR. VAPOROPOULOS

SOMETHING has been said in previous chapters of that speculative fever which possessed Egypt for several years, and the collapse that followed. How these things operated in certain individual cases may be learnt by considering the history of that enterprising Greek, Mr. Aristides Vaporopoulos, whom a classically minded friend of mine calls Aristides the Moderately Just.

His father was an innkeeper in Corfu during that queer forgotten episode when the Ionian Islands were a British Protectorate, and, of all people in the world, Mr. Gladstone was the Lord High Commissioner thereof. Vaporopoulos the elder migrated to Malta and set up a tavern in Valetta. Here his son was born; and that is why he was baptised William Albert, as well as Aristides, and why he always calls himself 'Mr.' and has been known to refer to the British Islands as 'home.'

In doing odd jobs about the inn, the youth early acquired a useful miscellaneous education and considerable knowledge of the world. He served thin wine to Italian sailors, coffee and lemonade to his own countrymen and the island aborigines, occasionally bad spirits to adventurous British bluejackets. He picked up English, Italian, French, and

gained much experience of mankind in various aspects, mostly shady. This instructive course of studies was continued in divers towns and cities of the Mediterranean. Disagreeing with his father about a little matter of accounts, he took service as a waiter in Palermo; subsequently, he migrated to one of the big hotels in Naples, where the wider world was opened to him; he saw something of fashionable travellers from the North, and added some German to his budget of languages. Thus equipped, after a brief dalliance with Athens and Constantinople and Alexandria, where he learnt Arabic, he settled in Cairo, and his linguistic attainments secured him an appointment as dragoman.

Then arrived the autumn of 1884, when Lord Wolseley's unwieldy Gordon Relief Expedition was toiling up the Nile in whaleboats, with the assistance of the great tourist agents. There was a keen demand for interpreters with this force. Aristides, an intelligent young fellow of two-and-twenty at this time, obtained an appointment, and went to the front, officially attached to an Egyptian brigade. He escaped the perils of the campaign unscathed, and drifted down, after it was over, to Assuan, where he invested the savings from his not illiberal pay in purchasing the goodwill of a small bazaar-stall. He sold sham jewellery to the natives in summer, and sham Sudan relics to tourists in the winter, and, being reasonably honest and extremely shrewd, he did well, and speedily enlarged his operations. In three years, he was able to exchange his booth in the bazaar for a shop on the river front, with a proper European plate-glass window, and a scrubby compatriot of his own as assistant

behind the counter ; in five years he had a branch establishment in Luxor ; and not long afterwards he was in a position to set up his headquarters in Cairo.

His great opportunity came with Kitchener's campaigns in 1897-8, and he seized it promptly. He went with the army, but not this time in any capacity so humble as that of interpreter. Grown older and bolder, he cherished higher aims. He turned most of his available assets into cash, and started for the Sudan with a large miscellaneous consignment of goods and stores, such as men in need of many things would be likely to require. He knew the natives better than the Intelligence Department ; his 'mobile transport' moved faster than Girouard's railway corps. And so when, after a toilsome march under the tropic blaze, the army arrived at its camping-ground, it found Mr. Vaporopoulos already installed in a shanty of biscuit-tins and sackcloth, his wares neatly set out on the earth ; himself, his Syrian clerk, his Hellenic assistants, unclean to look upon, but unwearyingly assiduous, prepared to supply perspiring and exhausted warriors with a variety of very welcome commodities—at a price.

Such enterprise could not fail to be rewarded. The tins of sardines, bottled peas, mixed pickles, jam, Indian cigars, went off on the top of the market. What young officer who had lost his last pocket-handkerchief could hesitate to pay Vaporopoulos half a crown for a small square of cheap Manchester print ? Five shillings did not seem too much for a bottle of Bass to a man, half dead with thirst, who had not seen beer for many a day. But Aristides did not limit himself to retail trade. He could get camels and donkeys

somehow while the military authorities were looking for them, and was always prepared to take a contract for such articles as wire rope, army biscuit, forage, and railway stores. The prices paid gave a splendid profit in spite of the cost of transport, and before Omdurman was entered Aristides had become a man of means. When the new Khartum was being constructed, he was one of the first to get a block of land and set up a general store, which prospered rapidly. His business grew by leaps and bounds; he was soon able to open branches all over the Sudan, and presently he was not merely a shopkeeper, but a merchant dealing in ivory, timber, gum, and rubber, with his agents at Kassala, Rumbeck, Gondokoro, and even in the Congo State and British East Africa. Then he came back to Cairo, engaged larger premises and more clerks, and devoted himself to consolidating what had now become a highly important and lucrative trading concern.

He was a big man by this time. He had relations with all sorts of people in high official stations; the banks knew and honoured him, and his draft would have been cashed at sight over half Africa. He found no difficulty in extending his activities in various profitable directions. He bought building land in Cairo and the suburbs, financed transactions in the agricultural districts, and took a hand in the great cotton and sugar speculations. Vaporopoulos was beginning to be known as an individual to reckon with, and cosmopolitan financiers, Armenian, Belgian, English, sought his acquaintance. Then, for the first time in his busy life, he turned to spend money as well as make it, and began to develop social ambitions. Hitherto, he had associated

mostly with his own compatriots, shaved once a week, and changed his collar every other day; when he wanted recreation, which was seldom, he went to an Italian café, drank coffee and a little absinthe, played a game of billiards, and sometimes visited a reeking native music-hall, where half-naked dancing women contorted themselves for his edification. His European friends gave him ampler ideas. He dealt with a competent tailor, frequented the bars and restaurants of the fashionable hotels, and discovered that a good many of the patrons of those establishments were eager to make the acquaintance of a person with his reputation for riches and business enterprise.

His friends were not of one sex only. Some ladies, both of the visiting and resident colony, were quite willing to cultivate his society. Aristides was still a bachelor, a dapper little middle-aged gentleman, supposed to be even wealthier than he really was. He had always been too much occupied with money-making to think of love-making, though he had vaguely intended to marry a good-looking girl of his own race when he could find time to attend to the matter. Now, under the genial rays of popularity and success, his ideas took a wider sweep. His big, new motor-car was often to be seen outside the Ghezireh Palace Hotel, or the Mena House, or the Grand at Heluan, with Aristides himself taking tea on the terrace, in intimate converse with goddesses in Paris chiffons, and lively young maidens from England and America who treated him with a free-and-easy Anglo-Saxon familiarity which he found extremely agreeable.

It was in this phase that he became acquainted with

those distinguished members of the British aristocracy, the Hon. Augustus Cashless and his sister Ella, both of whom were rudely described by too candid friends as being in Egypt 'on the make.' The Hon. Augustus, after a variegated career in politics and the City, had scented the Egyptian land boom from afar. To his ingenious brain, and the fertile suggestion of a well-known promoter—a little off colour at the moment—was due the conception of the Great Sesostris Land Company, to which the attention of the British investing public was being earnestly besought. London society, thanks to Mr. Cashless's connections, was a good deal interested, and various influential persons had accepted allotments of shares. The market, however, was a little shy, and wanted to see some solid money—especially Egyptian money—in the venture before it would bite freely.

Aristides was brought into the concern through the agency of the Hon. Ella, whose acquaintance he had made at a Ghezireh tea-party. Miss Cashless was not exactly in her first youth, and the stress of a dozen London seasons had made her look a little anxious. But her figure, aided by the efforts of a too-confiding Grafton Street dressmaker, was still agreeable; and she had red-gold hair, which made the heart of Aristides jump each time he looked at it. The lady was extremely gracious to the little Greek whose thoughts began to take a vague, alluring turn. Could it be—after all—he was rich and not quite a fool. 'You are so clever, dear Mr. Vaporopoulos,' said Ella to him, as he drove her back to the Semiramis Hotel in his motor-car; and Aristides pondered over the words through a night of sleepless happiness. Privately, Miss Cashless referred to him in conversation



with her intimates as 'a little Greek bounder who is goin' to put Gus and me up to all sorts of good things.' She introduced him to her brother who, to oblige his sister, was quite willing to allow him to participate in the advantages of the Great Sesostris Company. A year before, Aristides would have hesitated to touch that promising concern with the end of a bamboo pole. But love blinded his keen black eyes, and ambition clouded his habitual shrewdness. Before he quite knew it, he was deep in the scheme; a few more drives and tea-parties with Ella, and most of his available capital—and a little more—was locked up in the Great Sesostris, of whose shares a hundred thousand or so stood in his name.

His holding, paid for in hard cash, gave the necessary fillip to the company. The Hon. Augustus went back to London and worked the affair vigorously, in society, in the financial press, and on the Stock Exchange. Paris and Brussels and the advertising outside brokers became interested, and the quotations began to rise. The £1 shares went up to 50s., and those in the know were commonly supposed to be waiting till they were worth a five-pound note. As a fact, they were cautiously unloading, and only deterred from clearing out altogether by the consciousness that the market was more buoyant than stable, and that any serious selling would bring it down. They agreed to hold on a few months longer.

Those were months for Aristides of pleasant musing. Miss Ella had gone home at the end of the winter season, but she wrote him little notes occasionally, and she had given him her portrait—of a few years' earlier date—

to look at. Aristides left his mercantile business mainly to his subordinates, not to its advantage; and dreamed of becoming a millionaire when the time came for selling his Sesostris shares. He never meant to keep them, of course; he knew too much about the property in Egypt for that: but of the proceedings of his kind friends in London he knew very little, and he did not understand how fragile was the foundation on which they had builded their boom.

It was slighter than they themselves believed. One morning they awoke to find the slump upon them, and the castle tumbling about their ears. Everything Egyptian went down with a run, and the huge inflated Sesostris speculation was the first to go. In a panic, Mr. Cashless's West-end friends hurried off to their brokers, and threw their shares on the market, only to render the situation hopeless. In three days 'Great Cæsars,' as the dealers called them, had fallen to par; in a fortnight they were at rubbish prices, and nobody would touch them. 'What about Egypt, Gus?' said the Hon. Ella to her brother. 'Egypt, my dear girl,' said Mr. Augustus, 'is U P, so far as you and I are concerned, and I don't think you need give yourself the trouble to write any more letters to that little Greek microbe.'

It was a severe blow to Mr. Vaporopoulos. For some time his position was decidedly shaky. He had plunged rather beyond his resources, and the banks were calling in their loans, and insisting on immediate repayment. There was a moment when the ugly word liquidation loomed rather insistently before him. But he pulled himself together and came through. His mercantile business was

still sound, and though he had crippled it a good deal by his financial adventures, and found it necessary to dispose of several of his stores and branches to the astutest of his Syrian assistants, there was enough to live on. He abandoned his dreams, alike of love and ambition, and entered upon a severe course of retrenchment and hard work. The motor-car was sold, the expensive flat given up, and the fashionable hotels saw him no more. He resumed his old habits, took to working thirteen hours a day again, and when I last saw him he was behind the counter of one of his own shops earnestly endeavouring to sell a box of extremely bad Hamburg cigars at the price of the best Havanas. Aristides will be all right.

The shares of the Great Sesostris Land Company stand at a nominal quotation of 5s. 6*d.* to-day ; and if you would care to have some you need only apply to the Hon. Augustus Cashless, who will be happy to furnish you, at that very moderate figure, with quite as many as you are likely to require.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHET

IT may not occur to many visitors that Cairo is a university town. Such, however, it is, and as such it is known and regarded with respect all over the kingdoms and principalities of Islam.

And here I am not alluding to the New University College which has been recently instituted, to give instruction in Western science and literature, under the patronage of the Khedive and the encouragement of the British adviser to the Ministry of Education. Millions of Moslem, who know nothing of the Khedive, and very little of the English, are interested in Cairo not because it is a great and wealthy city, the capital of Egypt, but because it is the seat of the University of El-Azhar; for that establishment is the chief seminary of the whole Mohammedan world, the gathering-ground for all who would make themselves proficient in the learning of Islam, the training-school for the priests and doctors of the Faith.

In the mere number of its students and its professors it surpasses all academies and colleges—not merely of the East, but of the West also. There are over 10,000 boys and men, of all ages from twelve to sixty, at El-Azhar, and the teachers, the sheikhs, ulemas, and tutors, are counted by

hundreds. Its constituency, like those of the European universities in the Middle Ages, is cosmopolitan rather than national: it draws its pupils from every part of the three continents in which orthodox Mussulmans dwell. Even as students used to come from Scandinavia and Sicily to Paris and Göttingen, so they now flock to El-Azhar from all the lands of the Prophet. There are Syrians, Moors, Algerians, Turks, Tunisians, Bosnians from the Adriatic, and Mongols from near the Pacific, Afghans, Punjabis, Abyssinians and Somalis, blue-eyed Circassians, and ebon-hued negroes. It is a microcosm of Mohammedanism, a museum of those various populations—white, brown, yellow, and black—who are the children of Islam. There is no place like it anywhere, and nothing in Cairo better worth seeing.

I waited outside in the mud of the squalid lane, while the guardians of the gate inspected the letter of introduction I had brought with me from the Sheikh Ahmed El-Azhary, the head of the Wakfs bureau, a learned doctor in Moslemism and likewise an enlightened administrator who knows and admires the ways of the English. My credentials being found sufficient, I was invited to put felt slippers over my boots, and thereupon conducted through the maze of vast courts and wide corridors. The place is confusing owing to its size and the mass of humanity which crowds every inch of the enormous floor space. It is like knocking off the top of an ant-hill and looking down upon the myriads of black insects that swarm about the galleries.

Men and boys were in heaps and knots and circles all over the ground. After passing through the outer quadrangles, you come upon the Liwân, or great hall of lectures.

It is an immense covered shed, with a low roof supported by a forest of columns of every shape and size. There are nearly four hundred of them, all robbed from old churches and temples. The classes and the teachers are scattered over the floor, packed so close together that often it is difficult to make your way between two of the groups. Here and there the professor has a wooden chair and a table; but, as a rule, teachers and pupils are alike sitting or squatting on the ground, with their robes gathered under their bare feet and their shoes laid out in front of them. The walls and pillars and planking are fairly clean, but not so all the students; some are even filthy and ragged, and a reek of promiscuous humanity fills the air. The din, too, is bewildering; for all the teachers are talking to their classes at the same time, and half the classes are repeating or reciting something, or droning verses from the Koran or the service-books, bending their bodies up and down in unison with the monotonous cadence.

The black-bearded sheikhs put a good deal of energy into their work, shouting, expostulating, and explaining vigorously; but their efforts did not always meet with much response. According to the rules, no pupils are admitted below the age of sixteen; but this regulation is not strictly observed, for many of the students were mere children. These boys were alert and interested, and when there was a class mainly composed of them the drone rose into a shrill chorus, and the bodies were swung up and down like those of a crew in a racing-eight. The elder students were of all ages and conditions—some, quite

grey and old ; some, intelligent young Syrians and Egyptians, with clear-cut, good features ; some, wild Arabs from Yemen ; some, mere grinning savages from Somaliland and the Upper Nile. Some, too, were evidently taking in the words of the teacher with attention, while others lolled about half asleep, listless, and stupid, perhaps from hunger, for many of these learners are in the lowest depths of poverty. No fees are paid by the students, the whole expenses of the establishment, including the salaries of the teachers, being met by the Administration des Wakfs—a sort of Egyptian Ecclesiastical Commission—which disposes of the vast revenues belonging to the mosques and religious and charitable foundations. A considerable number of the students are in the position of the sizers and poor scholars in our own mediæval universities ; they not only obtain their education free of charge, but they also receive a daily allowance of food and a small stipend.

About a thousand are lodged and boarded at El-Azhar itself ; others find quarters in some of the neighbouring mosques. Many are married, and live with their wives and children somehow and somewhere in the purlieus of the native city. After the student is admitted to El-Azhar, he stays practically as long as he pleases. Some do remain half a lifetime, dawdling over the sacred texts, droning over their lessons day after day, hanging about the Liwân long after they have lost any interest they ever had in learning, and any real desire to enter the priesthood, simply because they have cut themselves adrift from the active world, and would not know where to turn for food

and shelter and companionship if they were to leave the great swarming caravanserai.

On the upper floors are the cubicles in which the in-college students live. They are bare little oblong apartments, scantily furnished (but one does not have much furniture in the East), watertight and whitewashed, and kept in fair order by the university servants. Some of the inmates are ragged, dirty, and churlish; others clean and courteous. In one room, I found four intelligent and polite Syrians, with whom, by the aid of my guide—an English-speaking young clerk in the Wakfs office—I entered into conversation. One of the four was a middle-aged man, who had been for ten years at El-Azhar. The full course lasts twelve years, and those who aspire, so to speak, to a degree in honours, may stay two or three years longer or more. This Syrian seemed to think that his ambition to become a really learned doctor in Islam would hardly be satisfied until he had spent at least fifteen years at the university. His companions were, by this standard, almost freshmen, youths of two- or three-and-twenty in their second or third years, and they regarded their senior with fitting respect. None of these men belonged to the class of poor students. They had good clothes, and comfortable rugs and coverlets to their *angariebs*, and they showed me, behind the doors of a glass-fronted bookcase, quite a respectable little library of Mohammedan theological literature—the gem of the collection being a volume setting forth in intricate detail the genealogies of the descendants and collaterals of the Prophet for several centuries. One of the four was a young man of means, who owned a silver-



handled cane and perambulated Cairo in a tarboosh and an overcoat. He evidently belonged to the smart set of the university, and had, indeed, as he explained, only been sent there by his father in order that he might return to his native village with a reputation for general culture and polish. The others proposed to become ulema, and seemed to be sedulous and even enthusiastic students.

These Syrians were pleasant, intelligent fellows, all of them very different from the unkempt, semi-civilised, creatures I saw in other dormitories; and one felt sorry that their alert brains were being wasted and fuddled over the antiquated futility that passes for learning at El-Azhar.

This seminary has been the workshop and arsenal of Moslem obscurantism. Modern science, modern literature, modern history, modern philosophy were, until quite lately, almost unknown. A little algebra was taught, and, I believe, some astronomy, though I fancy that in the latter branch of study the system is that which was accepted before the age of Copernicus. Lord Cromer tells an instructive story in this connection. He once, he says, asked the head of the university whether his profession taught that the sun went round the earth or the earth round the sun. The learned person replied that he was not sure: that one nation taught one way, and another a different way: that his own general impression was that the sun went round the earth, but that he had never paid much attention to the subject, which in any case was too unimportant to merit serious discussion.

The anecdote is characteristic of the whole spirit of El-Azhar. It lives in the past ; it is hedged in by a narrow formalism, and its main interest is in the dogmas, the theology, and the traditions of Mohammedanism. Some literary culture its pupils obtain, and some ethical training ; they may learn to write that rich and varied language, the classical Arabic, with elegance and precision ; and they are taught respect for the moral virtues which Islam enjoins—temperance, justice, mercy, and patient endurance. But the years which the ' Alim ' spend in its crowded cloisters are for the most part devoted to theological formulæ and religious studies. They learn by heart long passages, not so much from the Koran itself as from the annotators and expositors of that book in the second and third degree ; they pore over the commentators on the commentaries. Or they read the lives of Mohammed, and the lives of his wives, and companions, and relatives, elaborate explanations of the ritual of the mosques, intricate genealogical tables of the descendants of the Prophet.

It is this kind of knowledge, laboriously acquired and committed to memory, which, in the fullness of time, qualifies a man to become an ulema, to leave the courts of El-Azhar, and to go back to be a priest or teacher or doctor of the law among his own people. One class, when I visited the Liwân, was reciting in monotonous recitative from the Koran ; another was hearing a lecture on the different ceremonials to be observed in fasting ; another on the benefits, practices, and effects of prayer ; another on the history of the Prophet. I only noticed one which occupied itself with anything approaching scientific studies, and

this was where an elderly sheikh was teaching a few youths some elementary arithmetic.

The Principal of the El-Azhar University receives a salary of about £1200 per annum, and is a highly important personage, dividing with the Grand Mufti and the Grand Kadi at Constantinople a sort of spiritual headship of Islam, with the duty of safeguarding the religious law and observances. With him and his university the English in Egypt have little to do—it stands outside our sphere of direct influence; nor does the adviser to the Minister of Education, who keeps so vigilant an eye on the other schools of the country, control the curriculum of this huge theological seminary. So long as they do not interfere with civil order and justice, the 'Alim' of El-Azhar are free to prescribe their own canons to their co-religionists in Egypt and elsewhere.

The graduates of El-Azhar carry a great influence all over the Moslem world, and are the missionaries of the strictest orthodoxy and conservatism. Many enlightened Mohammedans wish El-Azhar to be transformed into a genuine modern university, with its vast resources employed for more useful objects. They would like to see the fanatical sheikhs supplemented, if not replaced, by teachers properly trained in learning and science. But El-Azhar is immensely powerful, it has a hold upon the whole body of priests and ulema, and it has a papal contempt for the temporal authority. The present Khedive, a devout but progressive Mussulman, fully alive to the value of rational education, has tried hard to reform El-Azhar, and has even threatened to divert a part of the revenue it draws from the Administration

des Wakfs to the purpose of founding a modern university. A serious quarrel arose on this ground between his Highness and the Chief Sheikh, and the latter dignitary was refused admittance at the Khedive's levee—an event which caused a prodigious stir in the native circles of Cairo. El-Azhar has remained too long a strange survival from the 'Ages of Faith,' a picturesque embodiment of much that is most characteristic of old-world Islamism, a bulwark against the advance of that spirit of intellectual unrest and inquiry which is invading Egypt and all the other Eastern lands. But the energy and determination of Abbas II have at length prevailed even in this stronghold of mediævalism. In 1911, a new law was promulgated by which a professional council of teachers and educational experts was appointed to assist the Principal, and the syllabus was enlarged by the addition of such subjects as geometry, hygiene, drawing, and natural history; and 'the difference,' writes Lord Kitchener in his Report of 1912, 'between the former and the actual state of things in El-Azhar is already very marked.' Twenty years hence, perhaps, the professors of the ancient university of Islam may be more interested in Mendel than in Mohammed, and its students may be discussing the problems of sociology more earnestly than the Lives of the Saints. But the struggle for supremacy between the Progressives and the Priests is not yet ended and it is likely to be severe.

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE OCCUPATION

EGYPT, according to Lord Milner, is the land of paradox. You appreciate the force of that remark at many points, but, perhaps, most of all when you endeavour to come to close quarters with the political system, which is full of the strangest contradictions, the oddest contrasts between form and fact, the reality and the conventional.

Here, for instance, is a curious illustration which was brought before one at the state receptions held by the Khedive at the Mohammedan festival of Bairam, and a few other occasions, after Lord Cromer had left the British Agency and before Lord Kitchener had taken it up. These Khedivial levees are rather grand affairs ; for his Highness is wealthy, and his court is carried on with as much display of the ceremonial side of royalty as that of most European sovereigns, except one or two of the greatest. The Diplomatic Corps is present in its customary array of decorative man-millinery. One could observe that ornamental company as it filed past the Khedivial throne and made its bow to his Highness. The envoys go in order of seniority of appointment, according to established etiquette ; an elderly Dutch gentleman, the representative of the Queen of the Netherlands, first ; then the others

in due order—Spaniard, Austrian, Russian, German, and the rest—down to the smaller states of both Continents. Very nearly last of all, you will notice a slightly built young Englishman, looking as unobtrusive as it is possible for anybody to look in a laced coat and gold-braided trousers; he takes his place far down the line, with Swiss and Belgians in front of him, and only a Swede, of still more junior standing than himself, behind. A stranger, who did not know, might think him a person of no particular importance; but this happened to be Sir Eldon Gorst, the representative of Great Britain, the virtual ruler of Egypt, the head of the whole administration, with far more authority and much greater power than all the Khedive's ministers put together. Technically, he is only the British Consul-General, accredited to the Court of the Khedive, just as the others are. He can offer the Khedive friendly advice; so also can the Belgian or the Portuguese Consul: only it is by no means certain that their advice would be followed; whereas it is in the highest degree improbable that the British Agent's recommendation would be rejected.

This brings us face to face with the strange anomaly of the whole political position in Egypt. There are many people who imagine that the lower Nile Valley is a dependency of Great Britain. It may be so—more or less—in fact; in theory it is nothing of the kind. Egypt in form is neither a dependency of England nor is it an independent state. It is still nominally a province of the Ottoman Empire. When an Egyptian regiment is at drill, you will hear its English officers give the word of command to the fellah conscripts and the negro soldiers

in Turkish ; for this army is theoretically a part of the armed force of the Sultan of Turkey. The officers wear the Turkish badge on their helmets ; the colour party carries a Turkish ensign ; the generals actually receive their commissions countersigned from Constantinople. The theory does not bear much relation to the facts, nor is the administrative or political life of Egypt affected to any substantial degree by this fiction of Turkish suzerainty. In practice, Ottoman control is limited to the appointment of a resident Turkish High Commissioner in Cairo, a very dignified personage, who is treated with much respect by everybody, and does nothing at all except draw his pay—rumour hints that it does not always come quite regularly—and engage in a little vague intriguing. If Yildiz Kiosk attempted seriously to interfere in Egyptian internal affairs it would be peremptorily warned off. Still, the legal and diplomatic convention which regards the country as a technically dependent province of Turkey is one of the factors in the international situation ; and those responsible for its destinies have to take it into account.

Except in so far as he is subject to the shadowy control of his suzerain, the Khedive is the sovereign ruler of an autonomous state. Nothing that we have done since 1882 is supposed to derogate from that position. We have never established even a Protectorate over Egypt. When we first blundered into the country, it was not with the smallest intention of conquering or annexing. We bombarded Alexandria merely to save the lives of Europeans threatened by a military rabble ; we sent Lord Wolseley with an army to 'restore the authority of the Khedive,'

weakened as it had been by the revolt of his mutinous colonels. We have been restoring or maintaining the authority of the Khedive ever since. Our few thousand troops are not a British garrison: they are merely the remains of the 'Army of Occupation' left behind by Wolseley to complete the work done at Tel-el-Kebir, and enable the Khedive to preserve the public order. Our officers in the Egyptian regiments and at the Egyptian War Office are not in the British service: they are temporarily 'lent' to the Khedive to assist him in the drill and discipline of his own army. Similarly, a number of British civilian officials have been permitted to take service under the Khedive so as to give his Highness their aid in the conduct of his administration and the management of his finances: they are paid and employed by him, not by England. The Khedive remains nominally the head of the Executive and the supreme power in the state. Every administrative decree, edict, or act of legislation is supposed to emanate from him. The actual Egyptian system is unique. We have no record of anything quite resembling it in the catalogue of modern constitutions and constitutional experiments. There is one set of persons who carry on the government, and another set of persons who tell them how to do it—that, perhaps, may find its parallels elsewhere; but the peculiarity here is that the informal advisory Government has the material and moral force behind it, so that if it withdrew its support the other, the nominal Government, would collapse. Thus the advice, when requisite, can always take the substance, if not the form, of a command.





*Photo by Dittich.*

WHITE SWEATER!

H.H. THE KHEVIVE.

ASK NO QUESTIONS!



The anomalous situation would not have arisen if we had chosen to make full use of the right which we had acquired by the mailed fist in the beginning. When Wolseley marched into Cairo, after the battle of September 1882, he represented the only effective force in the country. The Khedive had been virtually deposed by Arabi's fifty thousand rebel troops ; and Arabi's disorderly horde had been beaten and dispersed by the invading army. The country was in our hands, and we could have done what we pleased with it. The obvious course seemed to be to hoist the British flag on the citadel at Cairo, appoint an English Governor, or declare the Khedive the Viceroy of the English Sovereign, and quietly proceed to administer the whole territory, under a hierarchy of British officials, on the Indian model, to the great advantage of its inhabitants. The proceeding would have involved a quarrel with Turkey and probably with France. Still, in 1882, with Germany encouraging us and Russia quiescent, we might have faced the risk.

The other alternative was to rescue, and retire. Having smashed up Arabi, we might have stayed just long enough to organise a new army for the Khedive, and then left Egypt to 'stew in its own juice.' But that would have led to further outbreaks, rebellions, revolutions, another European intervention of some kind. Egypt could not stand by herself.

We fell back on a compromise. We did not annex and we did not retire. 'The Anglo-Saxon,' says Lord Cromer, 'asserted his native genius by working a system which, according to every canon of political thought, was unworkable.'

And the line he took was that he would do all that was necessary for Egypt without accepting the responsibility of incorporating it with his own dominions. 'He would not interfere with the liberty of action of the Khedivial Government ; but, in practice, he would insist on the Khedive and the Egyptian Ministers conforming to his views. He would, in theory, be one of the many powers exercising equal rights ; but, in practice, he would wield a paramount influence. He would occupy a portion of the Ottoman dominions with British troops, and at the same time he would do nothing to infringe the legitimate rights of the Sultan. He would not break his promise to the Frenchmen ; but he would wrap it in a napkin to be produced on some more convenient occasion. In a word, he would act with all the practical common sense, the scorn for theory, and the total absence of any fixed plan based on logical reasoning, which are the distinguishing features of his race.'

The unworkable system worked mainly because it was put in the hands of a body of exceptionally able men. England had the good luck, or the good sense, to entrust the destinies of Egypt at this critical stage to a group of administrators of high ability and unusual force of character. There were accomplished financiers—such as Sir Edgar Vincent, Sir Auckland Colvin, and, afterwards, Sir Edwin Palmer and Lord Milner ; military organisers of the stamp of Lord Kitchener and Lord Grenfell ; irrigation engineers like Sir Colin Scott-Moncrieff, Sir William Garstin, and Sir William Willcocks ; above all, Lord Cromer himself, the great pro-Consul—resolute, tactful, far seeing, and inexhaustibly patient, who never lost his temper or his

nerve through all the trials of a most trying time. Fortune helped in another way. The situation, difficult for everybody, was particularly difficult for the titular ruler of Egypt. Perhaps, if he had been very strong, or self-assertive, or impatient, it would have become quite impossible. Luckily, the Khedive, Tewfik Pasha, was none of these things: he was in many ways an estimable prince, exemplary in his private life, courteous, kindly, intelligent, and humane. But his was an amiable, rather than a powerful, personality; and the weakness he had shown at the decisive moment, when Arabi's mutinous regiments assembled before his palace, was characteristic. His self-effacing and self-distrustful modesty rendered it easier for him to accept the position forced upon him by events, and enabled him to work, as a more vigorous sovereign might not have done, for the common benefit of his shaken realm, in concert with his able and rather masterful English 'adviser.'

His successor, the present Khedive, who came to the throne young, capable, high spirited, and ambitious, naturally found it more difficult to accommodate himself to tutelage, and for some years there was much friction between himself and his English counsellors. But Abbas II gradually reconciled himself to the situation, and found an outlet for his energies and his undoubted ability in schemes for promoting the material and social welfare of his country and the development of his extensive estates. So the the system gradually crystallised, and it has long since settled into the established order of things, and operates smoothly enough as a rule; but it still depends upon securing a high level of personal capacity in the Anglo-

Egyptian hierarchy, and maintaining the tradition of the famous bureaucracy of the 'eighties and 'nineties.

The compromise involves the keeping in being of a full-blown native ministry. Each public department has an Egyptian minister as its chief: there is the Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, the Minister of War, the Minister of Education, and so on. To this functionary belong not only the emoluments, but also the outward honours, of the office. If you walk into the ministerial building in Cairo, you will find his Excellency treated with extreme respect, seated in a handsome apartment, attended by a staff of secretaries, guards, and ushers. When you leave the Pasha's presence, you may be conducted to a much more modest room, where a care-worn Englishman sits at a desk loaded with documents, and gives hurried commands to clerks and messengers. He wears the red fez on his head, but there is no sign of high official rank about his person or his surroundings; the minister's portly native under-secretary looks more imposing. This busy Briton is the adviser—nominally, the subordinate—of the high-placed chief of the department; engaged, at a moderate salary, to assist him in his work, and to supply such good counsel as he may be required to offer; in fact, he is one of the links of that chain of British influence which the Occupation has drawn about the Egyptian Government. It is his duty to see that the business of the office is properly conducted, to suppress laxity and maladministration, to insist on the right thing being done and the wrong thing being avoided. He does not command. He only says: 'I think it advisable that your Excellency should issue such

and such an order,' or 'I hear that so-and-so has been grossly negligent, and I hope your Excellency will think proper to reprimand him.' His Excellency does not always comply with this admonition; but if he refuses too frequently, or on sufficiently serious occasions, the 'adviser' reports the matter to his own real chief, the Prime Adviser, the British Agent, who, if necessary, would carry it to the Khedive; and in that case the minister might be faced by the alternative, *se soumettre ou se démettre*.

It is obviously a relation in which much depends on the personality of the parties in it. The ideal position, according to the views of some of the earlier Anglo-Egyptian officials, was that the Minister should have all the dignity and leisure, and the adviser all the hard work and the power. They would have been well content to allow his Excellency to sit in his room, smoking cigarettes and reading a French novel, only occasionally rousing himself to sign, without examining them, the documents prepared for him by his English mentor. Things do not invariably take that course; nor if Egypt is to have any real training in self-government is it advisable that they should. It may happen that the Egyptian is the stronger member of the partnership. There are departments of state in Cairo where this has been the case. The Minister has more initiative and energy than the adviser, and the latter has yielded to his influence. Tact, however, is required as much as strength, if this arrangement is to be rendered tolerable. An under-secretary who was constantly quarrelling with his nominal chief and putting pressure upon him, would be so troublesome not only in the office,

but to the Consul-General and the Home Government, that some other sphere of usefulness would probably be found for him.

It speaks well for the adaptability of Englishmen in difficult circumstances that such cases have been rare. The 'unworkable system' has been made a success by good temper, knowledge of the world, and a single-minded desire to promote the interests of the public service. Due credit should also be given to the members of the successive Egyptian Cabinets who have done their best in a position which must have often imposed a strain upon them. The strain proved too severe for the greatest native statesman of modern Egypt, the talented and intellectual Nubar, and it must always be a little trying for any ambitious man of capacity and personal force. But of late years, the Khedive's ministers have usually found no difficulty in reconciling themselves to the arrangement; and the best of them, though they may sometimes chafe a little under the advisory hand, acknowledge and appreciate the character of the foreigners with whom they are compulsorily associated, and on the whole get on very well with them.



## CHAPTER XXIII

### GOVERNING ELEMENTS, OLD AND NEW

FROM what has been said about the character of the Occupation, it will be seen that to talk about England 'governing' Egypt is a misuse of language. We do not govern Egypt; we only govern the governors of Egypt. From the beginning, our idea has been that the actual administration of the country should be left in native hands, with a certain number of Englishmen to see that things are properly done. Impatient critics have sometimes complained of this complicated system. Why, they say, do we not obtain simplicity and efficiency at once by abolishing it, and establishing a complete British civil service, like that which accomplishes the far more difficult task of managing the affairs of the peoples of India?

The reason is that we pledged ourselves not to annex or incorporate Egypt ourselves, but simply to prepare the Egyptians for self-government. It was a promise given in haste and with an inadequate knowledge of the facts. If we had known in 1882 all that we have learnt since, it would assuredly not have been given at all: but made it was; and the policy it suggests has been steadily kept in view. Honestly and laboriously, we have been trying to pave the way for complete internal autonomy under

native direction. When this will be established it is impossible to predict ; but it could not be established at all if the bureaucracy were British, even in its higher grades, any more than there is any reasonable chance of instituting it in India. Therefore, the provincial government of Egypt is entirely native. The mudirs, or governors, are all Egyptians, and so are their subordinates down to the omdehs, or headmen, of the villages, and from them to the village policemen. The English advise, and they inspect. The mudir takes his orders from the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Finance. Both these departments have a number of British inspectors, who travel round the provinces, find out what the mudirs and police authorities and revenue officials are doing, and report to Cairo the result of their observations. Their reports come before the English advisers at the various ministries, who go into them, and are supposed to see that action is taken where necessary, and peccant provincial administrators admonished, fined, or dismissed.

Thus, in the last resort, there is British control and supervision ; but it is not direct British management. Except in the Irrigation service—a highly important exception—the Englishmen merely superintend and report. The mudirs, the mamurs, or sub-governors, and the hierarchy under them in every province, are natives. Here, we have a radical difference between the condition of things in Egypt and the Sudan : in the latter territory there are no native mudirs. At the head of every province there is an Englishman as governor, who is directly responsible to the Governor-General for the entire administration

of his district. But, then, the Sudan is virtually a British dominion : Egypt is not, and is not intended to be.

The arrangement, all things considered, is perhaps the best that was possible under the circumstances, and it works rather better than might have been anticipated, though not without a certain amount of friction. One of the great difficulties at the outset was that of personnel ; for in the East everything depends on the man rather than his office. When we came into the country, we found it badly in want of a satisfactory native governing class. The mass of the population, the genuine Egyptian aborigines, are peasants, who have always been ruled from above and usually from outside. There was no middle class, except the mercantile and professional community of the towns, largely foreigners of one kind or another—Syrians, Greeks, Armenians, Italians. Then there are the Copts, who are sometimes represented to be the genuine descendants of the ancient Egyptians. In reality, they are of the same race and origin as the fellahin ; but, having resisted the Mussulman conversion, they did not intermarry with the Arab immigrants ; they were driven off the land and, like the Jews of the Middle Ages, they took to trade, and developed more intellectual interests than their agricultural neighbours. They make excellent clerks, scribes, book-keepers, surveyors, and minor officials of all kinds. They are intelligent and industrious ; but they are no more capable of assuming serious responsibility or power than the peasantry, and, being Christians, they are not suitable persons to exercise authority over a Mohammedan community.

There are a certain number of well-to-do landowners, scattered over Egypt, who constitute something in the nature of a squirearchy. Some of them are the descendants of prosperous fellahs, who did well, laid by money, added more and more feddans to their holdings, until they became rich men with large estates. Such a landowner would sometimes leave the untidy village street, build himself a good house on his own land, with his barns and stables and servants' quarters about it, and live the life of a country gentleman in a moderate fashion. It is that life to which the Egyptian really aspires when he follows his own instincts; and even the townsman wants to get land if he can. Merchants, tradesmen, officials, like to invest their savings in real property. I met a young clerk in one of the public offices in Cairo, who had been educated at an American mission-school and spoke English well. He was three-and-twenty, and, of course, married and a parent. He told me that he had saved enough out of his salary to buy a small estate in the Delta. His wife and children and his mother-in-law and an uncle managed the farm, and he went down there himself during the long summer vacation when most of the Cairo offices go to sleep.

Everybody, indeed, in an Egyptian town seems to have an interest in the land. The Berberine servant who acts as chambermaid in your hotel is probably the tenant of a tiny patch of earth, with a date-palm and a mud hut; and there he labours during the summer and autumn, leaving his family to look after it when he comes down to Cairo in the cool season to gather the piastres of the stranger. And the trader, who has made money, will often own an

estate worth thousands of pounds, left in charge of a nazar or bailiff, whose accounts he will check from time to time. Such a man, when he retires from business, may himself set up as a country gentleman, even as prosperous shopkeepers do elsewhere. This class has increased since the Occupation. Land is a better investment than it ever was, and it is more secure. Trade has been extraordinarily prosperous, the banking system has developed, and, above all, it is now safe to be rich. A man can have a good house, and exhibit the outward signs of wealth, without the risk that his superfluity will be squeezed out of him by tax-collectors, or extorted from him as bribes by the retainers of the Pasha. It is no longer necessary to conceal all evidence of means, live in ostentatious penury, and bury your money—if you have any—in a hole in the earth: that is one of the reasons why land is more sought after than ever, and why the boom in real estate attained such gigantic proportions.

Some of the old-fashioned Egyptian squires, who have been settled on their estates for a generation or two, and farm their own land, are much looked up to by their poorer neighbours, and exercise a good deal of influence. They seem to have many of the characteristic qualities which belong to their condition. I became acquainted with a patriarch of this kind who was an estimable old gentleman. He lived in a great, whitewashed, untidy old house, with large, bare rooms on the ground floor, and latticed apartments above in which his women-folk abode: he told me, by the way, that his wife had never been downstairs or set foot outside the house—had never, in fact, moved

beyond the confines of her second-storey prison—for twenty-five years. This proprietor was a rigorous Mohammedan of the old school, very particular in the performance of his religious observances, and in the habit of getting up at an unearthly hour of the morning to say his prayers. But he was alive to modern progress in agricultural affairs, and farmed with a certain amount of science, attending carefully to the rotation of crops, and paying much attention to drainage. There was nothing of the aristocrat about him : he spoke to the peasants on terms of absolute equality, and treated even a minor native official of the Public Works Department with ceremonious deference. He was a mine of information about all agricultural matters ; and though he could barely read, he managed the complicated accounts of his estate by an efficient rule-of-thumb method of his own. He complained bitterly of the depredations of his nazar ; but I do not think that this functionary could often have got the better of him. He had a shrewd and humorous judgment of things in general, and much enjoyed a joke. Towards the English, he was, on the whole, friendly, acknowledging freely the benefits the Irrigation Department had conferred upon the country, and the improvement in the revenue administration.

But the sturdy old Moslem could not get over the fact that we were Christians ; he had been brought up to regard Christianity as a religion fit only for Coptic clerks and Greek money-lenders, and other low persons. I asked him what would happen if we were to abandon Egypt, and he admitted frankly that it would be a great misfortune for people like himself. ‘ We should have the Turks back

again,' he said ; and he did not like the Turks, and gave me a catalogue of their iniquities. ' But they were Moslems,' he added.

It was these Turks, or Turco-Egyptians, who formed the real governing element in Egypt before our intervention, and, to some extent, they do so still. They constituted the military caste, the higher official hierarchy, and the greater landowners, having possession of the large estates which the Khedives had granted to their favourites and successful ministers. Egypt, even under the dynasty of Mehemet Ali, was a subject-province, ruled by Turkish conquerors. Political power and social importance belonged to the Osmanli, including in that term Circassians and Albanians ; and the Egyptians were regarded as a subjugated, inferior, population.

Nothing could exceed the contempt with which the natives of all ranks were treated by those who were, or supposed themselves to be, of the Ottoman race ; and even now, though they have lost their power, they retain their insolence. Before 1882, most of the pashas and provincial governors were Turks ; and the administrative oppression was accentuated by the fact that it was carried on by a class who considered themselves the masters of the country. This was the case even with the Turco-Egyptians, whose ancestors had been in the country for a century or more, and who had long lost all touch with Constantinople. But they still looked upon the Calif as their political, as well as their spiritual, head, and still regarded themselves to some extent as a foreign garrison.

We have cut the claws of this class ; but they are still

influential. The blood of the masterful, fighting race tells ; and the Turk, even with a good strain of Arab or Egyptian in him, retains a certain energy and vigour of character which give him the ability to command. Twice in the course of my visits to great estates belonging to European land companies, I was introduced to native intendants or managers, who seemed to be men of much administrative capacity—one of them even had English subordinates, to whom he gave orders ; and in each instance I learned that they were of Turkish origin. It is these Turco-Egyptians who still hold a good many of the places in which initiative and willingness to accept responsibility are required. From this stock sprang Riaz Pasha, probably the ablest statesman of modern Egypt—except Nubar, that subtle and versatile Armenian. The mudirs and mamurs of the provinces, and the police commandants, are largely Turco-Egyptians ; some of them the sons or grandsons of the men who filled similar offices—in a different fashion—before the Occupation. They are better so engaged, under British inspection, than in leading the life of pleasure in Cairo and Alexandria, with much more doubtful Western assistance, or sulking on their estates, dreaming vengefully of the bad old days.

The Egyptian Turk is not too fond of us. With the individual Englishman, he can sometimes get on pretty well ; for between the Englishman and the Turk there are points in common—both coming of a vigorous stock that has Imperial instincts and traditions. But for the English rule, the Turk has small liking, even though he may himself be doing well under it. I heard the Occupation bitterly



condemned by an Albanian officer in the Egyptian army, who had fought bravely under Kitchener and Grenfell, and bore on his breast a whole row of medals as proofs of his exploits. Yet this man, who had served faithfully under the English, and had been rewarded and honoured for doing so, wished us away, and talked of Egypt for the Egyptians : meaning Egypt for himself and his kindred. The feeling of the ' Turk ' is intelligible. He knows that he has more ruling capacity than anybody in the country except ourselves. If we left, he believes he would have the upper-hand once more, get all the good places and the dignified offices, and make himself comfortable in the ancient high-handed fashion. He cannot be expected to cherish any affection for an administrative system which puts him on the same political level as his former serfs and subjects, and makes no more of a pasha than if he were an Armenian storekeeper. So he grumbles at the English, and looks vaguely towards Constantinople, ignoring the fact that the little finger of the Sultan and the Young Turks, if once they really got hold of the country, would be thicker than the loins of the ' Ingleezi,' with no particular regard shown for Osmanli blood. He probably would not be allowed to ' boss ' the country again ; but he thinks he would and could, and naturally resents his supersession.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### GOVERNMENT BY INSPECTION

THIS is the correct description of the system which prevails in Egypt under the British occupation: it is government by inspection and authoritative advice. We leave the administration so far as may be in native hands; but we tell the native administrators what they ought to do, and we provide European supervisors to see that they do it.

At headquarters, in Cairo, this control is fairly close and constant, because there, we have the European adviser in daily and hourly contact with the chiefs of the departments and their subordinates; but outside the central administration there is no such division or delegation of powers. The mudirs are supposed to be the responsible governors of the provinces, with the entire local civil and police hierarchy under their command. They have no English advisers, but there are a number of English inspectors, who travel about the country, visit the mudiryehs, the revenue offices, the police stations, the prisons, and have the right to 'call for papers,' to inquire into alleged abuses or miscarriages of justice or failures to comply with the requisition of the ministries, and generally to overhaul the proceedings of the provincial and municipal administration. It is the inspectorate which prevents the local machinery from

slipping back into the old grooves, and enables the British Agent and his staff to keep in touch with it—more or less. The more or less depends to a considerable extent on the character and capacity of the inspectors. In the early days of the Occupation, they had to be drawn from such sources of supply as were available on the spot. Some were military men ; some, officials who had served, in one capacity or another, under Ismail or the Dual Control ; some, private individuals who had been long in Egypt and had become acquainted with the country and the natives. The Egyptian civil service, it must be remembered, had been a good deal leavened by Europeans—French, Italians, English—even before the Intervention. Ismail, though he preferred the French, had some liking for Englishmen in positions of responsibility. A story was told me of one of those English employés of the Khedive by his son, himself in the service of the present Egyptian Government. The Englishman, a retired naval officer, had an important administrative department under his charge, and was liked and trusted by Ismail, who treated him with familiarity. After serving for some years, much to the advantage of the public interest, he thought he was entitled to an increase of his moderate salary, and made the request to the Khedive by word of mouth. ‘How much do you think you ought to have?’ asked Ismail. The Englishman suggested an addition of four hundred a year to his emoluments. ‘And what is the entire budget of your department?’ inquired the Khedive. ‘Over £80,000,’ was the reply. ‘My dear Captain,’ said his Highness, ‘you have £80,000 a year passing through your hands, and you

cannot get four hundred for yourself without coming to me about it! What strange people you English are, to be sure!’

Some of the rather miscellaneous collection of persons who formed the official hierarchy at the outset turned out magnificently and did admirable work; but it was largely a matter of chance, and there were some failures. The Anglo-Egyptian Civil Service is now recruited in the regular fashion I have already described in dealing with the Sudan. Likely candidates are nominated by the authorities of the English universities, their qualifications are considered by a Board of Selection composed of high officials, and the best of them are chosen to fill the annual vacancies. There is a large field to choose from; for the Egyptian service offers sufficient pay, a career, a pension, a fair climate, and abundant holidays—all which things are naturally attractive to the youth at Oxford and Cambridge, balancing perhaps between a clerkship in Whitehall and the teaching of cricket and the Latin grammar to schoolboys. Plenty of candidates present themselves; and it is the fault of the Board of Selection if they do not get young men of the right stamp, or as near it as our ancient universities can supply.

I have said something about these young gentlemen as they develop in the Sudan under military tutelage. In Egypt, their functions are at once easier and more difficult. They are freed from the strain of dealing, often unsupported and alone, with tribes of savages in a country conquered but hardly as yet subjugated. On the other hand, they have to grapple with the problems of an older and more

complex society, and to maintain their authority with civilised Orientals, sometimes of exceeding astuteness. For a young man of five- or six-and-twenty, who a year or two before was a sort of grown-up schoolboy, to tackle a wily old mamur or sheikh, learned in all the learning of the Egyptians, is no easy task. And in Egypt there is scant opportunity of giving the young civilian the prolonged preliminary training which is imparted to the neophyte in India. The service is a small one, and there are practically no subordinate posts to be filled by Europeans. The junior sub-inspector, after a very few months' apprenticeship under a senior man, has to be sent on his rounds, and he at once assumes the responsibility of supervising dignified and high-placed native functionaries double his own age. He has to conduct his correspondence and his verbal intercourse with them in a difficult foreign language, and under conditions with which it takes years of close observation for most Europeans to grow familiar. His duties are delicate as well as responsible, and much tact, temper, judgment, and firmness are needed to perform them properly; for the inspector is not the direct official chief of the governors and district magistrates, who carry on the local administration, and have the police and subordinate officers under their command, and the people under their thumb.

The system is a makeshift, and I have heard it criticised unfavourably by some experienced Europeans in Egypt. One able man, who knows the country thoroughly, condemned it because it hampered the mudirs too much in minor matters, derogated from their dignity, and made it difficult to get the right kind of native gentleman to accept the office.

The mudir, as the representative of the Khedive and the local head of the administration, is a big man in his province, entitled to a great deal of the consideration and outward respect, which the Oriental loves. But it is not easy for him to conserve his status when a young English civilian may come in at any moment to 'sit upon' his Excellency, overhaul his accounts, investigate his proceedings, and hear complaints against him from his own subordinates.

My friend told me that one mudir complained to him especially of the interference of the inspectors in trivial matters; he could not, he said, dock a clerk of two days' pay for unpunctuality without being taken to task for it by the inspector. How, he asked, could he maintain his authority and enforce discipline in these circumstances?

Nor is this minute inspection always effective, for the local officials can usually baffle the inspector, if they choose, and render his inquiries to a large extent nugatory. What, indeed, can the latter do, especially if he is young, not altogether familiar with the colloquial Arabic, and unversed in the ways of the people? Let us say that an alleged case of police corruption, or an unpunished crime, has been brought to the notice of the Ministry of the Interior. An inspector is ordered from Cairo to investigate and report, and he informs the mudir that on such and such a day he will visit that potentate's seat of government and go into the matter. 'O Hamed Mustapha!' says the mudir to his confidential assistant, 'behold, the Ingleez Bey, Jon-ess mister, cometh to make a report. Let us see to it, my brother, that he learneth those things which it is fitting for him to know!'

In due course Jones, B.A., appears, and is received with all suitable respect. The mudir is delighted to see him ; very glad indeed that the Effendim at Cairo are inquiring into that matter which has been the cause of so much anxious thought to himself and his vigilant staff ; most desirous to assist the inspector in his labours—in fact, has had all the papers prepared to save him trouble. The inspector glances through a formidable bundle of documents, and makes what he can of them with the assistance of his translator. He questions the mudir, who deeply deploras the unfortunate incident which has occurred. He himself has spent sedulous days and nights over it, and, after much cogitation, has framed, with the assistance of Allah, a theory on the subject. Would the inspector deign to hear it ? The inspector listens to the explanation, which may perhaps strike him as rather thin. But when he comes to examine the other witnesses, the mamurs, the secretaries, the magistrates, the police, and the village headmen, he finds that they all support the mudir's version of the case with singular uniformity. He may have his doubts ; but what can he do ? The officials are in daily contact with the local chief, they are dependent upon him for all sorts of small favours, and they have good cause for not wishing to incur his displeasure. The inspector is a stranger ; he is not in touch with them, and they have no reason to offend their magnate for the sake of a person who will presently go away and forget them. Jones must be a man of unusual penetration if he is able to get behind the story which has been prepared for him, or to compile a report which tells more of the truth than it is considered desirable for him to ascertain.

Another Anglo-Egyptian of great experience, with whom I conversed on this subject, was so much impressed by the difficulties of government by inspection that he advocated its abolition and the substitution of direct British responsibility. He thought that an English mudir should be appointed in every Egyptian province, as is the case in the Sudan ; or, if that is not done, that at least the native mudir should be provided with an English adviser, according to the precedent adopted at the central ministries. His view is that the tradition of corruption and maladministration has not yet been eradicated, and will not be for generations to come ; and, that being so, it is hopeless to expect good government in Egyptian hands. But then he is one of those Englishmen who have the profoundest distrust of all ' native ' honesty and competence ; and he gave me lurid tales of the manner in which bribery is still attempted, even of European officials, and of the rooted disbelief in administrative integrity.

For my part, I do not agree with him. I know that jobbery and mismanagement are not confined to the East, and examples of it have been met with as far removed from the Nile as Poplar and St. Louis. If minor officials in the Egyptian irrigation service sometimes accept *douceurs* and connive at evasions of the law, so also do minor officials in English and American municipalities. The old Egyptian bureaucracy was a bad one not because the men in it were Orientals, but because they were Orientals inadequately controlled, irregularly paid, and employed by a venal and capricious despotism. Pay the Oriental properly, keep him under strict supervision, and make it his interest to



be honest, and I dare say he will be about as upright as most other imperfectly educated men with no exalted ideal of public duty—which, after all, in most countries is only the possession of the few.

At any rate, the expedient of enlarging direct British action is not likely to be adopted: the tendency is the other way. Instead of still further reducing the powers and responsibilities of the mudirs and their councils, it is probable that they will be extended. Lord Cromer was, on the whole, satisfied with the progress made by these officials during the closing years of his tenure of office. Some of them still exhibit too much of the slackness and laxity of the old regime; but they are assimilating the new methods, and some of the younger governors are far more capable and efficient than their predecessors. The time has not yet come for withdrawing such check as is enforced by the existence of the inspectorate; but I think that in the future the numbers of the inspectors will be diminished and their activity curtailed, and every effort made to render the mudir really responsible for the administration of his province, and to judge him by the results. If he need assistance, it may be given by providing him with a strong provincial council, formed of the leading men of his district. Lord Cromer's later policy was to place in native hands all the functions which natives could be trusted to perform, and the policy is likely to be carried farther under Lord Kitchener. That, indeed, is the only means by which Egypt can be prepared for the self-government which it is the ultimate object of the Occupation to confer upon her.

## CHAPTER XXV

### HALTING JUSTICE

THE most unsatisfactory feature in the condition of modern Egypt is the administration of criminal justice. The opponents of the British Occupation point exultingly to the fact that in a prosperous and improving country, with a population, on the whole, docile, submissive, and peaceable, life and property are less secure than they used to be in some provinces of European Turkey. This insecurity is most noticeable in the Delta, which ought to be, one would think, a region very easily policed, for it is made up of flat fields and little open villages, with no mountains, swamps, or forests in which evil-doers can take refuge ; and, though there are a certain number of predatory Bedouins about, the great majority of the villagers are quiet, hard-working peasants. Yet in the Behera province, and other parts of the Delta, crimes of violence are far too numerous. Arson, robbery, and murder decrease very little ; and assaults upon women, homicidal attacks, house-breaking, forgery, cattle-poisoning, and other offences, tend to increase ; and some old residents have assured me that in this respect the state of the country is no better than it was under Ismail and Said.

Englishmen are not often the victims of personal violence,

partly because there are very few of them in the small towns and villages, partly because those who are there know how to protect themselves, and it is not deemed safe to meddle with them. Europeans of some other nationalities do not share this immunity: Greeks and Italians have been murdered or robbed, even in the suburbs of Alexandria.

A great proportion of the crimes reported (considerably more than half) go unpunished, and everybody knows that many serious offences are committed in the villages which are never reported at all; and, again, many notorious criminals when brought to trial before the native courts are acquitted. In the last six months of 1911, out of eighty convictions, in cases sent up to the Courts of Assize by the committing magistrates, for wilful murder with premeditation, only three sentences of death were pronounced. Human life is held strangely cheap, and homicide is often the result of incidents of the most trivial character. 'A man who expostulated with his neighbour for crossing the end of his garden was murdered the same afternoon for no other or better reason.'<sup>1</sup> 'Comparatively few murders are committed or attempted for purposes of robbery, and the majority may be ascribed to revenge, feuds, questions of women, or sudden quarrels arising from motives of which it would be difficult to exaggerate the futility. Thus in Assiut, a woman is murdered for refusing to give a glass of water; a man for taking a handful of flour. In Behera, a man is killed for allowing his sheep to eat in a neighbour's clover; in Gharbia, another for fishing in a

<sup>1</sup> Lord Kitchener, *Reports on Egypt and the Sudan*, 1911 and 1912, pp. 31 and 35.

drain ; in Girga, a third, because his son stole a date ; and a girl is murdered for purloining a head of maize.'<sup>1</sup> In the great cities, there has been a steady growth of crime ; and in Cairo, with its large sprinkling of cosmopolitan rascaldom, there were 454 murders and other grave offences in 1912 as compared with 344 in 1910. Society in Egypt, in town and country alike, is still somewhat imperfectly protected against evil-doers. This is partly due to the inadequate numbers of the police force. There are only 8290 policemen with 434 officers for the whole of Egypt ; and of the officers only 62 are English. These sixty-two Englishmen have to keep order and suppress crime among 12,000,000 people, scattered in thousands of villages about the Delta, and stringed out along the course of the Nile, with the desert handy on either side for fugitives and marauders, or packed into the bazaars and swarming alleys of the cities. No wonder they find they have rather too much on their hands. Lord Kitchener is endeavouring to improve matters in the rural districts by organising the ghaffirs or village watchmen into a sort of local gendarmerie, giving them regular police training, and some military drill and instruction in the use of arms. There are over 40,000 of these ghaffirs, under their own special officers and the general authority of the omdehs, or village headmen, and a good deal is expected from their efforts under the new system.

To the ordinary Nile tourist nothing of all this is visible ; but some hints of it will speedily be brought before any

<sup>1</sup> Lord Kitchener, *Reports on Egypt and the Sudan, 1911 and 1912*, pp. 31 and 35.

visitor who spends a short time in the Delta towns and villages. I went into the living-room of an English bank manager, and observed that he had a small armoury of firearms, rifles, and Mauser pistols, as well as sporting-guns. I said, I did not know there was any big game in that part of the country. He smiled, and said that one might possibly need a weapon, in certain eventualities, for other purposes than that of sport. He added that in the town in which his branch was situated there was a good deal of floating ruffianism and loose rowdyism, imperfectly controlled by the police, who were regarded with contempt and inspired no terror. One could never tell, he observed, whether some incident might not produce an outbreak of this disorderly element, and in that case it would be as well to be able to defend oneself.

It is a sure sign of insufficient police protection when private individuals take to carrying arms, as they do in the city of Paris and certain portions of the United States of America. My friend the bank manager told me that many officials and other residents in the rural districts thought it advisable to have a weapon handy. He said that he had met the omdeh of the neighbouring village, and found him going his rounds girt with a belt that supported a business-like-looking revolver. Asked why this defensive apparatus was necessary, the headman replied that he often had to carry considerable sums of money with him, and was always liable to be attacked by Arab footpads or village ruffians. This was in the heart of one of the richest and most populous agricultural districts in the world. It is not increasing poverty which has led to increasing crime here :

the causes are of another kind. The police, besides being weak in numbers, work under many disadvantages. They were organised as a quasi-military force, and in the early years of the Occupation they did good service under direct English command. There was much open defiance of authority, the dregs of the Arabist rebellion were still simmering, and there was soldiers' work to do. Everybody in Egypt knows how one iron-handed Briton dealt with disaffection and disorder in a perturbed district. 'Will you undertake this job?' said his superior. 'Yes, if you will give me a free hand.' 'You can have as many men,' said the Chief, 'and, within reason, as much money as you want; and I shall ask no questions. But you have got to keep this province quiet. If you succeed—well. If you fail, there is an end to your career.' There was no failure; and in a couple of years that province showed as clean a crime-sheet as Bedfordshire. To-day, brigandage and robbery are again rife there. The gendarmerie has been turned to civil police duties under chiefs who are not, as a rule, police experts. The mudir, nominally responsible for the security of the province, has no control over the parquet; and his authority is liable to be weakened by the interference of the English inspector, who may know nothing whatever about police work, and sometimes knows very little about the people and the district. The police, too, are largely independent of the civil administration. Neither the Ministry of the Interior nor the local authorities have the right to see a *procès verbal* after it has come into the hands of the parquet. This separation of powers sounds rather well theoretically; but in practice, where the police

are often timid and sometimes corrupt, it works badly and allows many criminals to be at large who ought to be in gaol.

Another difficulty is that the Egyptian habitual criminal does not mind going to prison, now that he is no longer flogged when he gets there: on the contrary, he is well fed, well lodged, properly clothed, and generally provided with more creature comforts, with more food, warmth, light, ventilation, than he is accustomed to enjoy when at large. 'It certainly looks,' says the Judicial Adviser to the Khedivial Government in a recent Report, 'as if our very hygienic and up-to-date Egyptian prisons hold few terrors for the criminal classes of this country. The problem is even more difficult here than in Europe, where a certain moral stigma attaches to imprisonment which is practically non-existent here. We can only hope that, with the advance of education and other civilising influences, the disgrace in question may, in time, be more keenly felt, and imprisonment become more deterrent than it evidently is at present.' It is certainly not easy to make prison strongly 'deterrent' to a person who regards a short sojourn in gaol as an agreeable and inexpensive rest-cure.

More than all this is the fact that the Egyptian peasantry do not understand the modern method of administering criminal justice, and do not co-operate with it. We have introduced the principle of English law which requires that a person, even if known to be guilty, shall not be punished unless his guilt can be proved in open court by the evidence of witnesses. This is alien to the Eastern temperament, and so is that tenderness for abstract justice which would rather see six criminals escape than condemn

one innocent man. When a crime is committed in an Egyptian village, the circumstances are, as a rule, matter of public notoriety. Everybody knows who the offender was ; there is probably not a human being in the entire precincts who could not denounce the author, account for his motives, and describe his crime off-hand. But before that criminal can be convicted he must be tried in open court, and his guilt proved by the testimony of witnesses. Now the witnesses will not appear if they can help it, and if they are summoned they are not anxious to give evidence against the prisoner ; for there is no certainty in their minds that he will be condemned ; and if he is acquitted they know very well that he will have a score to settle with those who have endeavoured ineffectually to get him punished. The reluctant witness may be a peaceable farmer ; the accused, a more or less violent ruffian who will not scruple to take his revenge. The villager does not see why he should incur these risks and inconvenience to oblige the State, which will not trouble to protect him when the trial is over. Besides, it is no affair of his to bring criminals to justice : the Effendim should perform that duty without the assistance of private individuals. Thus it is that witnesses cannot be procured, even in flagrant and notorious cases of murder, and that offenders, caught almost red-handed, escape punishment.

The Ministry of the Interior makes some attempt to deal with this state of things by imposing an extra police tax, according to the Indian precedent, on a village in which there is much unpunished crime. This, it is assumed, will give the whole population an interest in waging war against



malefactors and overcome the reluctance to give evidence. It does not always work that way. In an Arab village, near a house where I was staying in the Delta, two travelling hawkers had recently been robbed and murdered. The omdeh, himself one of the Arab villagers, was called upon to produce the murderers, whose identity was known to every man, woman, and child in the place. He professed his inability to do so, and thereupon was ordered to enrol half a dozen extra watchmen, and pay them the regulation number of piastres out of the village funds. The omdeh induced six of his own friends and associates to accept these offices, with an understanding that on receiving their salaries they should give them back to him to be redistributed among the enlightened ratepayers. Thus the administrative pressure was not felt, and the penalty inflicted on the peasant population was rendered nugatory.

A rather curious appendix to the story was the attitude of the inhabitants of a small outlying hamlet attached to the village. These people were not Arabs, but Egyptian fellahin. They protested that they had nothing to do with the murder, which had been arranged by the Arabs—possibly with the connivance of their omdeh and the sheikhs, who, at any rate, had made themselves accessories after the fact. The hamlet-dwellers did not feel called upon to denounce these wrongdoers to the authorities, but they did not see why they should suffer for their misdeeds, and they stoutly refused to recognise the increased police-tax or contribute to it in any way.

In these matters, Egypt is suffering, like other Oriental countries just now, through the transition from the old ways

to the new. We have endeavoured to adapt the procedure and the principles of Western law among a people who have not yet assimilated its spirit. Under the ancient dispensation, criminal justice was rough and ferocious. Still, it did manage to keep down violent crime by the effectual method of striking terror. The law might not be loved, but it could make itself felt in a forcible fashion when the occasion arose.

If a murder was reported to the Pasha, and he considered it advisable, or was requested from Cairo, to make an example, he acted without undue formality. He came down to the village, and called upon the omdeh to produce the murderer forthwith. The headman, probably knowing all about the crime, delivered up the criminal if he could, and the Pasha promptly hanged him; or, if the right man was not available, the omdeh surrendered somebody else to the gallows. If the omdeh could not find anybody within a reasonable time, the Pasha very likely hanged *him*, caused several of the principal residents to 'eat stick,' ordered his zaptiehs to seize some portable property or cattle as a fine on the community at large, and went away.

This very arbitrary conduct had, at any rate, the effect of reminding the villagers, with dramatic emphasis, that murder was a proceeding which might involve unpleasant consequences for somebody, or perhaps everybody; and that the commission of murder was, therefore, an indulgence which, in the general interest, should be kept within due limits. It was not ideal justice, and no trouble was taken to obtain conclusive evidence of guilt. The

innocent often suffered, but the guilty did not always escape ; and it was not left to the private individual to assist the law as a witness at his own personal inconvenience and risk.

The old system cannot be commended ; but it was probably not a whit more distasteful to the people than the one we have put in its place. We cannot, of course, go back to the traditional Oriental method ; we can only hope that the blessings of the Western procedure will gradually gain comprehension and sympathy ; and, in the meanwhile, we must take pains to render the administration of criminal justice as effective as it can be made under the conditions, and a great deal more effective than it is at present.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### SOME RECENT REFORMS

IN the preceding chapters, I have said something of the defects which mar our administrative record, something of the difficulties which still remain to be surmounted. Yet, taken as a whole, the record is one to which we are entitled to turn with satisfaction. In the recent history of our race there is no chapter more creditable than this of our relations with the peoples of the Nile basin during the past thirty years: that space of time, brief enough in the life of nations, almost covers our occupation of Egypt and our control of its affairs; and within it, a small number of British statesmen, soldiers, civil officials, engineers, and educationalists have performed a work of organisation and reconstruction which cannot easily be overpraised. Nothing that England has done in Asia, or France and Germany in Africa, has been so swift, so certain, so unquestionably beneficial to the world at large and to the populations immediately concerned.

At the opening of the 'eighties of the last century, Egypt lay, as it were, waterlogged and half-derelict, rolling heavily across the track of international politics. In the later years of Ismail it had become a bad example of Oriental misgovernment, rendered worse by a veneer of Western

extravagance and vulgarity. Ismail's palaces and railways and boulevards and theatres and steam-yachts, his *caravanseraï* of wives and concubines, and the brigades and batteries he quartered on the Sudan, or threw away in Abyssinia—all these had to be paid for by millions of ill-fed, overworked, and ruthlessly plundered peasants. It was the fellah, grubbing in the Nile mud, and dabbling in the wasted and unbridled Nile flood, who in the last resort bore the burden alike of Turkish pashadom and cosmopolitan usury. These kept their fangs buried fast in the luckless country—even when Ismail was cleared out—not because he had spoiled the Egyptians, but because the bondholders were afraid he might begin to spoil *them*. The rich lands of the Delta and the river banks, which once fed the populace of Rome with corn, and are now feeding the mills of Lancashire with cotton, could barely find a living for their own inhabitants. The *concessionnaire* and the foreign middleman waxed fat under the shelter of the international conventions and jurisdictions which the Powers had extorted from the weakness of the Sultanate and the insolvency of the Khedivate. Military insubordination had followed social disruption; and three very ordinary colonels might have overthrown the government, and restored the regime of the Mamelukes, if England—as usual in 'a fit of absence of mind'—had not muddled into armed intervention at the critical moment.

It was one of our lucky blunders. It saved Egypt from France, from the Turks, to some extent even from the bourses; it placed us securely astride the short route to India; it eventually created for us a new empire in the

Sudan, and rescued that great area from anarchy and barbarism ; it initiated the regeneration of the Nile valley, financial, economic, political, so that now, while those who were young when the process began are not yet old ; the country is more prosperous, more stable, more progressive, more honestly governed than it has been for many centuries. In the last few years, lit by the fires that have flared from continent to continent, throbbing to the march of armies and the movement of world-diplomacy, we have left our men to do their work on the Nile almost unnoticed. But the work has gone on, quietly and steadily, though with many checks and set-backs ; and if we take stock of it to-day, we see that the process of reform is maintained, and that with every year that passes we are doing something to redeem the promise with which we entered upon military occupation of the Khedivial dominions. We are preparing the Egyptian people for self-government and self-realisation ; though not in our time, or for long afterwards, will the goal be reached.

Not long ago, among the papers ' presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of His Majesty,' was one headed ' Egypt, No. 3 (1913),' which I have no doubt was consigned, for the most part unread, to numerous legislative and editorial waste-paper baskets. Such is the fate of the greater part of that invaluable material for the writing of history which His Majesty's Stationery Office discharges with wasteful profusion upon an unregarding world. But ' Egypt, No. 3 (1913),' was worth a glance if only for its authorship. It was a ' Despatch from His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General at Cairo '—that is to say, from the leader

and administrator who has written his name so deeply not only upon the sands of North-east Africa, but also upon the soil of Europe and Asia. Fourteen years ago, Lord Kitchener was called away from the Nile to play his part on the greater stage of affairs, to break down the Boer resistance in South Africa, and then to command the armies of India. But now, after a long absence, he is back in Egypt not as the strategist and war-lord, but as the supervisor of economic and political reforms; and in the two concise Annual Reports, in which he gives an account of his stewardship, we can discover how far Egypt has gone on the road to stable nationhood since Major Kitchener, R.E., was commanding the Egyptian cavalry when Wolseley dragged his slow column up the Nile nine-and-twenty years ago.

Egypt, when Lord Kitchener took over the British Agency at Cairo in July 1911, was under a political cloud. The three previous years had been marked by a good deal of economic depression—the natural and inevitable result of the excessive inflation of the preceding period which culminated in the collapse of the great speculative boom of 1907. The public revenue was increasing, and the general resources of the country were untouched; but the banking and business community was in disorder, and there were numerous failures. This disturbance of the financial atmosphere may have helped to render Egypt more easily responsive to that wave of unrest which passed over the Mohammedan world after 1908. The operations of the Young Turk Committee affected all Islamic countries, more or less; and in Cairo the Committee had its agents in

close touch with the groups of semi-educated young native agitators, who were equally opposed to the Khedivate, as the representative of Turkish autocracy, and the British control, as the embodiment of alien and Christian domination. Sir Eldon Gorst's liberal and conciliatory attitude, and his well-meant efforts to extend the sphere of local self-government, had been misinterpreted—as he himself mournfully acknowledged—into 'an attempt to pacify the Nationalist agitation by ill-timed concessions and an intentional diminution of British authority.' In February 1910, Boutros Pasha, the Coptic Prime Minister, was murdered by Wardani, a young Nationalist, and the trial of the murderer gave occasion for many demonstrations of Mussulman fanaticism and anti-English feeling. It was discovered that a seditious society, in intimate relations with the Young Turk Committee, was in existence in Cairo. The connection of these agitators with the abortive plot to murder the Khedive, the Premier, and Lord Kitchener himself, in July 1912, was not open to much doubt.

The appointment of Lord Kitchener at this juncture was an exceedingly wise step. Sir Eldon Gorst was an accomplished and high-minded administrator and an able financier. But his amiable temperament, his unobtrusive manner, his rooted objection to all methods that bore even the appearance of harshness, his dislike for the assertion or even the show of autocratic authority, had created a somewhat unfortunate impression. He had seemed a little wanting in that energy of character which Orientals expect in their rulers. The imputation would clearly not lie against the resolute soldier who had overthrown the Khalifa



and humbled the Boers. Everybody in Egypt knew that Kitchener was a strong man—the sort of man who would ‘stand no nonsense’ if it came to the point; and nothing could have been more salutary for the Farid Beys, the Shawishes, and the fluent young persons of the Cairo and Constantinople press and the Swiss congresses, than to find themselves confronted by one who had been the master of many legions, and had wielded the sword as well as the pen. Lord Kitchener’s presence at the Cairo Agency was the most practical commentary on Sir Edward Grey’s statement in the House of Commons that no attempts to weaken the British control would be of the slightest effect. It showed the agitators that England still meant business, and that ‘Committee’ methods would not work in Egypt.

Lord Kitchener, however, took a sedate view of the matter. He knew that the activity of the cosmopolitan, and more or less denationalised, agitators did not really express the sentiments of the great mass of the population. Egypt was not ‘seething with disaffection,’ though there was more yeasty fermentation among the articulate minority of the large towns than is good for an Eastern people. On this subject, he spoke a few plain words in his first Report. ‘The excitement,’ he wrote, ‘caused by the totally unexpected action of Italy, in declaring war against the Turkish Empire and proceeding to invade Tripoli and Cyrenaica, was widespread and deep; but notwithstanding the mischievous efforts of some of the more irresponsible native newspapers, the people of Egypt have displayed the most praiseworthy self-restraint. . . . Egypt was declared neutral, and that neutrality has been strictly maintained by Egyptians,

who have thus shown an admirable devotion to duty, law, and order, in spite of the intensely sympathetic and religious feelings raised by the long struggle which has been going on so close to their own frontier.'

The same conditions prevailed the following year under circumstances of still greater provocation. The past year had been one of considerable anxiety owing to the war in the Near East. On the war itself, Lord Kitchener does not offer any comment beyond one significant sentence: '*Defective military arrangements appear to be responsible for the breakdown of one of the finest fighting armies that existed in the world.*' But as to the internal agitation in Egypt we read:—

I am glad to be able to report that political feeling in other respects has lately been much calmer, and that the consideration of practical reforms for the good of the country has apparently become more interesting to the majority of the people than discussions on abstruse political questions which are unlikely to lead to any useful result. On returning to Egypt after a long absence, I have been forcibly struck by the fact that the formerly homogeneous body of intelligent Mohammedan inhabitants, who constituted a collective community based on fixed social laws, is now split up and divided into parties and factions of a political character. Whatever the value of a party system may be in Western political life, it is evident that its application to an intensely democratic community, the essential basis of whose social system is the brotherhood of man, combined with respect for learning and the experience of age, is an unnatural proceeding, fraught with inevitable division and weakness. The development and elevation of the character of a people depends mainly on the growth of self-control and the power to dominate natural impulses, as well as on the practice of unobtrusive self-reliance and perseverance, combined with

reasoned determination. None of these elements of advance are assisted in any way by party strife. Calm and well-considered interest in political affairs is good for both the governed and those who rule; but factitious interest, generally based on misrepresentation and maintained by party funds and party tactics, does nothing to elevate or develop the intelligent character of an Oriental race.<sup>1</sup>

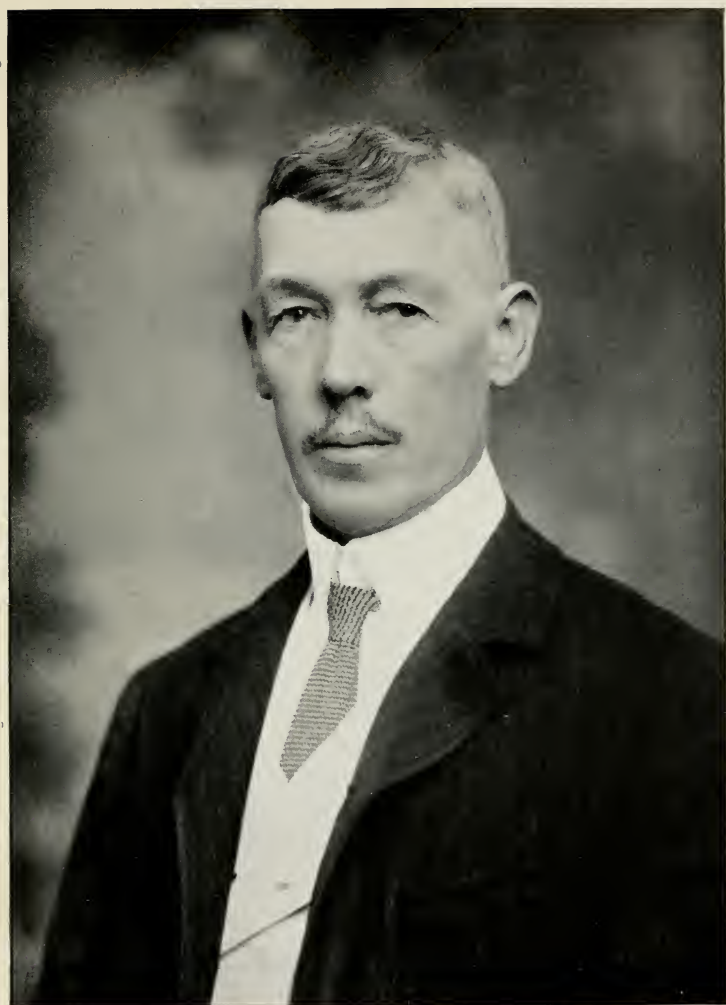
It is not through politics that salvation will come. 'The future development of the vast mass of the inhabitants of Egypt depends upon improved conditions of agriculture, which, with educational progress, are the most essential steps towards the material and moral advance of the people.' Lord Kitchener, having restored confidence in the existing system and the authority of the law by making it plain that all attempts at disorder would be met by stern repression, has devoted himself to agrarian and educational reforms. He has been the friend of the fellah, of that ignorant, enduring, invincibly laborious cultivator, who has wrung a subsistence from the dry soil and wet, brown mud of the Nile land through all the changes of the ages. 'The fellah,' says Lord Kitchener, 'remains the same as he has always been—one of the best and most hard-working types of humanity; somewhat conservative, like most cultivators, and hardly realising the changes that have taken place around him.'

He has been slow to understand that it is possible for him to get not merely too little water, which has always been his standing anxiety, but too much. We have so improved the irrigation machinery that the farmer has

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt*, No. 1, (1912), p. 2.

become careless and extravagant in his use of the fertilising flood. Much of the land has become waterlogged, especially the newly reclaimed Delta areas where there is no natural drainage, and the crops have been injured. Cotton pests have arisen, and the cattle decreased through want of sufficient nutriment ; so that in 1911, though more land was under cultivation, the harvest was a poor one. Lord Kitchener set to work to remedy these defects. The peasants were taught to husband the water-supply, drainage operations were extended in the Delta, and measures taken to extirpate the cotton parasites and destructive insects. More careful selection of the plant was found to be requisite ; and, as the poorer cultivators often found it difficult to obtain good seed from the merchants, who sold them inferior varieties at high prices, the Government now supplies the fellah with the article he requires at a reasonable price.

Another great reform is the establishment of halakas, or official markets, in which the cultivators can sell their cotton. During the past year halakas have been established throughout the cotton-growing areas of Egypt, with a view to protecting the small cultivator from fraudulent practices, and in order to bring into closer contact buyers and local sellers, who are thus enabled to carry out their transactions at fixed centres, under circumstances tending to a more regular and orderly conduct of business. These halakas are paid for by, and are under the direct control of, the various local Councils, provincial or municipal, inspection of their general working being carried out by the Ministry of the Interior through the medium of a British inspector. The official weighing-machines placed in them



*Photo by Elliott & Fry.*

SIR WILLIAM WILLCOCKS, K.C.M.G.



are periodically inspected and tested by inspectors attached to the Department of Weights and Measures.

The general working of the halakas is thus described : An enclosed space about an acre in extent is taken in a suitable position, in the centre of which the official weighing-machine is erected, and, in a prominent position, a notice-board is placed, on which is daily marked up in large figures the opening price of ginned cotton, received by telegram from an agent in the Bourse in Alexandria ; should there be a rise or fall of more than five piastres during the morning, a further telegram is received and posted up notifying the change. In addition to this, a circular is dispatched every afternoon by the National Bank of Egypt at Alexandria giving the latest prices of all the various kinds of cotton and of seed. This notice is displayed at the markets in a conspicuous position. The small farmer throughout the country is thus informed of all the latest prices of cotton in Alexandria, and is no longer obliged to rely on information gathered from interested parties. A fee of five millièmes a kantar is charged on cotton entering the halaka, and this amount goes to meet the expenses incurred by the Councils ; the owner can then have all his cotton weighed free on the official weighing-machine, or he can, if he wishes, have a few bags weighed, for verification purposes only, before or after they are weighed by the purchaser. Next to the manager's office is placed a branch of the Savings Bank, in which the seller can deposit any money he receives, should he wish to do so, and there are also store-rooms to be rented.

The scheme, as might be expected, has met with

considerable opposition from the small merchants. In some places they have combined in refusing either to enter the halakas or to purchase cotton that has passed through them. But the enterprise is welcomed by the honest buyers as giving them a fairer chance of competing in the market with their less scrupulous rivals, and several of the representatives of the largest cotton-dealing firms in the country have given practical and substantial support to the halakas.

A more important reform is that which is called the Five Feddan Law. It is intended to protect the small cultivator—the man who farms five Egyptian acres or less—from having his land, house, or farming utensils seized for debt. The principle is that of the Homestead Law in the United States, and of that which makes the ‘*bien de famille insaisissable*’ in France; it is also that of the Punjab Land Alienation Act in India. The protection of the poorer peasants in this manner was rendered necessary by the action of the small foreign usurers who, scattered throughout the country in the villages, and financed by various banks, were able, with the support of the Capitulations, to lend money on mortgage to the fellahin at exorbitant rates of interest. Not even a country as agriculturally prosperous as Egypt can stand such a burden indefinitely; and the inducements held out to the fellah to take the first step into debt were temptations few could resist, with the inevitable consequence that, once in the clutches of the money-lender, there was no escape for the victim until the whole of his property became so involved as to bring about his expropriation. It is the standing evil which attends



on peasant proprietorship everywhere, in Ireland, in Hungary, in Roumania, in Bengal, and all wise governments do their best to guard against it by making it difficult or impossible for the peasant to expropriate the holding without which he cannot exist. But with five acres free of debt it is considered that the fellah can live in comfort and bring up his children properly ; and gradually he may learn to do without the local usurer, put his money into the savings banks, and raise funds when he needs them by getting advances on his crops from the Agricultural Bank of Egypt, which lends under government restrictions, and is not allowed to exact extravagant interest.

These social reforms are probably of more value to the people at large, at the moment, than the remodelling of the legislature and electorate which is provided by the new Organic Law promulgated in July 1913. The importance of this belongs to the future rather than the present ; it is an extension of the principle, always kept before us since the beginning of the Occupation, that the Egyptians ought to be allowed as large a share in the general and local administration of the country as they seem able to exercise with advantage. Lord Dufferin's famous Report, which initiated the new system, recommended that certain representative ' Institutions ' should be established, though for the purpose of criticism, discussion, and suggestion rather than to legislate, or to control the executive. The Legislative Council, constituted under the Organic Law of 1883, was a consultative body of thirty members, of whom fourteen were nominated by the Government. It examined the budget and new laws, and communicated its opinion on

these matters to the Government, which, however, is not bound to accept its advice. The General Assembly included the members of the Legislative Council, the six Ministers, and forty-six elective members. It had nothing to do with legislation, but no new direct personal or land tax could be imposed without its consent, and no public loan contracted. The General Assembly has never shown itself a very practical or judicious body, and one of its recent exhibitions of bad temper and bad policy was the rejection of the very necessary and beneficial proposal to extend the concession of the Suez Canal Company after the existing concession expires.

Under the new Organic Law the General Assembly disappears, or, rather, it is merged in the Legislative Council, which is reconstituted with enlarged powers and membership as the Legislative Assembly. This body will have eighty-nine members, of whom sixty-six are elected. The country is divided into a number of approximately equal circumscriptions, each sending one representative to the Assembly, chosen by secondary election, through 'electors delegate,' one for every fifty inhabitants. The six Cabinet Ministers are *ex-officio* members of the Assembly; and in addition the Government nominates seventeen members, under a proviso which obliges it to make its selection in such a manner as to secure that certain classes and races have a minimum representation in the Assembly. Thus the Copts will always have four representatives, the Bedouins three, the merchants two, the doctors two, and the engineers one. This is a judicious provision which might be introduced into some other constitutions. Why should whole

orders and professions be virtually deprived of political power, as they must be under purely local representation? Moreover, the members of the Legislative Assembly must be elected by an absolute majority of votes, so that a second ballot is taken if no candidate obtains the requisite number at the first poll. 'This system,' says Lord Kitchener, 'is clearly preferable to that of the relative majority under which, by reason of the scattering of votes among a number of candidates, the election often results in a very imperfect representation of the electorate.' To which we may say to Lord Kitchener's countrymen, *De te fabula*. As a constitutional reformer there might be scope for the energies of the British Agent in Westminster as well as Cairo.

The new Legislative Assembly, like its predecessors, has restricted powers. It is still held that legislation and administration are the functions of the Executive Government; the Ministers are responsible to the Khedive, not to the Assembly; the laws will still be enacted by Khedivial decrees, drafted and issued with the concurrence of the British Agent. But the Assembly has now enlarged opportunities for influencing legislation. It may initiate a project of law, '*sauf en ce qui concerne les lois constitutionnelles*,' and may send it up to the Council of Ministers. If the Council approves, it returns the draft Bill, with or without amendment, to the Assembly for public discussion; it can reject the proposal if it thinks fit, but it must notify the Assembly of the reasons for its decision. In the ordinary way laws will be laid before the Assembly by Ministers; if the Assembly disapproves the proposal, a conference must be held; and if no agreement can be reached at this

meeting the question is adjourned for fifteen days, at the expiration of which period the draft, in its original form or amended, must again be submitted to the Legislature. If there is still a difference of opinion, the Government, on the initiative of the Cabinet, may dissolve the Assembly and call for another general election; or it can, if it pleases, promulgate the proposed law without further discussion, though not without explaining to the Assembly the reasons for overriding its opinion. The ultimate word in legislation, it will be seen, remains with the Khedivial authority. But the new procedure will ensure at least three public discussions by the Legislative Assembly and one private conference with Ministers, whenever there is a disagreement between the Government and the Assembly concerning a project of law. 'It may be anticipated with some confidence that a project which has been the subject of such prolonged discussion will not be promulgated by the Government against the wishes of the Legislative Assembly unless there are weighty reasons for such a course; while the lengthy debates to which such a project has given rise, and its promulgation, if it is considered to have successfully stood the test of so much discussion, may be taken as a safe guarantee that the law is really sound.'

In this way the more educated and influential members of the Egyptian community are acquiring a gradual association with the business of public affairs. The Government is still nominally absolute; it keeps high politics and the final control of legislation and administration in its own hands. But if it does not recognise the existence of a 'Sovereign People,' it consults its subjects, it hears their

views, it is open to receive remonstrances and suggestions from those who are in contact with the life of the towns and villages. And that is the Oriental version of 'democratic ideas'; it is all that Eastern tradition, so far as it has been kept clear of Occidental influences, expects from a just and enlightened ruler; it is probably as much in the way of representative institutions as Egypt can at present safely stand. But it is a step in advance, a further stage in the political training of the Egyptian nation. If the Legislative Assembly uses its present opportunities judiciously, it may eventually be entrusted with larger powers and fuller responsibilities.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE DRAG ON THE WHEEL

THE regeneration of Egypt is still hampered by the fetters clamped upon the country in the past. The Khedivial Government and its English advisers have to carry on their administrative and reforming duties under the vexatious international restrictions from which they have not yet succeeded in disembarassing themselves. Even if the Legislative Assembly were clothed with the fullest parliamentary prerogatives, as we understand them in Western communities, it could not be a 'sovereign' legislature; it could not pass laws which would be enforced throughout Egypt and bind all its inhabitants; nor can the Khedive and his Council of Ministers; nor could the British Government if it so far departed from all its practices and professions as to make the attempt. For Egypt is still held in the clutch of the Mixed Tribunals and the Capitulations; and though she has now, under the Anglo-French Convention of 1904, almost resumed her financial and economic freedom, she remains in humiliating tutelage as regards the administration of justice and the exercise both of legislative and executive authority. The horde of foreigners and foreign subjects are exempt from the jurisdiction of the Egyptian courts and largely freed from the restraints and obligations of the ordinary Egyptian laws. The Mixed Tribunals,

established by Nubar Pasha in 1876, at the time when the hand of the European creditor lay heaviest upon Egypt, decide all civil suits in which European subjects or Americans are parties. And these courts are independent of the Government, which can neither appoint nor dismiss the judges, who are nominated by eleven European Powers, great and small, and by the United States. They also try certain penal cases, and offences against the bankruptcy laws in which foreigners are concerned. If a foreign subject is accused of a crime he is not amenable to the Egyptian Parquet, but is brought before the court of his own consulate, which may or may not have a competent judicial officer to deal with him.

It follows from this arrangement that the Mixed Tribunals really exercise a dispensing authority over Egyptian legislation, civil and criminal; for the judges not only interpret the law but they decide whether they will accept and administer it. If they choose to hold that any Khedivial decree is *ultra vires* or contrary to the Capitulations, or otherwise unsatisfactory, they can and do ignore it. Almost every act of the Government is done on sufferance, since there is no means of compelling the Mixed Tribunals to recognise and obey it. In fact, the judges of the Tribunals can make such modifications of the law as they please by agreement amongst themselves, while the Government is powerless to interfere with them. These judges have now been constituted a regular legislative committee with authority to legislate for foreigners; but any Power, however trivial its interests in Egypt, may object to an amendment of the existing mixed codes, and cause indefinite delays.

This new scheme of legislation for European residents is regarded by Lord Kitchener as 'a notable advance on the previous state of affairs—one, indeed, which has cost the Egyptian Government, and more particularly the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a very considerable effort.' But it still leaves the judges with power to make the law which they themselves are supposed to interpret, and it still places the Egyptian Executive at the mercy of irresponsible nominees, appointed by a dozen external authorities ; so that it cannot be considered as 'more than a temporary makeshift, and a more or less satisfactory palliative of the legislative impotence under which the country has suffered so long.' Thus the important Five Feddan law, of which mention has been made, could not have come into operation if the Mixed Legislative Council had refused its assent ; for many of the moneylenders affected by it are Greeks, Italians, and other foreigners.

The consular criminal jurisdiction is also a nuisance, and sometimes a scandal. Here, for instance, is a suggestive passage from the Report :

#### WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC

Under the limits imposed on their activity by the Capitulations, the Egyptian police have done their best during the year to cope with this deplorable evil. Over 1100 girls of minor age have been met on disembarking and handed over to various authorities who accept responsibility for their welfare, while others have been rescued from vice and consigned to the charge of institutions fitted to take care of them. In certain cases coming within the jurisdiction of the native tribunals, heavy sentences have been passed for instigating or facilitating the



debauchery of minors. It is to be hoped that the recent visit of Mr. Alexander Coote, the Secretary of the International Bureau for the Repression of the White Slave Traffic, to this country may help to organise and strengthen the societies which already exist here for this purpose. In present circumstances, however, as the trade is carried on, not by Egyptians, but by foreigners, *who are only subject to their own special jurisdictions*, it is impossible for the Egyptian Government to deal effectively with the situation.<sup>1</sup>

It must also be remembered that it is not only foreigners who are amenable to this extra-territorial justice. The Mixed Courts try all civil suits in which one party is European and the other native. There are Egyptian judges in all these courts, sitting with the European lawyers who are appointed on the nomination of their respective Governments. So a native proprietor who may have a dispute with a European land company or its agents knows that, if the quarrel comes to be fought out by litigation, he will have to go to the Mixed Courts, that is to say to what is practically a foreign tribunal administering a foreign system of law. He will require the assistance of French-speaking counsel, acquainted with European codes and procedure ; and he may be carried into legal depths which he would never have to sound if he could take his case to the local mudir's court with the assistance of an advocate familiar with colloquial Arabic. The whole process is so complicated and expensive that poor natives cannot resort to it, and they probably suffer some amount of injustice from the less reputable class of Europeans in consequence.

Lord Kitchener does not, however, suggest the complete

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt* No. 1 (1913), p. 36.

abolition of the mixed jurisdiction. He thinks that it is still necessary for the due protection of the very large financial interests held by foreigners in Egypt. But the Tribunals need thorough-going reform. For one thing, they are no longer so well conducted as they used to be in the early days of the Occupation ; they do not command the services of judges of the high stamp of Sir John Scott and his French colleagues, nor have they quite the same reputation for independence or for effectiveness. Moreover, they are dominated by principles, which we do not recognise in the British Empire, and are entirely opposed to the English and American judicial and administrative spirit.

The Mixed Courts bear witness to the influence of the French ideas which prevailed in Egypt all through the middle portion of the nineteenth century. They imported the French institution of the Parquet, and the French conception of the entire magisterial and judicial body as a department of state. The judges, the magistrates, the crown lawyers, and public prosecutors, the collective Parquet, are a legal hierarchy, a portion of the executive machine. The judge often takes upon himself the main burden of bringing a criminal to justice, and extracting, by his own interrogatories, that 'confession' to which the Parquet attaches so much importance. This is not the English view of the proper functions of the bench, and it does not fit in with the political ideas we are endeavouring to implant in the minds of educated Egyptians. The present Judicial Adviser has suggested that various changes in the organisation and procedure of the courts should be introduced. But here the Egyptian

Government is met by the old trouble. Nothing can be done except by negotiation with a bevy of Foreign Offices which cling obstinately to their lever for interfering with the affairs of Egypt. 'I regard it as very unfortunate,' says Lord Kitchener, 'that political opposition should prevent the adoption of reforms in these courts which the responsible Government of the country considers essential.'

Unfortunate it is ; but it is one of the misfortunes from which Egypt can never be completely liberated so long as she continues to be burdened by the Capitulations.

Every reader of the books and official publications on Egypt must be very familiar with this name. The thing confronts one at every turn in the literature of the subject, and it has hampered and obstructed us constantly since the beginning of the Occupation. British officials have found it the worst possible obstacle in their path, and the most serious drag on their efforts.

Most people know roughly what the Capitulations are ; but it is only the resident in Egypt who is fully aware of the manner in which their—mostly baneful—influence is exercised. The Capitulations are the treaties and conventions which give Europeans in the East the right of exemption from the local tribunals. In Turkey and Egypt they date back several centuries. They are a testimony, not to the weakness, but to the power, of the Ottoman Empire in the past. Mohammedanism, in its haughty disdain for the Christian dogs, had no legal system which could apply to them ; the law of Islam was too sacred to extend its protection to infidels. The European Powers were, therefore, allowed to arrange that if their nationals

committed crimes their own consular representatives should try the offenders. It was a valuable privilege in times when the Christian in the Moslem territories was scarcely treated as a human being; and it has been jealously maintained and extended as the numbers of European traders and settlers in the East increased. When we took the affairs of Egypt in hand we found that pretty nearly every civilised Power, small and great, had a Capitulation in full working order for its own subjects. Thus there was, and is, an *imperium in imperio*, or rather some twenty-three of them. Every consul is the privileged protector and guardian of a number of persons who owe no allegiance to the nominal head of the state, and stand outside the administration of justice by his officers. If a foreigner commits a crime he cannot be arrested by the Egyptian police, nor may he be brought up before an Egyptian judge and tried by Egyptian law. The police or the aggrieved party can only bring him before his own consular court. And before he can be punished it must be proved that he has committed an offence, not only against the law of Egypt, but against the law of his own state, or at any rate against such local law as the consular authorities agree to recognise.

In the old days this privilege was jealously asserted by the Powers whose subjects were settled as residents and traders in Egypt, as in other parts of the Turkish Empire. There was a legitimate distrust of local justice and its administration. No European cared to be at the mercy of magistrates and police, who might be corrupt, and were certain to be ignorant of Western legal principles; and who

were bound to obey any ordinance issued by a despotic Oriental government. Without the protection afforded by the Capitulations, foreign traders could hardly have found it possible to carry on business in Egypt at all; and the existence of the European mercantile community was, on the whole, advantageous to the country, and could not be easily dispensed with. Thus the Capitulations had their uses so long as Egypt remained under purely native rule. But since the influence of a Western Power has prevailed at the centre of authority, and permeated the entire political organism, they are scarcely necessary, and, on the other hand, they lend themselves easily to abuse and disorder. The Egyptian police may not always deal successfully with native offenders; but with foreigners their difficulties are more serious. They cannot even punish trifling infractions of their own regulations without so much trouble that they often decline to make the attempt, and prefer to let the peccant alien escape the penalty of his misdeeds.

In England and elsewhere a driver of a vehicle who disobeys the police orders as to the speed limit in cities or the rule of the road is summarily disposed of. In Cairo, a lively young Frenchman, anxious to test the paces of his new motor car, dashes through the crowded outlet of the great Nile bridge, sends donkeys and loaded camels scurrying in alarm out of their course, endangers the lives of pedestrians as he cuts round a corner on his wrong side, and finally impinges upon a loaded trolley, and pulls up, having done some damage to woodwork and human limbs. If he were a native effendi the police would arrest him, hale him

before a magistrate, and have him duly fined or imprisoned. As a European, they can only take his name and threaten him with proceedings before his consular court. In a case like this they would probably succeed in getting the offender punished—that is, always supposing his conduct constitutes a breach of the French code as well as a violation of the Egyptian police rules. But suppose there is some doubt in the matter, and the foreigner feels himself the victim of a grievance? Naturally the first person he goes to for redress is his consul, who is more interested in assisting his fellow-countryman to get out of a difficulty than in furthering the ends of Egyptian justice.

In the consular courts of the greater Western Powers there is, of course, no sort of disposition to use the international privilege in order to shield vulgar criminals; indeed, I have heard Englishmen aver that this judicial impartiality is carried so far that an accused British subject might sometimes have a better chance of acquittal if he were tried before the native judges. But certain of the other consulates are less particular. Their main object is to protect and serve their own nationals, even if these happen to deserve small indulgence from society and the law. It is common knowledge that illicit pursuits and immoral practices have been carried on more or less openly under the shelter of the Capitulations. A horde of Greeks, Levantines, Italians, Algerians, Maltese, and nondescripts of all kinds descended upon Egypt in Ismail's time, and many of them or their descendants are there still, all prepared to claim the protection of a foreign flag. The smuggler of hashish, the keeper of a gambling hell, the

seller of poisoned intoxicants, the owner of a night-house, may belong to this body of persons. In the interests of public security and order the authorities ought to be able to suppress or coerce them promptly and effectually. But the cumbrous Capitulation system ties their hands. They cannot act without the concurrence of the consuls, and they are not allowed to exercise the ordinary powers with which the police are armed against the criminal and disorderly classes. The European scoundrel defies them, and he is supported by his diplomatic agency, which will not allow international rights to be pared away, even at the risk of encouraging international ruffianism. And in our efforts to reform Egyptian justice and diminish crime we are constantly brought up against this solid barrier of alien privilege.

The true remedy is the abolition, or rather the modification, of the Capitulations, on which it is understood that the Government has again quite recently approached the European Powers.<sup>1</sup> If the Capitulations were abandoned, the Mixed Tribunals could be swept away and replaced by native courts, in which, for some time at least, European

<sup>1</sup> 'A short time ago a Russian subject was, at the request of the consular authorities, arrested by the Egyptian police and handed over to them for deportation to Russia. I am not familiar with the details of the case, neither, for the purposes of my present argument, is any knowledge of those details required. The nature of the offence of which this man, Adamovitch by name, was accused, as also the question of whether he was guilty or innocent of that offence, are altogether beside the point. The legal obligation of the Egyptian Government to comply with the request that the man should be handed over to the Russian consular authorities would have been precisely the same if he had been accused of no offence at all. The result, however, has been to touch one of the most tender points in the English political conscience. It has become

judges or assessors would be employed as well as Egyptians, and the whole vexatious system of international interference in domestic legislation would disappear. The Capitulations, valuable enough so long as Egypt was involved in Turkish misrule or local chaos, are obsolete now that she has a stable government and an enlightened system of law and administration. But whether our diplomacy can succeed in the requisite process of bargaining remains to be seen. France would not object, for her acquiescence seems to be implied by the Treaty of 1904.<sup>1</sup> But it is different with some others of the large and little Powers, who will not give up their last political foothold in the Nile valley, and their opportunity for bringing pressure to bear on the *de facto* rulers of Egypt, without some consideration.

clear that a country which is not, indeed, British territory, but which is held by a British garrison, and in which British influence is predominant, affords no safe asylum for a political refugee. Without in any way wishing to underrate the importance of this consideration, I think it necessary to point out that this is only one out of the many anomalies which might be indicated in the working of that most perplexing political creation entitled the Egyptian Government and administration. Many instances might, in fact, be cited which, albeit they are less calculated to attract public attention in this country, afford even stronger ground for holding that the time has come for reforming the system hitherto known as that of the Capitulations.'—Lord Cromer on 'The Capitulations in Egypt' in the *Nineteenth Century and After*, July 1913.

<sup>1</sup> The clause of the Anglo-French Agreement, which was at first kept secret, but has now been published, runs as follows :

'In the event of their [His Britannic Majesty's Government] considering it desirable to introduce in Egypt reforms tending to assimilate the Egyptian legislative system to that in force in other civilised countries, the Government of the French Republic will not refuse to entertain any such proposals, on the understanding that His Britannic Majesty's Government will agree to entertain the suggestions that the Government of the French Republic may have to make to them with a view of introducing similar reforms in Morocco.'



Moreover, they can always urge with plausibility that they have no guarantee for the permanence of the existing situation, for to them Egypt is still a semi-independent state, tributary to the Ottoman sultanate. We are not formally responsible for its destinies; we are, it may be repeated, only temporarily providing the Khedive with some British troops to assist him in keeping order, and with a British Consul-General and a few other officials who are kind enough to give their 'advice' to his Ministers. You are, the Foreign Offices may say, pledged to terminate your Occupation some time; it may suit you, for what we know, to redeem your pledge ten years, or two years, hence, and then our subjects will need the safeguard of the Capitulations as much as ever.

The unanswerable reply to all such contentions would be to dismiss the fiction of a temporary Occupation and declare boldly that Egypt is a British Protectorate, and that the British Empire is, and will remain, responsible for its external safety and its internal order. It is on the whole creditable to the self-restraint of English diplomacy that it has forborne to take this step during the past few years. With Austria converting its occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina into formal incorporation, and Italy seizing the Tripolitaine, it would have seemed natural enough that an English Protectorate should have been proclaimed, particularly as that step would have been extremely beneficial to Egypt, besides making it clear to all the world that we intended to maintain our position in the Eastern Mediterranean. But we acted wisely in declining to lend ourselves, even in appearance, to the enterprise of despoiling

Turkey in the hour of her distresses, and inflicting a further shock upon Mussulman sentiment. Moreover, the conversion of our anomalous supervision into a definite political control would be deeply unpopular in Egypt, however advantageous to all classes of the population.

Yet it would undoubtedly simplify the difficult business we have undertaken in the Lower Nile lands. The reports of Lord Cromer, Sir Eldon Gorst, and Lord Kitchener bear constant testimony to the inconvenience of reforming an Oriental country through the medium of its own government. In Egypt we are at once responsible and irresponsible. We rule through the Khedive and his Ministers; and we have to get the right things done by a mixture of admonition and veiled pressure, which must throw a heavy strain upon the tact, temper, and firmness of all parties concerned. The Khedive himself would probably have as little cause for regret as anybody if the Occupation were converted into a Protectorate, and if His Majesty's Consul-General at Cairo became the British Resident. But we owe it to ourselves, and to the pledges we have made to the world, to maintain the present system unless it is rendered clearly intolerable by causes which affect the British Empire and its relations to other Powers more than Egypt itself.

We have done much on the Lower Nile with our hands tied. How much we can do where we are free to act with a single eye to the good of the subject race, we have shown in the Sudan. Something has been said in previous chapters of the progress made by that great tropical dependency of Britain, as it virtually is, under the beneficent despotism

of Sir Reginald Wingate and his staff of military and civil officials. Lord Kitchener's testimony to the value of the work is given in a few eloquent sentences of his latest Report :

When we conquered the Sudan there was hardly a single inhabitant who possessed any money, and, with the exception of the fighting men, the whole population was practically starving. Nothing, I think, strikes one more in revisiting the Sudan to-day than the great increase which has taken place in the individual prosperity of its inhabitants. This increased prosperity, which is the result of careful administration, has been so equally divided throughout the entire population that it is not too much to say that there is now hardly a poor man in the Sudan. Unlike the Egyptian fellahin, the Sudan cultivators are not bound down by debts, and have not, therefore, to struggle to meet the exorbitant interest of the usurers who prey upon this class in Egypt. In the Sudan the benefits of peace have been fully reaped by the cultivators, and the increased facilities of communication have brought markets hitherto undreamt of to their doors. The development of the rich products of the country has been carefully fostered, and a golden harvest has thus been brought in which has remained in the country. It is, therefore, not surprising that the people are contented, happy, and loyal. When expressions of this happiness and contentment are heard, it is satisfactory to feel that they are not merely word-painting for the benefit of the rulers of the country, but are based, as the people themselves maintain, on solid facts.

This is what a few Englishmen have contrived to effect in the Sudan in a decade and a half ; and their success has been partly due to the fact that here there were no Capitulations to hamper them, nor the encumbrance of an alien legal system. In Egypt, where the task is more complex and

the difficulties heavier, the change has been less striking ; but solid and substantial benefits have been conferred upon the country, which is beyond all question more prosperous, more peaceful and more stable than it was when the Occupation began.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### CONCLUSIONS

WE are not popular in Egypt. Feared we may be by some ; respected, I doubt not, by many others ; but really liked, I am sure, by very few. That the benefits produced by the Occupation are recognised by a considerable section of the Egyptian population is unquestionable. The merchants, the traders, the shopkeepers of the towns, the people who have bought land and made money by it, would shudder at the thought of changing the regime under which they have so long lived in security and grown prosperous. Indeed, it is probable that almost everybody in Egypt, who owns property or carries on a settled business, would be alarmed if there were any serious chance of bringing the Occupation to an end.

But they have no love for us personally. The Englishman has the capacity to win the esteem, and even the affection, of primitive or semi-barbarous peoples. You see that, for instance, in the Sudan, where sometimes a retiring official will be escorted for miles on his homeward journey by a crowd of sheikhs and tribesmen who will bid him farewell with tears. But when we have to rule civilised or partly civilised communities we are less successful in conciliating our subjects. We have the defects of our qualities, the

defects which have made difficulties for us in Ireland, in South Africa, in Bengal, and in French Canada. In Egypt, as elsewhere, we retain our characteristic Anglo-Saxonism. The British official community lives in a little world apart, thinking of 'home,' and surrounding itself, as far as possible, with home-like associations. Of native society it sees little; and though it may meet educated natives in the public offices, in the orderly-room, and in business, it does not really get into touch with them. And the educated, Europeanised Egyptian for his part finds it hard to be at ease with us. He prefers the continental type of European, and when he looks westward it is to Paris, not London, that he directs his gaze, and it is, as I have previously explained, the peculiar products of Parisian culture that he specially appreciates.

Throughout the entire period of our connection with the country we have had to cope with persistent and determined agitation which has for its avowed object that of reclaiming 'Egypt for the Egyptians,' and removing foreign (which means British) control and supervision. We have been doing our work, subject to constant opposition and interruption from those who think we ought not to be doing it at all. The Nationalist movement, which in the form of a military insurrection was the immediate cause of our intervention, has never died down. It has given birth to various schools of 'Reformers,' some of whom merely affect to ask that the official administration should be left in native hands, while others demand a full parliamentary constitution with a cabinet responsible to an elected legislature. It finds an outlet in more dangerous ways, in plans and combinations

to overthrow the Khedivial government and its supporters, in the angry rhetoric of the writers and talkers of the Geneva congresses, and in the subterranean work of the fiercer conspirators, who weave assassination plots and sometimes succeed in carrying them out. The constitutional reformers have disclaimed all complicity with such desperadoes as the fanatic Wardani, who murdered the late amiable and high-minded Premier, Boutros Pasha, and with those who concocted an abortive attempt on the life of the Khedive and Lord Kitchener. Many of them no doubt are sincere. But in all such cases the border line between those who only 'talk daggers,' and those who would be quite willing to use them, is apt to be undefined. Certainly a considerable number of the Egyptian Nationalists are respectable, and, according to their lights, patriotic persons, not unworthy of the ostentatious patronage extended to them by travelling English M.P.'s and other vindicators of the rights of peoples.

But some of these latter gentlemen would be a good deal astonished if they discovered how close is the connection between certain of their clients, who talk with so much cultured ease of enlightenment and reform, and show so laudable a familiarity with modern progressive literature, and certain other persons who are seeking to kindle a Moslem fury against the Feringhi and all their works and ways. Even from the latter one cannot withhold some measure of sympathy. It is hard for any class of men, especially for men who are young, ambitious, high-spirited, to be governed—though it be for their own good—by those who are alien from them in religion, race, and sentiment. There is plenty of sheer social envy, of personal

greed, of yeasty idealism, of impatient vanity, in the Egyptian Nationalist movement. So there is in all such agitations. But it has its better elements; we can only hope, without too confidently expecting, that we shall gradually succeed in reconciling these to an anomalous, but for the present an advantageous and indeed inevitable, political expedient.

The Nationalists might be more effective for mischief if they were less divided by internal dissensions and more skilfully directed. They lost the ablest of their leaders some years ago by the death of Mustapha Kamel Pasha, the chief organiser of the extremist party. Kamel was a man of some talent and much power of fluent expression both in speech and writing. His newspaper, the *Egyptian Standard*, was virulent in its abuse of England and the English. But it was written with literary skill and argumentative resourcefulness, and some of its articles, if bad politics were excellent journalism, forcible, expressive, and ingeniously calculated to rouse native passion against British influence in every shape. Mustapha Kamel's nationalism was of the most aggressive and assertive type. His aim was to persuade his countrymen that British control in Egypt was not merely tyrannical but also glaringly inefficient. He attacked the officials of every department with unmeasured invective, not even sparing those who had been responsible for scientific and administrative achievements which have evoked the admiration of the world. In many articles he endeavoured to prove—or at any rate to produce the impression on the minds of his readers—that the splendid irrigation work of Sir



Colin Scott-Moncrieff and his successors was only a dismal failure. The English canals and barrages were simply draining the country of its life-blood, and would in due course send it back to desert. Our agriculture was a mistake ; our education an imposture ; our financial and judicial services utterly inadequate. Kamel tried to persuade his followers that Egypt was thoroughly mismanaged under English supervision, and would remain mismanaged until the administration was entirely transferred to native hands. His influence, not only with the educated discontented class, but with the masses of the large towns, was very great. Seldom has such a mighty crowd been seen, even in an Oriental city, as that which filled the streets of Cairo on the day that Mustapha Kamel's body was carried to the tomb.

External events during the past few years have been favourable to the propaganda of the Nationalists, and have done something to counteract the weakness they have inflicted on their own cause by their squabbles and jealousies. Egypt has felt the impact of the wave which has rolled through all the Eastern world since the early years of our century. With Turkey, Persia, India, China, stirred by new ideas and strange emotions, Egypt can hardly remain entirely irresponsive. She also was shaken by that astounding collapse of Russia before Japan which came like the blast of a thunderbolt—like a new revelation from the Unseen—upon Africa as well as Asia. ‘ Throughout the whole of the Dark Continent,’ wrote the late Edward Dacey, who knew Egypt well, seven years ago, ‘ from Cairo to the Cape, there had, in the course of the last century,

grown up a profound conviction that in any conflict between Europeans and natives the latter were bound to come to grief in the end. This belief received a violent shock throughout the East as it gradually oozed out that Russia, the greatest military Power in Europe, had been signally and ignominiously defeated by a native Oriental race. I do not suppose that one Egyptian native in a thousand or a hundred thousand had any conception where Japan was, who the Japanese were, or to what race or religion they belonged. But all over Africa—north, south, west, and east—the tidings of Russia's defeat at the hands of a coloured race who, whatever else they might be, were certainly not Christians or whites, spread with the strange rapidity with which news in the East passes from hand to hand. There is not a village in Egypt in which there is not some Mullah or Mahdi or holy man, learned in the Koran, who was only too glad to announce to his adherents that the downfall of the infidel was at hand, and that the day was coming when Islam would once more become supreme. The Egyptians are not fanatical Mohammedans, but they are fervent followers of the Prophet, and they are convinced that the decline of the Cross is certain to lead to the rise of the Crescent.'

While this disturbing thought was still fermenting in the native mind, there came the Turkish Revolution, the rise of the Young Turks, the establishment of parliamentary institutions under the very shadow of the Calif's throne. All things considered, it is not surprising that the Egyptian agitators have been active during the past decade, nor is there any immediate likelihood that this activity will cease. Fortunately, though it is always troublesome it is not often

dangerous, and its least perilous phase is that which shows itself among the articulate sections of the population—the middle classes and professional men of the towns.

Nor are we too popular with another large and influential class. The old governing element, the members of the Turco-Egyptian families, the sons and grandsons of the men who were beys and pashas under Ismail and Said, are hostile to the Occupation, though they may not deem it advisable to give overt expression to their hostility. These persons think that they would have much to gain by our departure. They would once more become a ruling aristocracy, they would 'boss' the country, get the good places into their own hands, and enjoy that outward consideration which goes with the exercise of power in Oriental lands. They are still a little sulky over their supersession, though even if we cleared out, bag and baggage, they would hardly be able to regain their old predominance.

But what of the peasantry, the real people of Egypt? They ought to be grateful to us, for undoubtedly we have improved their lot and done many things for them. Thanks to the English, the fellah can now live at peace on his farm, undisturbed by the fear of a sudden raid from tax-gatherers or marauding pashas. The land tax is paid according to a regular assessment, and the farmer of the Delta is as well aware of the precise nature of his public obligations as a London ratepayer, or probably better. I spent some days with the manager of a branch of the Agricultural Bank, who was making loans to the peasants on mortgage, and gathering in arrears of interest due from them; and I was interested to observe how accurately informed these people

were as to their financial relations with the state. Every man brought with him his tax-sheet and assessment paper, and knew to a piastre how much his land was worth, and how much he would have to pay on it. It was in the course of the same journey that I had visible proof of the agrarian progress and activity which prevail under the shelter of the Occupation. The Egyptian peasant is still for the most part a poor, hard-working drudge ; but he is no longer a serf, and he is safe from administrative oppression and territorial violence. For the first time in his history he knows what it is to live without the kurbash and the *corvée* : neither money nor labour can be extorted from him by the stick. Above all, he has his water supply secure. The English engineers have poured the life-giving fluid through the canals, and the English inspectors of the Public Works Department see that the tenant obtains his fair share without having to bribe officials or crave favours from the hangers-on of the local magnate.

But it is more than doubtful whether the English receive credit for these reforms. The peasantry have little consciousness of the part we play in the administration of the country. They know that certain officials come among them from time to time who treat them with more humanity and justice than their old tyrants, and they are probably glad that the Government has chosen to employ these agents ; but their recognition hardly goes beyond this point. They accept good fortune and ill with the same Oriental fatalism. It is the will of Allah. He has been pleased that their crops shall increase and their burdens be lightened, and has put it into the hearts of the effendim

that they shall no longer be beaten and plundered. Praise to the Most Merciful. His will be done.

To tell the truth, I believe the peasant thinks less of the reforms than of the grievances under which he still suffers, or believes himself to suffer. He is not, perhaps, so much impressed by the abolition of the kurbash as he ought to be. He has been flogged for so many centuries that he has got used to the process; that was the will of Allah too. In a country where a gang of labourers, working under contract, voluntarily pay a foreman to stand over them with a stick and use it freely on shirkers, immunity from personal chastisement is not highly appreciated. Besides, the present system has endured long enough to have dimmed the memory of past evils. The confiscations, the oppression, the forced contributions of the old days, are forgotten by the younger generation; which, on the other hand, has its own tale of official incompetence, police corruption, and ineffective administration of justice. I have dwelt already on the great blot on our administration, our failure to suppress disorder in the country districts, to keep violent crime within limits, and to secure the conviction of offenders. The fellah grumbles at these troubles, oblivious of the grosser wrongs from which his fathers suffered.

For these and other reasons we have little gratitude to expect in Egypt. The peasantry do not know us; the superior classes do not want us. Of the latter, many who admit our services profess that they were quite able to accomplish them without our aid, and that a native government, purged of the abuses of the old Khedivate

—intensified as these were by the money poured into Ismail's lap by foreign money-mongers—could have done all that was requisite; and could have done it, so they think, without introducing those Western usages and innovations which are distasteful to Mussulman sentiment. Egypt, it cannot be too often repeated, is a Mohammedan country; and no devout Moslem likes to be ruled by infidels.

Even the slow-thinking fellah has that feeling; and there are those who make it their business to stimulate it. Mustapha Kamel worked hard to excite Mussulman sentiment in the villages against the Christians. His emissaries did what they could to push the Nationalist agitation among the peasantry, and his successors have made some efforts in the same direction. The fellah is not a newspaper reader; but in most of the villages there are a few persons—headmen, land surveyors, Coptic clerks, schoolmasters—who can read, and when a copy of the provocative Cairo journal comes into the place its inflammatory contents soon become known. Its political arguments must often be above the heads of the villagers. But its appeals to Moslem passion are not. The fellah is a devout Mohammedan; to him his religion is all in all; and though at present he seems to have taken the Nationalist agitation calmly, it is not without its effect upon him. The perfervid oratory and violent journalism of dissatisfied townsmen may be comparatively harmless. But in India and in Russia this urban rhetoric does at length begin to sting through the thick hide of the peasant, and the same thing may happen in Egypt. I do not know how far my informants were

correct in their estimate of the situation ; but I was assured by some who are closely in touch with native opinion that during our dispute with the Porte over the Sinai frontier question some years ago popular feeling in the villages was absolutely on the side of the Turks. If it had come to war—as it very nearly did—these observers were convinced that there would have been furious anti-European riots in the towns and outbreaks among the fellahin. There is a deep-lying reservoir of Mohammedan bigotry, contemptuously acquiescent in the presence of other religions, which yet, under conceivable circumstances, might boil up into steaming and scorching fanaticism.

Islam lies at the base of Egyptian society, and it is on the future of Islam that the future of Egypt depends. For let us make no mistake on one vital point : we are not Christianising the East. The Mohammedan world is farther from conversion to the faith of the West—for my part I believe the Buddhist and Brahman world also—than it was three centuries, or even ten centuries, ago. Indeed one may say that in the continents of the brown and yellow races Christianity has been steadily receding for over a thousand years. At the beginning of the Middle Ages it did indeed seem as if all the world were likely to find shelter under the Cross of Christ. There were populous Christian communities throughout Asia Minor, Persia, Turkestan, Thibet, China ; great and powerful Christian churches spread over North Africa and Central Africa from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea and the equatorial regions. Except for a few anæmic remnants in Abyssinia, Syria, Armenia, all these have disappeared, absorbed by Buddhism

and Brahmanism, or swept out by the conquering tide of Islam. The two processes are in operation still. Japan, which almost promised to become a Christian country before the Protestant Reformation, has gone back to the old gods or the old negations. If Mohammedanism is ebbing out of Europe, it is on the crest of the advancing wave in Africa, where its mullahs are making converts daily, under the eyes of our officials and our ineffectual missionaries, in the British territories of the Atlantic sea-board.

Some optimists persuade themselves that Orientals are adopting the morality, if not the creed, of Christendom. That seems to me more than doubtful. They are assimilating some of our ideas and ideals, but these are for the most part not those which are distinctively Christian. It is the common experience of everybody, who has conversed with the educated native from Tangier to Tokio, that this person, when he abandons the orthodoxy of his fathers, does not accept the orthodoxy of his teachers. He is more likely to turn Atheist or Rationalist than Christian: to seek refuge in a tangle of modern Antinomianism rather than to recline upon the New Testament and the Church Catechism. And let us remember that the Eastern reformer is not always the shallow creature, with a simian aptitude for copying the tricks and habits of the people he both hates and envies, who has become too familiar to us in the facile pages of hasty travellers and ingenious writers of fiction. The East, like the West, has its seekers after light, its thinkers and real students, who are feeling the thrill of our transitional era, and searching for some solid foothold amid the floods that surge across the old landmarks. These men are not

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quite content to accept ready-made the ethical conventions, a little time-worn and travel-stained among ourselves, which we rather contemptuously fling down to them. It is not always easy to meet the arguments of enlightened, but conservative, Moslems who insist that it is the immorality, rather than the virtue, of the West which is transmitted to the East.

‘Our ethical system,’ an intelligent and cultivated Mohammedan might say, ‘is not perfect; I am the first to admit it. Yet we taught our young men the Moslem virtues of devotion, gratitude, filial obedience, temperance, hospitality, and courage. What do you give them in exchange? A faith they cannot believe in, for they know you daily ignore its tenets; a code of morals which has not prevented your own societies from being the battle-ground of the animal instincts and the predatory passions. If our cities are being sapped by drink and vice it is because they are too closely imitating your own. You have inflicted upon us the horrible curse of alcoholism, from which the East was free; you have induced our youths to learn your languages, and they employ their knowledge to read the pornographic romances of the boulevards. You have put polygamy out of fashion with the wealthier classes (it never was the fashion with the poor), and you suppose that morality is the gainer when the Egyptian husband supplements his single Moslem wife with a relay of female companions, drawn from the pavements of your capitals and the *coulisses* of your music-halls. Islam may have its demerits; but it is a working system of religion and morals, and we shall do wisely to cling to it.’

Cling to it, wisely or not, I believe they will, and the reformers of the East must make their account with the fact. Can Mohammedanism reconcile itself with modern progress? There are those who persistently maintain that it cannot. 'Islam,' wrote Sir William Muir, 'never changes'; and many Anglo-Indians and Anglo-Egyptians agree with him. There are said to be two main obstacles—the Koran and the seclusion of women. We are told that it is impossible for a society to be progressive, when it is controlled by rules and formularies, laid down for a primitive community twelve centuries ago, and fortified by all the sanctions of religion. The argument is an odd one in the mouths of persons who profess to regulate their own lives by a Scripture much older than the writings of Mohammed, and promulgated among a people no more civilised than the Arabians of the Prophet. If the Bible is no impediment to electric tramcars, steam turbines, representative government, joint stock companies, and university extension lectures, perhaps the Koran need not bar the way to these improvements either. If the Moslem reformers are in earnest, they will, no doubt, prevail on the ulema to interpret the sacred texts in a favourable sense. A priesthood, which could not stretch the articles of its religion so as to cover the requirements of contemporaneous society, would be singularly deficient in the ecclesiastical instinct.

On the other question—the woman question—one must not dogmatise. None of us know much about it in its Eastern application. Some of those who know least are the foremost in denouncing the harem as the blight of

Oriental society, the fatal influence that negatives all genuine progress. But it is an institution which has existed for many centuries, which fits without friction into the conditions of Eastern life, which has been approved by both sexes in the countries where it is practised; and, at least, it relieves them from some of the miseries and failures rampant elsewhere.

I can conceive that my educated, conservative Mussulman might have a few further remarks to make on this subject. 'You are good enough to inform us,' he might observe, 'that our family life, based as it is on the seclusion and segregation of women, and recognising, under very strict legal and social regulation, polygamous marriage, is unsatisfactory. Possibly. Neither polygamy nor the harem is enjoined by our religion, and for them we do not seek our warrant in the Koran. They have established themselves through the practice and custom of the ages in most Oriental countries; but I do not deny that we may find them, like many other ancient Eastern usages, unsuited to modern conditions. How they can best be modified is a matter many of us are gravely considering. But will you excuse me, if I venture to suggest that we are by no means disposed to accept you, without further question, as authoritative mentors in this branch of study? For, so far as we can gather, you have made rather a squalid muddle, not unmixed with sordid tragedy, of the sexual relations in your own enlightened and progressive communities. Are your marriages universally, or even in a great majority of instances, tranquil and happy? Are your husbands always faithful? Are your wives invariably contented?

Have you, any more than ourselves, been completely successful in "subduing to the useful and the good" those individual passions, and overpowering emotions, which Nature has sown in the human soul and body?

'On these points we have our doubts. We read your newspapers, your fiction, your dramatists, and we learn that your society is racked by sexual unrest, and perturbed by the most horrible sexual immorality, which you vainly strive to keep in check by ferocious, but apparently ineffectual, penal laws. You suppress black slavery in the East and are struggling with what you call white slavery in the West, a degradation which your agents have even introduced among ourselves.<sup>1</sup> Your matrimonial arrangements work so badly that your men, it seems, take refuge in licentiousness, and your women are in revolt. And with it all we discover that you are threatened by "race suicide," and that your system does not even provide (as ours does) that practically every woman shall have a secure place found for her in the world, and shall not miss the opportunity to fulfil her primary vocation of motherhood. Have we, then, much to gain in all these matters by adopting your codes and your creeds, or by hastily assimilating the methods in which so many among yourselves have lost confidence? If we must change our own social and domestic system, it is not clear to some of us that we are compelled to replace it by yours, or that we should be wise in doing so.'

As a matter of fact you have only to walk through a

<sup>1</sup> See the passage from Lord Kitchener's Report (quoted above (chapter xxvii. p. 248).

street in Cairo to see that there are plenty of ladies in Egypt who are evidently allowed, or who allow themselves, a personal freedom not often extended to their well-to-do sisters in other Mohammedan countries. The Egyptian veil seems in a metaphorical, as well as a literal, sense a much more transparent vestment than the Indian *purdah*. But on the other hand one sometimes hears that the movement for the emancipation of married women has little vitality, except among the reformers and the small Europeanising 'smart set' of the capital. Some of the ladies reject the veil and the separate female apartments, receive masculine visitors in their family circle, wear European dresses, and accompany their husbands to Paris or Mentone.

But I believe the whole number of these vindicators of women's rights is still very limited, and the example, in spite of the impulse given by the princesses of the Khedivial family, is not being followed to any considerable extent. One hears of cases of well-born and highly cultured Moslem ladies who, after some experience of emancipation and intercourse in the Western fashion, have voluntarily and deliberately returned to the seclusion of the zenana. One lady who has done so I know, and I have spoken with, though I have never seen, her. She is the wife of an accomplished scholar, and might herself claim that title, having studied not only English and French literature but also Egyptian antiquities and archæology. For some years she mingled freely in the most cultivated foreign society of the capital. Now she has thought it right to resume the habits of her people. She passes her days in her own apartments, and only leaves them to drive out, closely

veiled, in her carriage. But occasionally she will converse on the subjects which interest her with an English professor or learned official or some other foreign gentleman—through the telephone! Thus do science and Moslem convention work comfortably together.

If the status of the Egyptian woman of the middle and well-to-do classes is to be changed, the most efficient factor will be the spread of female education. There is a growing interest in this subject in the country. 'There is probably nothing more remarkable in the social history of Egypt during the last dozen years than the growth of opinion among all classes of Egyptians in favour of the education of their daughters. The girls' schools belonging to the Ministry of Education are crowded, and to meet the growing demand sites have been acquired and fresh schools are to be constructed, one in Alexandria and two in Cairo. Very many applications for admission have, however, to be refused. The Provincial Councils have during the past year done something to remedy this deficiency. Girls' schools have been opened by the Councils in five *mudirias*, and in other cases private girls' schools have been taken over. The increase in the schools directed by the Education Department, and the activity of the local educational authorities in the same direction, have revealed the fact that the supply of trained female teachers is entirely inadequate. The Sania Training College was founded in 1900 to meet this need, and twenty-eight girl students are at present in attendance there. Several also have been sent to England for professional training. At present, however, it is clear that neither the Training College nor

the Educational Mission is able to provide the number of teachers required, and it can only be hoped that the increase of the facilities for primary instruction for girls will enlarge the field of recruitment for this purpose. In the case of elementary vernacular education, again, the desire to secure this instruction for girls has completely outrun the possibility of providing adequate accomodation.<sup>1</sup>

A growing desire is manifest among Moslem parents to have their daughters educated; they are clamouring for more primary schools, and they even send their girls to be taught by Coptic priests and American missionaries rather than that they should not be taught at all. There is a famous private school in Cairo, under an English headmistress, where hundreds of Mohammedan young ladies are brought up precisely as high-school girls are in England, no whit less alert, as intelligent, and as eagerly interested in their studies. The great want is that of qualified native teachers; and here the Ministry of Education, under its late capable chief, Zaghulul Pasha, set the good precedent of picking out

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt*, No. 1 (1912), p. 25. In the Report for the following year, *Egypt*, No. 1 (1913), we read:—

‘The demand for girls’ schools in Egypt shows no tendency to decrease. Reference was made in last year’s report to the want of suitable accomodation and properly qualified teachers, which makes it difficult to keep pace with this growing movement. Some progress has been made in the past year. The Sania and Abbas Primary Schools for girls contain 461 pupils. Both are full, and unable to meet a constantly increasing demand for admission. The attendance at the Sania Training College increased in 1912, and several Egyptian girl students, as in previous years, have been sent to England to complete their professional training, but further provision for the training of Egyptian women teachers appears to be very necessary.’

promising female pupils from the secondary schools and sending them to be trained in England. The difficulty, as his Excellency rather mournfully explained to me, is that marriage is still the only recognised profession for women in the East ; and there will be little hope of keeping the young preceptresses at their work beyond the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. One of these prize pupils, I was told, on passing her examination and obtaining a government nomination, immediately received no fewer than seventeen offers of marriage, which shows at least that the Egyptian bridegroom does not despise feminine culture. But one wonders how an educated young woman will contrive to settle down to matrimonial immurement after her year or two spent at a training college or a university in England.

Feminine education, as well as technical and agricultural education, the British Agent and the advisers of the Ministers are doing their best to encourage. Literary culture on Western lines is regarded rather coldly ; it is felt that Egypt is likely to get quite as many educated young gentlemen, with the latest imported ideas, as it will require, without much official assistance. Of journalists, lawyers, candidates for government employment, it needs only a moderate supply. What it does want are trained native doctors, architects, engineers, estate managers, surveyors, men of business generally, and students properly prepared for industrial and commercial pursuits. And these the technical schools and colleges are gradually furnishing. In this way we may produce some effect on the intellectual movement, and the attitude of those who will give it shape



in the future, as well as upon the economic progress of the country.

But with the possible awakening of Islam, with the social and ethical consequences of the dynamic change that is passing through the Eastern mind, we have little direct concern. Egypt, like other Oriental lands, will in due course try to work out its own salvation, perhaps in unison with the West, quite possibly by shaping a different synthesis for itself. We may have to abandon our conception of the huge, somnolent, amorphous Orient, waiting passively for the West to stamp the impress of its vitalising energy upon the lethargic bulk. It is a favourite literary tradition :

The East bowed low before the blast,  
In patient, deep disdain,  
She heard the legions thunder past,  
And plunged in dreams again.

Did she? At any rate the East seems more inclined for action than dreaming just now. She is clearing the mists of sleep from her eyes, and is showing a tendency to be self-assertive, practical, and independently constructive. The East may take over from us various external forms and material appendages, such as parliaments, military tactics, super-Dreadnoughts, and bowler hats, without necessarily assimilating our spirit, our morals, or our view of life. It was our teacher before, and it may have much to teach us again, even in the purely scientific sphere, when it has learnt from us the grammar and the alphabet of modern knowledge.

Meanwhile, and without prejudice to the ultimate results, we have a task to perform in Egypt which will not be completely fulfilled for many years to come. Quietly and steadily, and with as little interference as possible from outside, we must go on doing our duty as we have done it throughout the Occupation period, making the best of the country and the people, economically and otherwise, according to our lights. Our lights may not be those of our clients, they may even sometimes be a little dim and flickering for ourselves ; but, such as they are, we must steer by them, not expecting any particular gratitude, understanding that we are not popular, but steadfastly discharging an obligation we cannot as yet abandon.

That we shall be relieved of it some time has been the conviction of Lord Cromer and the other men who have been engaged with him in the reconstruction of Egypt. But they are equally convinced that the period of our release is far distant. The habits and traditions of centuries are not changed in a few years ; and it must be long before Egypt is adapted for that self-government, combined with freedom from foreign dictation, for which we have been preparing her.

The preparation may take a slightly different form in the near future. We have made mistakes, and have learnt lessons from experience ; and we may anticipate that the system will undergo some important modifications, tending generally, I imagine, in the direction of associating competent natives more closely with the responsible business of administration in all departments. But, in the main, the system will be retained, and it will be animated, one may hope, with the same spirit of integrity, self-sacrifice, and

zeal for the public benefit, which has rendered the British Occupation of Egypt the most honourable episode in the recent history of our race. It has been a difficult experiment, which seemed foredoomed to failure; it is creditable to many Englishmen and some Egyptians that it has been, on the whole, a success.



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