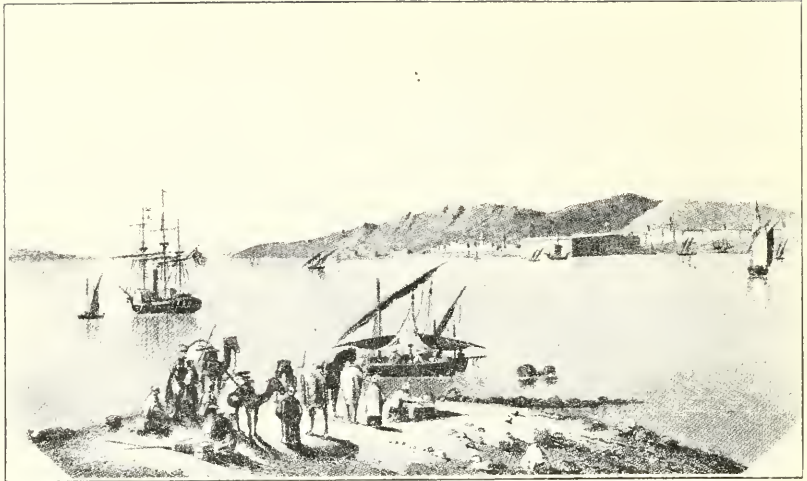


## THE BRITISH OCCUPATION OF EGYPT

BY LIEUTENANT COLONEL P. G. ELGOOD, C.M.G.

**F**IVE HUNDRED years before the birth of Christ, Cambyses the Persian swept across Sinai and planted his standard in Memphis and Thebes. It was the end of the Pharaonic Empire, and from the calamity Egypt did not wholly recover. One invader has succeeded another and the tale is not yet complete. For twenty centuries and more, Egypt has been the victim of conquest and satrapy.

The French occupation (1798-1801) was a turning point in the history of Egypt. It gave a fresh lease of life to Turkish sovereignty, but it also produced a man in Mohammed Ali, who laid the foundation of Egypt's present prosperity. But his government was too personal, too arbitrary to outlive his times: nor did it do so, as subsequent history testifies. Of Abbas, a grandson, and Said, a son, little need be said, but Ismail, another grandson, who ascended the throne in 1863, requires longer mention. About his memory so many stories revolve that the true is not easy to separate from the false. Yet this much is certain: during his short reign of sixteen years he brought Egypt to the brink of beggary. At his accession the public debt stood at £ E. 3,000,000; at his abdication it amounted to £ E. 100,000,000, and for the major part of that formidable total there was little to show. The country could well afford to support its ruler's whims in the beginning. War was raging in the United States and the spinners of Europe were paying fabulous sums for Egyptian cotton. Then the golden harvest dried up, and Ismail began to borrow at ruinous discounts or rates of interest. Two instances will suffice. Out of a nominal loan of £ E. 32,000,000 floated in 1873, Egypt received £ E. 11,000,000 in cash and £ E. 9,000,000 in depreciated script, and for the accommodation paid in annual interest £ E. 2,156,000. At another moment in return for a cash advance of £ E. 72,000, the sovereign handed over £ E. 230,000 of Egyptian stocks. Finance of this type carries its own penalty, and in midsummer 1875 the borrowing came to an abrupt end. Alarmed at Ismail's personal extravagance, European bankers would lend no more. In despair he offered to a syndicate in Paris the 177,000 shares subscribed by his predecessor to the Suez Canal Company: but doubtful of the value of the security, the syn-



*Courtesy of Longmans Green & Co.*

THE SUEZ ROADSTEAD ABOUT 1840  
From *British Routes to India*, H. L. Hoskins



*Courtesy of H. L. Hoskins*

THE SUEZ ROADSTEAD TODAY

dicate hesitated, and getting wind of the negotiations, Disraeli on behalf of England bought the shares for £ E. 4,000,000. Hitherto the domestic concerns of Egypt had been of no particular interest to England. If investors chose to speculate in Egyptian securities, it was their concern and not that of the Cabinet. But partnership in the Suez Canal altered this point of view: England no less than France thenceforth was directly interested in the maintenance of stable government in Egypt. None the less, Disraeli had no intention of embarking upon any adventure in that country, and to Ismail's protests of solvency he turned a deaf ear. The end came in June, 1879, when the Sultan of Turkey, pushed by England and France, forced him to abdicate. Ismail could hardly complain of the fate that had overtaken him. His wilfulness and extravagance had well nigh ruined Egypt, and posterity will remember him more kindly for his creation of the Mixed Courts.

Tewfik, his son, succeeded. The new reign began inauspiciously with low Niles, poor harvests and epidemics which took toll of man and beast. Under the strain Egypt bent, and sought in vain for relief. It was not to be found. England and France, endeavoring to ward off bankruptcy, had succeeded in promulgating a law of liquidation (1880) that lightened part of Egypt's heavy burden, but taxation was still intolerably high and justice seldom obtainable. Tewfik, a simple-minded and frugal man, was no ruler to ride the storm, and matters went from bad to worse. In their plight the people turned to Islam for comfort, and al-Azhar, the seminary of Islamic lore, in return whispered of the need of brotherhood of Moslems. Out of the wild talk of Alims and sheikhs, there sprang up a hatred of Europeans, and a belief that their interference in the affairs of Egypt was at the root of her ills. Under these influences a crudely national party came into existence, that planned to dethrone the sovereign and establish a republic. Led by Arabi, the army was the first to show its hand. Military grievances were numerous and legitimate enough, but Tewfik did not handle the business well. He accepted a national ministry, gave Arabi the portfolio of war. It was a rash experiment, and the new minister took every advantage of his authority. There seemed no alternative but intervention, yet England in particular hung back. She had joined France in a dual control of Egyptian finance without enthusiasm, she had held aloof from the commission of public debt,

she had refused to nominate an Englishman to supervise collection of Egyptian revenue. She had never coveted possession of Egypt, she did not desire it now.

In the end many unoffending Europeans lost their lives in the tumultuous days of June, 1882. The patience of the British admiral gave way: getting no answer to his letters of remonstrance, he opened fire on the forts of Alexandria July 11. France did not participate. Her commitments in northern Africa were already heavy, and she was reluctant to add to them. It was thus left to England to fulfill the Anglo-French promise to support the authority of the throne. Military operations succeeded naval: news of Arabi's intention to destroy the Suez Canal transferred the campaign from Alexandria to Ismailia. The British and Egyptian forces met at Tel el Kebir on the 10th of September in an engagement ending in the rout of the latter and the capitulation of Cairo. Thus began an occupation, which continues to this day.

In a sense England had accomplished her mission. Order had been restored, Arabi and his confederates were prisoners of war: there seemed no great reason to retain a garrison in Egypt. But decision was not so simple as that: the future would remain doubtful until the worst of Egypt's grievances had been redressed. They were legitimate and manifold, and an impartial survey of Egyptian conditions in the autumn of 1882 justified the impression that abuse of authority was at the bottom of the evil. The throne itself was the worst offender: its word was law, its prerogative was illimitable. It imposed burdens upon the people by simple decree, it drew no distinction between national revenue and the civil list. The incidence of taxation was painfully imperfect: the heavier burden fell upon the wretched peasant. The kurbash and the prison were the twin pillars of the administration, and provincial authority used both mercilessly. Crime also was rife: no man's life or property was safe in a country where brigandage and blackmail marched hand in hand. Various departments of the State needed reconstruction: everywhere corruption and indolence reigned supreme. Irrigation was in deplorable straits. Incompetent engineers wasted the valuable summer water, neglected to keep in repair public works. The barrage, Mohammed Ali's great conception, at the apex of the Delta, stood unusable: its foundation had subsided, its piers were cracked. Military service was another affliction. Pay was generally in ar-

rears, the term of engagement illegally extended, the ration issue insufficient. Robbed and maltreated, conscripts deserted right and left. No less oppressive was the *corvée* or system of forced labor, which swept the countryside clear of able-bodied fellahin in order to construct works frequently of questionable utility and to clear canals and drains for the benefit of wealthy landowners.

Hesitatingly the British cabinet reached four conclusions: first, that a peaceful Egypt depended upon the removal of grievances; secondly, that reconstruction of the administration alone could remove the grievances; thirdly, that England would indicate the method of reconstruction; and lastly, that British troops must remain in Egypt until the task was accomplished. There had never been talk of annexation or of prolonging occupation once stability was assured. Lord Dufferin as special High Commissioner came to Cairo to lay the foundations of constitutional government. His mission went no further than a modest experiment in organic law—he was to maintain the throne with a drastic restriction of its former prerogatives. No new tax in future was to be imposed without consent of a General Assembly, no new measures could become law until a Legislative Council had debated it. It was Egypt's first introduction to representative government.

Meanwhile Europe was divided. Germany, Italy, and Austria saw nothing unreasonable in England's programme; France and Turkey hotly contested it. The indignation of France was natural, but illogical. Having refused to coöperate in the disagreeable business of intervention, she was not in a position to complain. She vented her annoyance in pressing England to specify the date of the army of occupation's departure: a question that the British Cabinet would only answer by the formula "as soon as the state of Egypt permits." But conscience was pricking Mr. Gladstone, the prime minister. He was anxious to remain on good terms with France, he was also desirous of relieving his country of the cost of maintaining the army of occupation. Spurred by this reasoning he decided to reduce the force in Egypt to the limit of a small garrison in Alexandria as the first step toward evacuation.

However, before a soldier could move, orders were countermanded. The southern Sudan was ablaze with revolt. Isolated Egyptian garrisons, making what terms they could, had capitulated: Khartoum, the capital, was in danger. Impressed by that menace,

the Egyptian prime minister hastily conscripted 10,000 fellahin, and bade their commander, General Hicks, stamp out the insurrection. But Hicks was trapped in the deserts of Kordofan, his travesty of an army wiped out. At once England pressed on Egypt the need of evacuating Khartoum while there was yet time: but neither the ruler nor his ministers would listen. "Let us talk of evacuation," said the prime minister testily, "when we've beaten these insolent rebels." It was a vain boast, for Egypt had neither the troops nor the money to undertake the reconquest of the Sudan, and England declined to lend either. In the end Egypt gave way, and General Gordon was selected to conduct the evacuation.

Throughout 1884 Lord Cromer, British agent and consul general, was patiently struggling with other embarrassments. Egypt was confronted with £ E. 8,000,000 of pressing liabilities with no money to give. Even the right to borrow had been denied. To meet emergencies and provide money for current needs, Cromer convincingly urged an immediate loan of £ E. 9,000,000. To demonstrate their complete disinterestedness in Egypt the British government invited the coöperation of Europe, and the convention of London in 1885 gave Egypt a fresh start by placing £ E. 9,000,000 at her disposal. At this point England vaguely took stock of her responsibilities in Egypt. They were growing apace, and she contemplated transferring their burden to other shoulders. Turkey, the suzerain Power, was the obvious alternative and was invited to take up the task. The Sultan was very willing, and his representative, Muktar Pasha, met Drummond Wolff in Cairo. But the two commissioners could not agree. Muktar was for reconquering the Sudan as a beginning, Wolff for reform and retrenchment in Egypt. The British cabinet then decided to negotiate directly with Constantinople. They offered to withdraw all troops within three years, reserving only right of reoccupation if circumstances required, and the Sultan would have signed an agreement on those lines but for the remonstrance of France and Russia. Mistakenly Turkey listened to the counsel, and her single opportunity of recovering control over Egypt passed.

Meanwhile Cromer was endeavoring to make one piastre do the work of two. The new loan provided £ E. 1,000,000 for development, and there was little doubt where the sum could be most profitably spent. Egyptian prosperity springs from intensive agriculture,



*Courtesy of P. G. Elgood*

#### THE SHADOOF

An ancient method of irrigation still used.



*Courtesy of Dr. H. V. Neal*

#### THE TIME-HONORED METHOD OF IRRIGATION

which in turn depends upon a punctual and adequate supply of summer water. To assure that elementary need Mohammed Ali had built his barrage, and to its reconstruction a little troop of British engineers applied themselves. The distribution of water and clearing of canals had been handled from time immemorial, though never very efficiently, by the *corvée*. Now a fresh difficulty supervened. Relieved from his fear of the *kurbash* under the new administration, the fellah ignored the summons of authority and stayed at home. Cromer for once was puzzled. Despite despairing cries from the ministry, remonstrances from provincial authorities and appeals from the land-owning classes, he would not reintroduce the *kurbash*: from lack of money he could not substitute paid labor. However, by skimping and paring, Egypt contrived to find the money from her own resources, and in 1890 the *corvée* was formally and finally abolished. The outlook was then brightening. Bankruptcy no longer stared Egypt in the face, the dead weight of the Sudan had been lifted. A reserve fund had been created, and money was available at last to recondition administrative services. But the ministries of justice and interior were painfully in need of reform, and it was only by pointed reminders that in a conflict of wills the English voice must triumph that the judiciary was reformed.

Tewfik died (January 7, 1892), and his son Abbas Hilmi sat on the throne. A wayward youth impatient of counsel and restraint, flattered and importuned by a court of parasites, he picked a quarrel with England at once. To the sagacious Cromer the incident pointed a moral. He had begun his work in the expectation that the Egyptian people under guidance would accomplish their own salvation: the attitude of the throne and of its advisers caused him reluctantly to put away that hope. Unless the process of reconstruction was quickened, he was forced to admit that a century would be insufficient for the task, and fortified with that belief he altered his procedure. Hitherto executive authority had been exercised by Egyptians, and ministers as they thought fit followed or rejected counsel tendered by Englishmen. That was now changed. At the side of each minister sat a British adviser, whose word was law; at the elbow of the provincial mudir or governor was a British inspector armed with little less authority. It was not ideal administration: it led in the end to the exclusion of Egyptians from the more important offices of their government. It hastened reconstruction, no doubt, but it also left a distrust of England's intentions.



None the less, under it Egypt prospered. The Sudan was reconquered, the administration purged of its grosser defects, and of the many obstacles that had hindered regeneration, there remained only the jealousy of France and the burden of the capitulations. From the first days of the occupation France had hindered and thwarted British plans, less out of affection for Egypt than from desire to pay off diplomatic scores elsewhere. But in 1904 the moment seemed opportune to come to an understanding: then France needed British good-will in Morocco as much as England needed the good offices of France in Egypt. Thus came about an Anglo-French declaration, that left England a free hand in Egypt. The capitulations were less easy to handle. Under them the foreigner escaped arbitrary taxation and arrest, and treaty and tradition consecrated those elementary rights. But in the nineteenth century the burden had become embarrassing: before applying either taxation or laws to the foreign community, Egypt had first to obtain consent of the fourteen capitulatory Powers. It seemed to Cromer an archaic procedure, and he proposed to substitute for the Powers a local council representative of resident foreigners.

The indignity of the proposal rankled: already wounded by a convention (January 11, 1899), recognizing an Anglo-Egyptian condominium in the Sudan, and by France's acknowledgement of the occupation, Egypt stirred uneasily. Out of the resentment was born a national party led by Mustapha Kamil, an inspiring personality, whose fierce denunciation of the occupation found an echo in the hearts of his fellow-countrymen. Abbas Hilmi patronized him, sheikhs and notables hung upon his words. All Egypt was convulsed with the struggle, but Cromer did not stay to see its conclusion. He had written his last despatch, had spoken his last word, and in the spring of 1907 he laid down his stewardship. It had been a memorable one: it had rescued Egypt from insolvency, it had planted the seed of virtuous administration. No man had ever served her better.

England was now at the parting of the ways, uncertain whether Egypt would respond best to further Anglicization of the government, or to a reversion to earlier ideals. Sir Eldon Gorst, taking Cromer's place, had no doubts: he indicated at once his intention to curtail the power of advisers, to restore to ministers their old predominance in administration, to limit British influence in the civil service. The policy worked admirably for a while: the throne coöperated enthusiastically and a new prime minister in full sympathy with

Egyptian aspirations took office. The national party began to disintegrate. There was a short struggle for supremacy between it and the cabinet, but Mustapha Kamil was dead, and his mantle had fallen upon less capable men. Moslem and Copt fell out: rival congresses embittered the dispute.

Gorst did not live to enjoy the fruit of his labors: in 1911 he went home to die. Criticism and comment pursued him to the grave. With one voice the foreign community condemned his policy as premature, and Europe agreed with the judgment. Nevertheless, he had ploughed too deep for a successor to disturb his work, nor did Lord Kitchener attempt to do so. That remarkable man was more concerned in the betterment of agriculture than in the political aspirations of Egypt, and he flung himself into its study. There was, no doubt, room for a vigorous hand. Cotton, the staple crop, was deteriorating in quality and in yield, due to inadequate drainage, overproduction, and insect pests. Meanwhile, population was increasing by leaps and bounds while the area of cultivable land remained stationary. Common sense bade Egypt in these circumstances to prepare against a day when economic pressure would oblige the fellahin to break virgin ground, and Kitchener cast an inquiring eye upon the extensive lakes and marshes that border the Mediterranean shore. Their reclamation was an extensive undertaking, and Kitchener was perhaps in too great a hurry to succeed. But if his execution was at fault, his insight was true enough: Egypt can never have a sufficiency of cultivable land. Meanwhile there had arisen an insistent cry for parliamentary control of the executive, and reluctantly Kitchener turned from agriculture to answer it. Gorst's modest experiments in organic law had whetted Egyptian appetite for wider concessions and Kitchener thought to satisfy it by creating a single legislature, invested with larger attributions than the two chambers it displaced. He was mistaken: nothing short of parliamentary control would now please Egypt.

War arrested the reflexion: unexpectedly Egypt found herself a participant in the struggle. Turkey, the suzerain Power, entered the lists, intent on blocking the Suez Canal. Military authority in Egypt proclaimed martial law. The news shocked society. Martial law had a sinister note, a hint of actual hostilities by no means relieved by a later understanding that England "undertook the sole burden of the war without calling upon the Egyptian people for aid

therein." It was a rash promise; for no human intelligence could predict in 1914 the course and consequences of the World War. Worse was to follow. Peace had sufficiently indicated the anomalies of a military occupation of Egypt; war with Turkey made their continuance impossible. A new form of government had to be devised, a new nationality provided for the Egyptian people. Annexation and autonomy were considered and rejected: the first was certain to promote suspicion among neutral Powers; the second, to increase difficulties in defending the Suez Canal. Between the two extremes stood a protectorate: no very satisfactory alternative in view of the earlier pledges given by England on the subject of the occupation, but an expedient probably less open to objection than the others. On the 19th of December, 1914, England announced her decision, and simultaneously invited Prince Husein Kamel, son of Ismail, to accept the throne in place of Abbas Hilmi, whose attitude was suspect.

The Turkish attack on the canal failed dismally, but for the two years following Egypt had to bear the inconveniences incidental to a state of war. They were at first light enough, but in the summer of 1917 that comfortable state of affairs came to an end. British strategy called for an invasion of Palestine. Across Sinai grew up a long line of communications, before Gaza there lay a field army needing labor and produce. For awhile Egypt provided both uncomplainingly: then the supply dwindled and military authority was forced to requisition. Crops and animals were seized, labor was compulsorily recruited: a melancholy comment upon England's undertaking in 1914. None the less from the war Egypt profited materially. Her revenue exceeded expenditure, her financial reserve increased. She had been saved from invasion, she had few dead to mourn. Agriculture had prospered. Her savings probably amounted to £ E. 150,000,000; her exports and imports had doubled in value. All this good fortune and more Egypt owed to her association with England.

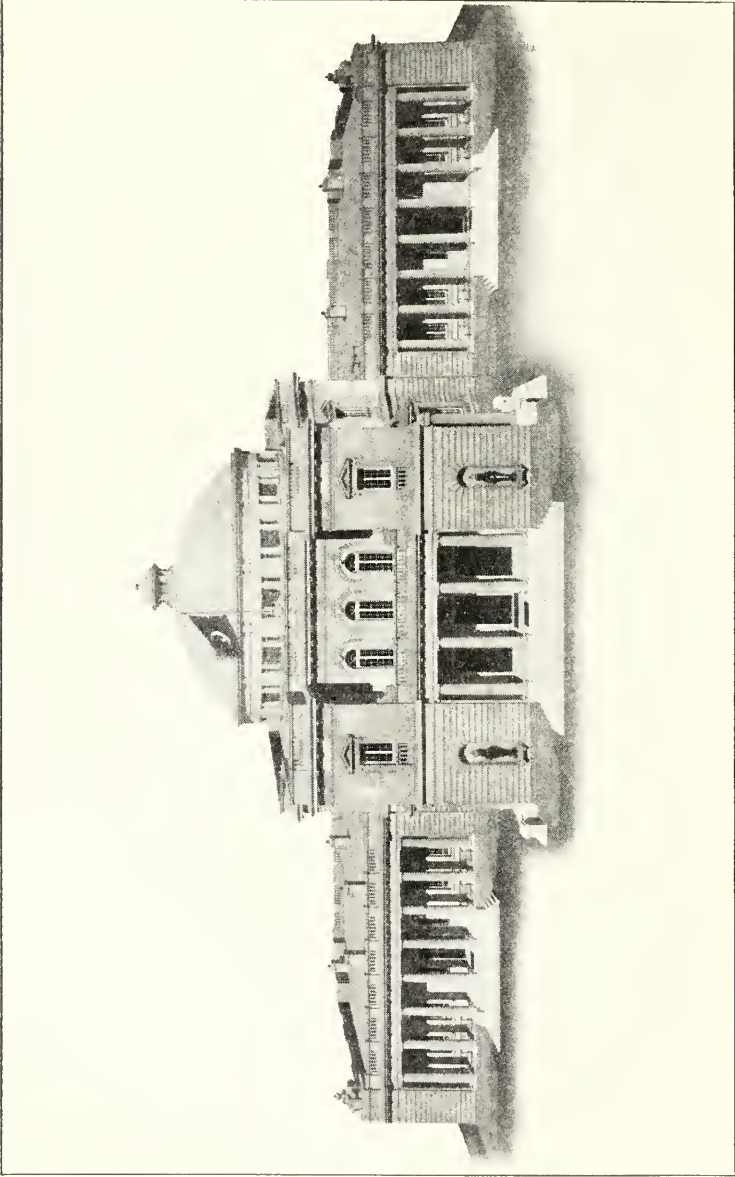
Meanwhile, President Wilson's inspiring reminder of the right of small nations to self-determination had stirred Egypt to the quick, and following the armistice Sa'ad Pasha Zaghul, a former Minister, stepped forward to champion his country's claim. He asked leave to discuss the grievances in London: for answer he was bidden to stay at home. It moved him to defiance. He issued a stream of

manifestoes, he called upon Europe to mark the measure of England's iniquity. So violent grew his language that military authority sent Zaghlul to cool his tongue in Malta. His arrest was followed by wild disorder. Administration came to a standstill: a lust for blood and destruction fastened on the country. In some perplexity the British prime minister commissioned Lord Allenby as a special High Commissioner first "to restore order," next "to maintain the King's protectorate on a sure and equitable basis." The first was easily accomplished. But Allenby's triumph went no further: try as he would, he could not succeed in convincing Egypt of the virtue of a protectorate.

Such was the situation when Lord Milner, at the head of a commission of inquiry, arrived in Cairo. His welcome was ominous: he was bluntly recommended to confer with Sa'ad Zaghlul, then in Paris, or betake himself home. Moreover Milner was handicapped by his terms of reference: he was only empowered to discover a form of constitution that "under the protectorate" would satisfy Egyptian aspirations. No such formula could possibly be devised, and Milner meditated upon a new line of approach. He met Zaghlul and a delegation, known later as the Wafd, in London, and boldly proposed a treaty of alliance between the two nations with acknowledgement of England's special interests in the valley of the Nile. He was prepared to be generous in turn—to withdraw the protectorate, to admit the sovereign independence of Egypt, to guarantee the country against aggression, to withdraw foreigners from the administration, to confine the duty of the British garrison to the protection of the Suez Canal. It was not enough. Egypt coveted the Sudan also and Milner regretfully broke off negotiations. Twelve months later Adli Pasha took up the thread. He was no more successful than Zaghlul, and Lord Curzon could only believe that in common with the whole world Egypt was suffering "from the cult of disruptive and fanatical nationalism." Meanwhile Allenby in Cairo was by no means at his ease. Conciliation had failed. Negotiations had borne no better fruit and he could think of no alternative but to offer Egypt her independence. Thus came about the unilateral declaration of the 28th of February, 1922, terminating the protectorate but reserving at the discretion of England security of imperial communications, defence of the Suez Canal, protection of minorities and foreign interests, and the future of the Sudan.

Some months later came the promulgation of a constitution and the meeting of Egypt's first parliament with Zaghlul as prime minister. Through the first session debate seldom wandered far from the reserved points, and Zaghlul went to London to settle them on his own terms. He returned empty-handed, boasting of his failure, speaking of England as the irreconcilable enemy. His intemperate words threw the country into a ferment, his attitude towards the throne encouraged the cry of "revolution or Zaghlul." Mutiny among Egyptian troops stationed in the Sudan broke out, Sir Lee Stack, governor general of the province, was assassinated in the streets of Cairo. It was a sorry business: the culminating crime of a long tale of political murders. Punishment followed: Zaghlul hid his face in retirement, the constitution was suspended and parliament was dissolved. It was well for Egypt to have a respite from democratic government, and the new prime minister, Ziwar Pasha, waited six months for the country to recover its senses. Once more the elections went in favor of the Wafd, as Zaghlul's party was now universally called, and Ziwar hardly knew what to do. England with some reason was suspicious of a Wafdist ministry. Egypt would be exposed to further mortification, if Zaghlul came back to power. It was a dilemma from which Ziwar escaped by persuading the King to dissolve the new parliament.

But palace rule, however benevolent in intention, is never a satisfactory substitute for constitutional government, and it fell to Lord Lloyd, replacing Allenby in the spring of 1925, gently to remind the King of that truth. It must be said of the tumultuous years which followed the declaration of independence, that His Majesty Fuad the First, who succeeded to the throne in 1917, had behaved with good sense and dignity. His position was always delicate and frequently extremely embarrassing. He had given parliamentary government a trial and found it wanting: driven to the opposite course, he found himself hedged about with constitutional limitations ill suited to a country so backward as Egypt. Nor had it always been easy to reconcile his concern for the true welfare of Egypt with his duty towards her elected representatives. The two interests frequently conflicted, and decision was often perplexing. On this occasion the elimination of Zaghlul made the way easier, and a new parliament met a new leader. It was a business-like assembly: party was forgotten in the interest of the State. Debate pro-



*Courtesy of P. G. Elgood*

THE EGYPTIAN PARLIAMENT HOUSE

ceeded smoothly, significant testimony that deputies recognized parliamentary government was still on trial.

Taking advantage of an official visit to London, Sarwat, the new prime minister, called on Sir Austen Chamberlain, minister for foreign affairs. He found that Englishman ready to discuss a settlement of the reserved points, and out of the conversation emerged another draft treaty, making substantial concession to Egyptian sentiment. It might have ended the differences but for an obstinate belief on the part of a parliament wholly Wafdist, that this party alone must have the honor of negotiating a settlement. Sarwat was not a member of it: his relations with Mustapha Nahas, the successor of Zaghlul now dead, were by no means cordial. Presently the whisper passed that Egypt was betrayed, and fearful of forcing an issue, Sarwat resigned. Nahas stepped into Sarwat's shoes, and at once picked a quarrel with England. He paid dearly for the temerity. Chamberlain took advantage of the dispute to remind Egypt that she must not interpret the four points reserved under the Declaration of 1922 as she thought fit, and Nahas, accepting the implication, made way for Mohammed Pasha Mahmoud. Some change was necessary in the interests of Egypt. To many Egyptians anxious for a settlement with England, the pretensions of the Wafd had become intolerable. Behind that party stood no doubt the bulk of the electorate, but a parliamentary majority, however important in domestic issues, is less so in negotiation. In that field negotiators must have not only a sense of statesmanship but some acquaintance with the virtue of compromise, and there was no sign that Nahas or his colleagues enjoyed either. Marking the moral, Mohammed Mahmoud prevailed on the King to suspend parliament. His term of office was too short to accomplish much, but he succeeded at least in persuading England to acknowledge Egypt's paramount right over the waters of the Blue and White Niles. That achievement, in itself of no small merit, passed unnoticed in the news that Mohammed Mahmoud had wrung out of Mr. Henderson, a new foreign minister, a treaty more favorable to Egypt than his predecessors. There was the customary stipulation that Egypt must approve the draft, and Mohammed Mahmoud returned to Cairo to prepare the electoral rolls. It was not his good fortune to carry negotiations

with England to the end. The elections ended in an overwhelming victory for Mustapha Nahas, and once more prime minister, that Egyptian went confidently to London. He was no more successful than his predecessors, Sa'ad Zaghlul and Adli, had been nine years earlier. The Sudan was the stumbling block. Egypt would not abate her claim to sovereignty, England could not afford to satisfy it.

Recalling the suspension that had befallen earlier parliaments, Nahas set to work to guarantee his own against a similar misfortune. Under his auspices suspension or even modification of the written constitution of 1923 became an act of high treason, and punishable by a new supreme court of justice. It was too much for the good sense of the King to admit, and with excellent discretion he refused his assent to the bills. The Wafd rushed on its doom; it swore to defend the constitution at all costs. In this wise the issue narrowed to a contest between the throne and the party. The first picked up the challenge. Ismail Pasha Sidki formed a new cabinet of ministers unidentified with any particular party, and the King adjourned parliament indefinitely.

In vain the Wafd protested, in vain it called on Egypt to pay no taxes: Sidki answered the defiance by proscribing all public meetings of the Wafd, confiscating its manifestoes, suspending newspapers that dared to publish them. There were whispers of revolution, but Sidki had the armed forces of the crown at his back. Presently he was able to publish a new constitution without provoking fresh disorder. To many Egyptians Sidki's constitution was the negation of democratic government, the triumph of the throne at the expense of the people. Among their number was the late prime minister Mohammed Mahmoud, who advised the electorate to boycott the coming elections. To that daring counsel Sidki answered smoothly: he begged his adversary to reconsider the decision, he guaranteed no interference with the polls, he spoke of the need of a united nation to reopen negotiations with England. But his undertaking went no further than words. He banned a national congress called by the Wafd, he ignored a declaration signed by four ex-prime ministers and twenty three ex-ministers that not only contested the validity of elections under the new constitution, but warned England that no treaty negotiated by Sidki would bind Egypt. Yet despite that protest, few observers conversant with Egypt could doubt how the poll would go. Sixty-five per cent of the





*Courtesy of P. G. Elgood*

VILLAGE ARTISANS  
Voters of today

electorate were reported to have voted, and the result was a personal triumph for Sidki. None the less, considering that within the last eight years four parliaments have sat, ten prime ministers have held office, it would be rash to assume that the life of the present parliament or of the present cabinet will be long.

Such briefly is the story of England in Egypt: a stewardship in effect of which England has no need to be ashamed. She has nursed her charge to adolescence, she has provided it with ideals of citizenship: so much at least will be admitted by posterity. The political history of the occupation may be conveniently divided into five phases. Indecision distinguished the first: England could not hit upon a consistent policy, much less name a date when the occupation would end. That uncertainty died away, and a vague conviction that the interests of England and Egypt were permanently indivisible replaced it. War introduced the third phase: the proclamation of a protectorate followed. The fourth terminated in admission of Egyptian sovereignty, and the fifth still awaits conclusion. The Sudan remains the only obstacle now to settlement. If occupation constitutes a title to sovereignty, then it must be admitted that the Egyptian claim in law to the Sudan is substantial. With the conquest of Sennaar in 1820 by Mohammed Ali and the annexation

of the upper basin of the White Nile by Ismail fifty years later, the Sudan passed to the keeping of Egypt. But the administration of this vast dependency proved too difficult to be successful. Misgovernment and rebellion were a commonplace, and in 1886 Egyptian arms were forced back to Wadi Halfa. But that retirement did not invalidate sovereignty, nor was the Egyptian title questioned until the reoccupation of the Sudan in 1898. Then England, who had partially financed the campaign and lent troops for the reconquest, claimed a predominant voice in the administration of the dependency. Her concern was with the Sudanese people; their welfare she believed should take precedence of the interests of Egypt. There have been setbacks to that ideal and doubtful adventures; but England can at least claim that her administration of the Sudan has profited its inhabitants no less than herself. The foundations of self-government have been laid, their development is assured; but until the process is completed England cannot with propriety withdraw from her task. So far no responsible Egyptians have yet indicated their intentions towards the Sudan: beyond postulating the sovereignty of Egypt over the whole valley of the Nile, they do not go. It is not enough: it is indeed debatable whether the people of the Sudan would acknowledge Egyptian rule.

Little has been said in the course of negotiation of the capitulations, and the ultimate disappearance of consular courts adjudicating between their nationals has been taken for granted. But the subject cannot be dismissed quite so cavalierly. Consular courts are not the only sinners, or the only jurisdiction that is independent of Egyptian sovereignty. To them must be added a dozen or more tribunals which adjudicate according to their own tradition of practice on marriage, divorce, and inheritance. These tribunals are Egyptian, but the law they administer is personal to the community they represent. It would be well if Egypt repaired her own legal anarchy before crying for the abolition of consular courts. And perhaps the clamor would be less insistent but for a belief that with the consular courts would go the capitulations. Certainly so long as capitulations exist, the sovereignty of Egypt is incomplete: more fallacious is the common belief that the European escapes taxation from their protection. It is not so, nor indeed would the foreign community object in principle to taxes on income or even to death duties, provided the State will not discriminate against for-

eigners. Unhappily on that point it feels little confidence. A supreme judicature international in type and embracing all existing tribunals and procedures, might conceivably furnish the guarantees the foreign community requires: but twice in the past Egypt has rejected that alternative, and there is no reason to believe that she would not do so a third time.

Although taxation is inelastic and amending legislation is still cumbersome, Egypt's financial situation is one that many countries burdened with legacies of the war may well envy. Her public debt stands at the modest figure of £ E. 91,000,000, and the reserve fund swollen with budget surpluses of prosperous years equals two fifths of that sum. Unhappily its investment is less satisfactory. Cotton is one offender. Confronted by falling prices the State bought half the 1928-1929 crop, and so locked up £ E. 15,000,000 of the reserve. It was a rash adventure. The cultivator obtained no permanent relief, the State became entangled in a doubtful operation. The market has not recovered, and a third of the cotton stored in the government go-downs still awaits a purchaser. The balance of the reserve is also heavily mortgaged. The heightening of the Aswan dam to hold up five milliard cubic meters of water in place of two and a half, the projected construction of a second reservoir on the White Nile forty miles south of Khartoum, and of subsidiary barrages, canals, and drains to distribute increased supplies of water, will exhaust the liquid reserve. And behind expenditure on irrigation are other commitments unrealizable and only indirectly remunerative: notably advances to cultivators, loans to coöperative and industrial societies, generous pledges of support to new agricultural and mortgage banks. Yet Egypt need feel no reason to be uneasy. Last year's accounts disclose a handsome excess of revenue over expenditure and the estimates for the forthcoming twelve months include a contribution of £ E. 5,000,000 on account of capital expenditure. Prudent finance should show no less happy results in the future. The industry of the Egyptian cultivator, his courage in facing falling prices, the stability of the climate and the fertility of the soil are sufficient guarantees. None the less there are lean years ahead, and Egypt would be well advised to consider her administrative expenditure. Economies have been made, no doubt, but there is still ample room for further and more drastic cuts.

Within the past twelve years on five separate occasions Eng-

land has endeavored to settle her differences with Egypt, and has failed. It is true that a government more stable in appearance than its predecessors holds office today in Egypt: but the country, nevertheless, is torn with faction and dispute, and until political parties lay aside their rivalries and approach England as a united nation, it may be wiser to wait on time. Yet if the future is uncertain, at least England can look back on the past with humble satisfaction. Her achievement in Egypt cannot be undone. The superstructure she has been at pains to build, may shake from time to time, but the foundations will not move. They are laid too well.