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EGYPT

AND

THE EGYPTIAN QUESTION

BY

D. MACKENZIE WALLACE

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It was late afternoon in the Lybian desert, somewhere to the south-west of the fertile oasis known as "the Fayoum." Though I had been riding since sunrise on a stately white ass of good average pace I was still far from the end of my day's journey, so I did not uselessly strain my eyes, as travellers towards evening are generally supposed

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to do, to catch a glimpse of the Bedouin encampment where we were to rest our wearied limbs, because I knew that it could not possibly be in sight. If I was not positively asleep I was at least on the borders of dreamland, when suddenly looking up, I know not why, I unexpectedly saw, stretching away before me on the ground, one of the most comical caricatures I ever beheld—a caricature compared with which the most exaggerated representations of the long, lean Knight of La Mancha and his famished steed Rosinante would have appeared tame and natural. At first I was a little startled, but a moment's reflection sufficed to explain that what I saw was simply the silhouette of my own human form and that of my amiable, long-suffering, nameless donkey, projected in wondrously elongated fashion on the reddish yellow sand by the slanting rays of the setting sun. It was an evanescent vision, for as soon as I had laughed merrily at my own expense and turned to salute the talented caricaturist, he disappeared below the horizon, blushing at the audacity of his unæsthetic conception. The comical silhouette, however, remained fixed in my memory, as a fantastic melody will sometimes remain for hours buzzing in one's ears, and as I rode forward in the twilight, meditating deeply on Egypt and things Egyptian, it blended itself with my thoughts till at last I promised myself that, if ever I should fulfil my intention of writing a book on Egypt and the Egyptian Question, I should use that caricature as an illustration. My brain was perhaps enfeebled

at the time by long fasting and fatigue, but a promise, even when made in a moment of weakness, ought to be respected. Now the way in which I mean to use the illustration is this: as that evanescent vision was an absurdly elongated caricature of the human form divine, so Egypt is an absurdly elongated caricature of a body politic. In defiance of all preconceived notions of political geography and the general fitness of things, we have here a country more than a thousand miles long, and so absurdly, disproportionately narrow that a very ordinary pedestrian can easily walk across it at almost any point in two or three hours, and at some points in a few minutes.

What thus seems to the vulgar eye a ridiculous freak of nature is easily explained by the scientific geographer. The eastern portion of Central Africa, like most other tropical countries, has an annual rainy season, but it is so hemmed in by mountains and high table-lands that the rainfall has no natural outlet. After trying in vain to get rid of itself by the formation of great lakes, boundless marshes, and other expedients for promoting evaporation, the imprisoned water forces itself in despair across the vast rainless desert to the northward, until it eventually finds rest in the Mediterranean. In traversing the intermediate barren expanse it has dug for itself, in the course of countless ages, a tolerably well-defined channel, but as it finds this channel insufficient during the periods of the floods, it annually spreads itself over the adjoining country and has thus gradually

formed, by depositing its alluvium on the sand, a long, narrow strip of arable soil. It is this long strip of fertile land, widening into a marshy delta at its northern extremity, that constitutes what is known as Egypt Proper, whilst the vast region from which the water supply is obtained is known as the Soudan and the Equatorial Provinces. In form the whole may be compared to a tall, straight, branchless palm tree, the roots stretching far southwards into Central Africa, and the feathery tuft of foliage spreading out on the Mediterranean coast; or, to use a more prosaic simile, we may liken Egypt Proper to a long walking-stick or fishing-rod, surmounted by a small outspread fan representing the delta.

The northern region, representing the outspread fan, though nearest to Europe, is the least generally known portion of the country. Tourists landing at Alexandria or Port Said generally hurry on by rail to Cairo, on the assumption that there is little or nothing to interest them in the Delta; and it must be confessed that an excursion in the Delta cannot be conscientiously recommended to the ordinary traveller, who has no special object in view and who wishes to combine frequent change of scene with a moderate amount of comfort. Any one who undertakes it will have to travel on horseback or on donkeys, and content himself with such food and accommodation as well-to-do peasants can supply; and for the fatigue and privations which he has to undergo, he will obtain only very inadequate compensation. The landscape presents no bold, striking features, and any enthusiasm

which may be at first excited by the novelty of petty details is soon extinguished by the all-pervading monotony. There are no pyramids, sphinxes, or ruined temples, and the shapeless masses of rubbish which represent the sites of ancient long-forgotten cities can interest only the accomplished Egyptologist. Still, the Delta has important peculiarities of its own, and even the lower portion of it, which is almost a *terra incognita,* should not be overlooked by those who wish to study Egypt seriously as a whole. It resembles a fan not only in its shape but also in the fact that it is composed of concentric zones differing considerably from each other. The outer zone is a range of low sand-hills, barely high enough at some points to resist the heavy, foaming breakers which the boisterous north wind in winter drives across the Levant from the southern shore of Anatolia. Immediately to the south of the sand-hills is a zone of shallow, brackish lakes—Mareotis, Aboukir, Edkou, Bourlos, and Menzaleh—and next a zone of low marshy land called the Berari, stretching from desert to desert with an average breadth of about twenty miles. The inner part of the fan, with Cairo as its axis, is the richest and best cultivated portion of Egypt.

The range of sand-hills near the coast, though inhospitable enough, is not so desolate and uninhabited as any one seeing it from a distance might naturally suppose. At short intervals along the shores of the lakes and of the sea are clusters of fishermen's huts, and in the hollows—especially where the sandy zone is intersected by a canal or natural branch of the

Nile—there are larger settlements and a certain amount of vegetation. After a long ride over soft, dry sand the traveller may suddenly come on a village nestling in the shade of date-bearing palms, and he may find to his surprise in the carefully tended gardens an abundant supply of melons, figs, grapes, and various sorts of vegetables. He will observe, however, that the method of cultivation is peculiar and laborious. It is useless to plant here anything in the ordinary way, for the surface of the ground is as dry and barren as any part of the Sahara. In order to raise fruit or vegetables it is necessary to dig a long, deep trench and surround it with a fence of strong reeds to prevent its being filled up by the drifting sand in windy weather. The bottom of the trench must be as nearly as possible on a level with the surface of the lakes, because it is only at this depth that the requisite amount of moisture can be found; and the fixing of the level is a somewhat delicate operation, for if the trench be not deep enough the plants die of thirst, and if it be too deep the roots are liable to rot on account of the superabundance of moisture. If planted exactly at the proper depth and properly manured with the native pigeon guano, which is brought down yearly in large quantities from Upper Egypt, the melons, tomatoes, and other fruits and vegetables grow luxuriantly, and are said to have a finer flavour than those grown elsewhere. It is from the sea, however, and from the lakes, that the inhabitants derive their chief

means of subsistence. Of sea fishes the best is a species of cod, and in the lakes there are millions of gray mullet of very fair quality. These are dried and salted in a primitive, imperfect fashion, which poisons the surrounding atmosphere—and afterwards, I suspect, some of the consumers—and are despatched in enormous quantities to the larger towns, where they form an important article of food for the poorer classes. Of the large revenue derived from this industry, the lion's share is of course taken by the Government, and a considerable portion of the remainder goes to the wholesale and retail fishmongers, so that the poor fishermen receive only very scanty remuneration for their arduous labours. Whether, as some learned archæologists assert, these fishermen are the genuine descendants of the ancient Hyksos—the nomadic tribes who ruled over Lower Egypt in the time when the Children of Israel dwelt in the land of Goshen—I cannot pretend to say, but they have certainly themselves no consciousness of any such illustrious lineage; and for my part I must confess that, though predisposed to find them interesting in every possible way, I could detect nothing in their type of features to distinguish them from the ordinary fellaheen.

It is not from its natural resources but from its peculiar geographical position that this sandy zone derives its importance. Lying between the more fertile parts of the country and the outer civilised world it naturally attracts the native and foreign commercial population, and contains four of the most

important of Egyptian towns—Alexandria, Rosetta, Damietta, and Port Said. Rosetta and Damietta, being situated on the two navigable branches of the Nile, were long the great natural emporiums of the export and import trade, and counted among their inhabitants many wealthy merchants, but during the present century they have been robbed of their commercial prosperity by Alexandria. Their decline dates from the construction of the navigable Mahmoudieh canal, which connects Alexandria with the Nile. The subsequent construction of railways, the enlarging and improving of the port of Alexandria, and the ever-increasing use of large ocean steamers which cannot conveniently enter either of the natural outlets of the great river, have all tended in the same direction, so that the once busy towns of Rosetta and Damietta now produce on the traveller very much the same impression as the decayed and half-deserted cities of Flanders which were formerly prosperous centres of industry and commerce. Many of the large, massive buildings in which the native produce and foreign goods were formerly stored have become picturesque ruins, and not a few of the ordinary houses are thinly tenanted or entirely deserted. The foreign wealthy merchants have disappeared, and their place has been taken by a much less respectable class of Greeks and hybrid Levantines, who keep small retail shops or buy up rice for exportation. The conservative natives, who cling tenaciously to their old homes and struggle vainly against the irresistible economic forces which have

shown such heartless indifference to their material interests, are naturally by no means ardent partisans of progress and modern civilisation, and they may in some manner be excused for that bitter anti-European feeling which always exists among them in a latent state, and which found violent expression during the late troubles. Their religious and political fanaticism is probably intensified by their tendency to bilious derangements, produced by the very inadequate supply of good drinking-water. During low Nile the fresh water in the river, being driven back by the sea, becomes brackish and undrinkable, and recourse is had to the cisterns which can be replenished only when the Nile is high, and which are probably never in a state to satisfy enlightened sanitary inspectors. Many of the villages of this sandy zone are in a still worse plight. Having no cisterns, the inhabitants are compelled to bring their drinking-water daily from long distances—sometimes, I have been told, from a distance of ten or twelve miles.

Alexandria, the successful rival of Rosetta and Damietta, was eighteen months ago one of the most populous, enterprising, and prosperous cities of the Levant. Her magnificent harbour, solidly built houses, well-paved streets, and active, wealthy mercantile community, presented a striking contrast to the appearance of the less fortunate Levantine towns which have remained under the direct rule of the Porte. At present what was formerly the finest part of the city is a shapeless mass of ruins, and many people predict that she will never recover her

ancient prosperity. Even before the bombardment, say these prophets of evil, she had begun to decline, and as she eclipsed Rosetta and Damietta, so she in her turn is destined to be eclipsed by a younger rival. The younger rival alluded to is Port Said, which is still a very insignificant place, but which possesses the enormous advantage of being on the direct line of communication between Europe and the far East. All steamers going to, or returning from, India, Australia, China, or Japan must touch at Port Said, whereas few or none of them go out of their way to call at Alexandria. It is for this reason that the Alexandrians favour all schemes for a fresh-water canal which would connect their own port with the Red Sea and draw away a portion of the traffic from the existing canal. For this reason, too, they discountenance all projects for connecting their isolated rivals with the rest of Egypt by a line of rail. About the projects for a navigable fresh-water canal I shall have occasion to speak in a future chapter.

Let us now leave this barren, sandy zone, with its decayed and its flourishing commercial towns, and proceed southwards to the next zone of the Delta, which is commonly called the Berari. We may start from Alexandria and travel by rail through the famous lines of Kafr-dawar, or we may ascend either of the main branches of the Nile in a steam-launch; or, if we feel inclined to "rough it," we may cross one of the lakes in a frail leaky boat, or thread our way on horseback through the treacherous morasses between two of the lakes. In any case we must be

prepared for rough travelling and scanty accommodation in the region which we are about to visit, and we shall do well to take thick boots and umbrellas or waterproofs, for this part of the country has not the rainless climate and dry soil of Upper Egypt. The word Berari means "deserts," but the region indicated by the name is not at all a desert in the ordinary sense of the term. Nearly all the year round the greater part of it is in a very moist condition—either positively under water, or at least covered with a thick layer of slimy mud, which produces an abundant crop of coarse reeds, rank grasses, and similar kinds of useless, amphibious vegetation. Here and there, often at long intervals, we come upon little agricultural oases, with villages containing from half a dozen to two dozen houses—the large villages might be counted on the fingers of one hand—and from village to village we wend our devious way along the rough and often slippery embankments of the canals. Woe to the inexperienced traveller who tries to take short cuts! Tempted by the apparent dryness and hardness of the surface in his immediate vicinity, and anxious to reach quickly a village that seems only a few hundred yards distant, he may, perhaps, disregard the warnings of the natives and endeavour to advance as the crow flies. If he yield to the temptation he will soon have reason to repent of his imprudence. At any moment he may unexpectedly find himself rapidly sinking into the treacherous marsh which lies concealed under the thin dry crust, and he may consider himself fortunate

if he succeeds in extricating himself and his horse with no worse mishap than getting himself coated with a thick layer of mud like a young hippopotamus after its morning bath. It is probably only after having had one or two humiliating mishaps of this sort that he will consent to follow the dictates of experience, for in such a region the temptation to take short cuts is, for a novice, almost irresistible. The point which he wishes to reach seems so near that he is apt to repel with indignation the proposal to follow a course which implies several hours of steady marching. Even when the wearisome, roundabout method of travelling is adopted, and all the prudent counsels of the cautious native guides are rigorously attended to, the difficulties of locomotion are sufficiently great. In support of this assertion I might draw largely on my personal reminiscences, but I shall confine myself to one incident by way of illustration. In order to reach the celebrated Coptic convent of Sitté Demiani —a sainted lady whose miracle-working remains have the unusual honour of being venerated alike by Christians and Moslems—I had to make a considerable portion of the journey partly on foot, partly on the backs of sturdy native bipeds, and finally in a flat-bottomed boat, dragged and pushed through the semi-liquid slime by naked fellahs evidently well-accustomed to taking mud-baths for other than sanitary reasons. If it should happen to rain for an hour or two, as it not unfrequently does in Lower Egypt, locomotion becomes altogether impossible, for the sloping embankments along which one has to travel

become slippery as ice, and neither quadrupeds nor bipeds can walk along them without slipping and falling at almost every step. What the traveller has to do, therefore, when threatened with a heavy shower of rain, is to make for the nearest village with all possible speed, and having installed himself as comfortably as may be in a peasant's hovel, possess his soul in patience, not only until the rain has ceased, but also until the sun has dried and hardened the slippery embankments. A day's imprisonment of this kind, which is, alas! by no means solitary confinement, seems to the victim, looking in vain hour after hour for some bright fissure in the dull, leaden, bluish-grey sky, one of the severest ordeals to which human equanimity can be subjected.

In this intermediate region between water and dry land the condition of the inhabitants is not so miserable as might be imagined. Rough, primitive pasturage for sheep and cattle can always be obtained within a reasonable distance, and the land, when properly drained and irrigated, is well adapted for growing both cereals and cotton. In tracts where the soil is too saline for such crops, a large quantity of rice is produced. The cultivation of rice is, in fact, one of the chief characteristics of this portion of the country, and it would afford the inhabitants a tolerably satisfactory means of subsistence if the general system of taxation were better accommodated to the average productivity of the various categories of land. As it is, the "rice villages" seem decidedly over-taxed, and it is to be hoped that in any scheme

for the re-allotment of the land-revenue their claims to have their burdens lightened will receive serious consideration.

In travelling through the Berari one frequently comes upon *koms* or mounds, composed chiefly of broken pottery, which show that in ancient times the district must have been much more densely populated than at present. An old sheikh, who enjoys a great local reputation for his historical lore, and who professed to derive his information from no less an authority than Makrizi, explained to me that the country had been formerly very fertile and had been ruined by the letting in of the sea-water in the time of Diocletian; but I have some difficulty in accepting this explanation. My learned friend, though possessing a venerable aspect, a severe dictatorial method of expressing himself, and all the other external characteristics which in the East ensure a reputation for extraordinary wisdom and profound erudition, was nevertheless, when judged by western standards, a little hazy in his chronology, for he always argued on the assumption that the reign of Diocletian was posterior to the Crusades; and this inaccuracy on his part makes me doubt seriously whether he was really so intimately acquainted with the writings of Makrizi as he wished me to believe, and whether that generally accurate author really says that the old fertility of the soil was destroyed by the letting in of sea-water. Even if all the Arabic historians adopted the theory of marine inundation I should hesitate to accept it, for it does not

well square with the unquestionable fact that much, if not all, of the waste land in the Berari is somewhat above the sea level. The true explanation, I believe, is that the drainage and irrigation have been for centuries shamefully neglected. Certainly the big patches of white nitrous salts, covering the soil and glistening in the sun like untrodden snow, have been created not directly by sea-water but by that upward percolation from the subsoil which naturally takes place when the upper stratum is long over-saturated, and the surplus water, instead of being run off by drainage, is allowed to evaporate. This process of upward percolation or "infiltration," as it is sometimes called, is found more or less in all parts of Egypt and many parts of India whenever the drainage of the irrigated land is not properly attended to. I shall have occasion to speak of its causes and of the best preventive and curative remedies when I come to describe the present condition of land irrigation in Egypt. For the present, suffice it to say that in the Berari very little is being done to counteract saline infiltration or otherwise improve the soil, and much is being done to increase the existing evils. The peasants, thinking only of their immediate wants and sublimely indifferent to the welfare of future generations, often cut a canal embankment and form an artificial lake, in order that, when the water has evaporated, they may have pasture for their cattle. During the process of evaporation the lake serves the additional purpose of attracting flocks of wild duck and water-fowl, which are an important supple-

mentary source of revenue. Many of the birds are netted in the ordinary way, but the majority are captured by ingenious contrivances which I have not met with elsewhere. Near the edge of the water, at points where the birds are in the habit of congregating, the captures are made by simple traps composed of a noose of horse-hair fixed in the ground by a short stick. In the larger lakes, where the water is two or three feet deep, a still more ingenious contrivance is used. Here the peasant wades about with the water up to his neck, and with his head concealed under the rind of a water-melon, which is perforated with holes, so that he may breathe freely and be able to look about him without being himself seen. When he has succeeded in cautiously approaching the bird which acts as sentinel, he catches it by the legs and jerks it under the surface before it has had time to give the alarm; and when the sentinel has been thus treacherously disposed of, it is an easy matter to bag the others in the same way. So plentiful is the game of this description that in the village markets a pair of fine live wild ducks may be bought for a franc. Snipe are almost as abundant, though by no means so easily bagged, and sportsmen who prefer big game may find wild boar, some of which, it is said, are of enormous size.

A region of this sort, where communications are difficult and representatives of the police extremely rare, is naturally often chosen as a place of refuge by deserters, escaped gaol-birds, and other persons who, for various equally good reasons, are "wanted"

by the authorities. In spite, however, of this disorderly element in the population, the state of public security is on the whole tolerably satisfactory, for the rule of the village-sheikhs, who are practically masters of the country, does not err on the side of weakness. To make the acquaintance of these famous personages, commonly known as "the little kings of the Berari," and to study their primitive system of government, was one of the main objects of my visiting the district, so I spent some time in one of the larger villages where three of the little kings reside, and endeavoured to obtain, directly and indirectly, some information concerning them. The first of the three whom I visited was a tall, broad-shouldered, middle-aged man, with large, dreamy eyes, surmounted by bushy black eye-brows, and with a heavy, listless expression of countenance which resisted all my efforts to interest or amuse him, but which considerably brightened when he began to talk in whispers with his dependants about practical affairs. His features suggested Turkish rather than fellah origin, and he wore, instead of the ordinary Egyptian turban, a Turkish fez, such as is worn in Egypt only by the official class; but I was assured by those who knew all about his genealogy that he had only fellah blood in his veins, and that he was a genuine native sheikh in the full sense of the term. His house near the market-place—of which, by the way, he was the proprietor, and from which he derived a considerable part of his revenue—was very like that of the ordinary village notables, only somewhat

larger and more thronged with servants, dependants, and visitors, all of whom, on being admitted to his presence, bowed low, kissed his hand, and showed most respectful demeanour. Kinglet No. 2, who likewise lived in the village, but in a less central position, was an older man, with sharp, delicately-cut features, and a small, restless, piercing eye, which suggested at once cunning and determination. Had I met him in Stamboul I should have supposed, from his features and bearing, that he was a Turkish pasha born of a Greek mother; but here again the village genealogists would not admit the existence of any foreign blood. He and my first host were cousins in the second or third degree, and hated each other with the intensity which is peculiar to blood relationship. The chief source of the hatred was a feeling of rivalry. Each of them possessed about 3,000 acres of good land, and exercised jurisdiction over about one-eighth of the population, and each strove to surpass, outshine, and injure the other by every means in his power. Intrigues and law-suits were among the favourite instruments employed, and the complicated struggle sometimes acquired a certain dramatic interest. During the recent troubles the intrigues and counter-intrigues were carried on most actively. So long as the success of the national movement seemed doubtful, both refrained carefully from committing or compromising themselves, but as soon as the Khedive was powerless and the mutinous colonels were masters of the situation, both sought to redeem their previous inactivity by zealously throwing in their lot with the

national cause, and denounced each other as hypocrites and traitors. The first to make a decided, aggressive movement was the sharp-featured, keen-eyed old man whom I have called kinglet No. 2. He went one day to Damietta, which is only a few hours distant, and complained to Arabi's friend and colleague, Colonel Abdel Aal, who commanded the garrison, that his unpatriotic rival was preventing the conscription and showing a very culpable indifference in the collection of supplies for the army. The accused rival, on hearing of this intrigue, hastened to Arabi's camp at Kafr-dawar and told the Dictator a very different tale, from which it appeared that he had done all in his power to aid the national cause, and would have succeeded in doing very much more if he had not been constantly opposed and thwarted by his elder colleague, who had now gone—doubtless for some illicit nefarious purpose—to Damietta. The Dictator was much impressed by the noble sentiments of the patriotic village-sheikh, and immediately nominated him commander of a fort on the coast, a few hours' ride from his native village. Intended as a reward for disinterested patriotism, the nomination was in reality a punishment for intriguing hypocrisy, for the worthy Sheikh had a strong constitutional dislike to everything connected with military affairs, and did not consider that his duty to his country imposed on him the obligation of exposing his person to the risks of grievous bodily harm. As he could not safely decline the proffered honour, he went to the place indicated; but foreseeing that

some British vessel might possibly, in passing along the coast, throw a shell into the fort, he took the precaution of pitching his tent in a sheltered spot among the sand-hills; and as soon as he heard of Arabi's defeat at Tel-el-Kebir he galloped home with all available speed, and became a loyal partisan of the legitimate Khedive. When any one speaks to him now of the part which he played in the insurrection he either denies boldly all the current rumours, or protests loudly, with a certain amount of truth, that he never had any real sympathy with the rebels, and accepted the command of the fort very much against his will. Of course he hates—if possible, still more intensely than before—the rival who was indirectly the cause of his being compromised, and awaits impatiently an opportunity of revenge.

The third sheikh of the village, though closely related to these two worthies, and possessing about the same amount of landed property and local influence, is a man of a different type. He has a good, honest, fellah face, is much more communicative to strangers, keeps aloof from the rivalries, quarrels, and intrigues of his ambitious relatives, shows himself indifferent to official distinctions, and devotes his exceptional intelligence and energy to the good management of his landed property and other legitimate means of increasing his fortune. When you enter his house you perceive at a glance that he cares less for show and ostentation than for order and comfort; and this first impression will be amply confirmed by a little serious conversation.

In the management of his affairs, as in the arrangement and furniture of his house, there are unmistakable symptoms of European influence of the good, healthy sort; but he retains the native costume (a long black robe and white turban) and the traditional modes of life, and he prudently avoids the snares and pitfalls prepared by shady financiers and other *chevaliers d'industrie,* who profess to represent in Egypt the principles of civilisation and economic progress. Without the necessity, therefore, of employing intrigue and other unfair means, he will probably in a few years entirely oust his unscrupulous, short-sighted rivals, and become by far the richest and most influential man in the district. Meanwhile, the influence of the three is pretty fairly balanced, and each possesses not merely a large share of the land in the immediate vicinity of the village, but also a number of the oases of cultivation scattered about in sporadic fashion among the marshes. It is in these outlying hamlets that the power of the kinglets is at its maximum, for the peasants in these little villages, having no land of their own, and being simply tenants at will, are to a great extent at the mercy of the proprietor. When they come into the big central village on market days they never fail to wait upon the great man and respectfully kiss his hand in token of allegiance and devotion. The floating population of deserters and escaped criminals, being still more at the mercy of the sheikhs, are as a rule equally submissive, and if they happen to make themselves obnoxious they are either handed

over to the regular authorities, or dealt with in severe, summary patriarchal fashion. Dark rumours are current about both immigrants and natives who had imprudently made themselves obnoxious to one or other of the influential Sheikhs, and who thereafter mysteriously disappeared ; and no one in the neighbourhood has the least doubt as to who were the self-constituted judges by whom the informal, capital sentences were pronounced. In some cases the secret executioners are equally well known, but in the wild Berari no official notice is taken of such natural, trivial incidents, and any reference to them in the presence of the Sheikhs would be at once a breach of established etiquette and, on the part of a native, an act of gross imprudence.

The reader may perhaps be inclined to assume that those "little kings" who are so powerful and independent within their own dominions constitute a political danger for the State, but any such assumption would be entirely erroneous. Practically independent as they usually are within the limits of their jurisdiction, and great as their power undoubtedly is for oppressing their dependants, they have all a most wholesome fear of the regular authorities, and the idea of open resistance to the central Government, or even to the Governor of the province, never enters their minds. The sudden appearance of a petty official riding unattended on a peaceable donkey, and armed merely with instructions to make an inquiry, throws the boldest of them into a state of alarm, and at once with astonishing alacrity they sink their

differences and rivalries, and loyally join together—not to organise an energetic resistance, but simply to buy off the unwelcome invader. An incident of the kind happened shortly before my visit, and was still a common topic of conversation. The official had been sent down to verify the land-registers with a view to obtaining something like the amount of revenue really due to the Exchequer, and the leading members of the community, knowing that they cultivated much more than the registers showed, decided to prevent the verification by the ordinary, approved method. After a good deal of stormy discussion it was agreed that the three big Sheikhs should each pay, ostensibly out of their own pockets, the sum of £50, and that £150 more should be raised from the other proprietors. In this way the official obtained a bakshish of £300, and considered himself justified in reporting to his superiors that the area of cultivation had not increased, and that the existing registers, if not strictly accurate, were in favour of the Government rather than of the tax-payers. Whether, in accordance with established usage, he honestly shared his gains with his superiors who had appointed him, I was not able to ascertain.

Besides the three big Sheikhs above described, the village has the happiness to possess ten little ones, each of which is the recognised head of a certain number of peasant families; and, strange to say, it is from among these lesser dignitaries that the so-called "Sheikh of the Sheikhs," or, as we should say, the president of the council of elders, is chosen.

The reason for this apparent anomaly is that the president, being nominally the link of connection between the commune and the higher authorities, is often obliged to go to the district town to have an interview with the sub-governor, and has to fulfil other tiresome routine duties which the little kings consider inconsistent with their dignity and comfort.

The future of the Berari, with its sheikhs and sheikhs of sheikhs, depends on the future of irrigation in Egypt. If an efficient system of irrigation and drainage could be created for the country generally, a comparatively small expenditure of labour and capital might gradually transform a large portion of these now desolate tracts into a fertile agricultural region, as productive, perhaps, as the contiguous upper portion of the Delta.

This upper portion of the delta-triangle, having the marshy Berari as its base and Cairo as its apex, may be called the garden of Egypt. The eastern part of it, containing the modern prosperous town of Zagazig, near the ruins of the ancient Bubastis, is the Biblical Land of Goshen. The western part, in the centre of which stands the flourishing, commercial, fanatical town of Tantah, with its famous mosque of Seid-el-Bedawee, the most venerated of Egyptian saints, is less rich in historical, Pharaonic associations, but not less rich in agricultural fertility. In whatever direction we traverse the district we everywhere see around us fertile well-cultivated fields and bright green, luxuriant pasturage, intersected by canals of various dimensions. Though the country is flat,

the landscape is not devoid of interest. The roads and canals are often lined with long rows of prickly acacia, and at intervals we come upon a magnificent shady sycamore. We have always within sight some groves of tall, feathery palms, and two or three villages, most of which have a little mosque, or at least the mausoleum of some local saint, with a cupola of unburnt bricks, looking in the distance like a gigantic bee-hive. The chief wealth of the district consists of the cotton-plantations, which, in the flowering season, have the appearance of immense gardens of yellow roses. The other fields, reposing after the exhaustion of cotton production, produce cereals and clover, so that large tracts of waste land, which generally form the main feature of oriental landscapes, are nowhere to be seen, whilst the pumping-engines along the banks of the canals, the ginning factories in the larger villages, the lines of railway intersecting the country in all directions, and the numerous other symptoms of western activity and enterprise make it difficult for us to realise, in spite of the cloudless sky and marvellously transparent atmosphere, that we are really in "the unchanging, fatalistic, somnolent East." Here, surely, is a convenient field for studying the good and bad influence of Western enterprise on the life and habits of primitive Oriental populations! Unfortunately no one has yet undertaken the arduous task, and the following pages contain merely some of the crude results of inquiries by no means exhaustive. These will be found in future chapters, where I speak of the critical economic

position of the fellaheen. For the present I must hurry on southwards, to complete my brief, general sketch of the country.

At the city of Cairo, which forms, as I have said, the apex of the delta-triangle, begins the valley of the Nile in the strict sense of the term, or what I may be allowed to call the Egypt of the tourists. The reader is perhaps afraid that I now propose to drag him once more to the bazaars, the mosques, the pyramids, the cave-tombs, the temples and the other "sights" which he has so often visited already, either actually in the flesh or metaphorically in the scores of volumes and the hundreds of magazine articles which have been written on the subject. If he has any such fears let him be at once reassured, for I have no such malevolent intentions. My aim is not to supplant, but merely in some measure to supplement, my predecessors; and as I intend to confine myself strictly to the social and political condition of the people, I have nothing whatever to say about the picturesqueness of Cairo, the beauties of Nile scenery, the peculiarities of Arab architecture, or the vexed questions of Pharaonic and Ptolemaic archæology. Occasionally I may be induced to indulge in short historical digressions, but only when I consider that some knowledge of the past is absolutely necessary for a full comprehension of the present.

In order to minimise the temptation to introduce archæological padding—a temptation, which, if I may judge from the works of my predecessors, it is hardly

possible for literary stoicism entirely to resist—let us avoid dahabeeyahs and Cook's steamers, and travel southwards as far as possible by rail. Though we cannot help seeing from the carriage-window nearly all the pyramids which Egypt possesses, ranged in irregular fashion on the edge of the western desert for a distance of about fifty miles, they are too far off to invite description; and though we pass quite close to the "ruins" of Memphis, we need not be conscious of their existence, for a beneficent palm-grove, assisted by the village of Bedrashein, kindly shuts out from view the shapeless mounds and the half-buried recumbent torso of a colossal statue which alone remain to mark the site of the once famous city. On the other side of the valley we catch, from time to time, a glimpse of the Cairo citadel, with its mosque of Mehemet Ali, or at least of the adjoining Mokattam Hills, but as the train starts in the morning, these distant background objects are not "transfused and etherealised by the warm, ruddy rays of the setting sun," which would render obligatory a literary outburst of ecstatic admiration. Making this journey by rail has at the same time an additional advantage, for the traveller may learn here, more thoroughly perhaps than in any other part of the known world, how extremely disagreeable railway travelling can be made by a combination of adverse natural conditions and the perverse ingenuity of railway directors. The adverse natural conditions are a hot and almost rainless climate—for the refreshing showers which are so frequent in the lower Delta rarely, if ever, ascend

above Cairo—and a light, friable soil, which is readily converted into thick clouds of dust; whilst the perverse ingenuity of the directors is displayed in the choice of ballast for the line and in the construction of the carriages. Constructed on the English model without any appliances for moderating the intensity of the sun's rays, the carriages soon become like well-heated stoves, and the train, as soon as it is set in motion, is immediately enveloped in a dust-cloud. In vain the panting, inexperienced traveller resolves to bear any amount of heat rather than be blinded and suffocated by the dust, and accordingly attempts to close hermetically all the windows and ventilators; he soon perceives the carriages to be in such a rickety condition that the dust enters almost as freely as if the windows had been left open. At the stations the trains generally stop for a few minutes—which may be considerably prolonged if the guard or engine-driver is on intimate terms with the station-master and desires to have a little friendly conversation with him—but the half-suffocated passengers find no cool shade and no refreshments more stimulating than Nile water; and the cloud of dust from which they have just escaped is replaced by a cloud of flies which is hardly less disagreeable. Though there is no longer a hard-hearted Pharaoh on the throne of Egypt the fly plague still continues, and causes a greater amount of annoyance than an untravelled Englishman can readily conceive. An English-born fly, when driven away, has commonly the intelligence and delicacy to take the hint, and seeks some other field for his

restless activity, whereas his cousin of Egyptian nationality, though exactly like him in external appearance, has a very different character. Impervious to hints, warnings, or threats, he invariably seeks to return to the same spot and displays in the carrying out of his intentions a tenacious persistency worthy of a very much better cause; and when at last he has fallen a victim to his impudent audacity, there are always a dozen others ready to take his place and renew the attack. After a short experience the foreigner learns to abandon all idea of reprisals and confines himself to strictly defensive warfare, which is carried on by means of the so-called "fly-switches" made of a peculiar kind of hard, dried grass. As for the natives, their skin has evidently lost, in the course of many generations, its primitive irritability, and consequently they can show an enviable indifference to this ancient and still surviving "plague." One often sees a child with its eyes surrounded by two curious black rings, which on closer inspection turn out to be a collection of flies, feasting on ophthalmic *exema*,—a most disgusting sight, which helps to explain the spread of ophthalmic affections among the Egyptian lower classes. To return to the discomforts of railway-travelling in this part of Egypt. A friend of mine, who has to make occasionally the journey between Cairo and Assiout, assures me that, though he has no special tendency to apoplexy, he never ventures to start without a plentiful supply of wet towels, and that in spite of this precaution he is frequently

compelled to stop half-way and spend the night in a friend's house, in order to recover sufficient strength for completing the journey. This unsatisfactory state of things is, of course, not unknown to the directors, but to all complaints they reply that they can do nothing—that they have to bear the sins of their predecessors, and that they have not sufficient funds at their disposal to make the requisite improvements in the permanent way and in the rolling stock. Why the funds at their disposal are insufficient for necessary improvements I shall have occasion to explain when I come to speak of the existing arrangements for diminishing the Egyptian national debt.

The district through which the railway passes is, with respect to productiveness, second only to the upper portion of the Delta. To the eye of the farmer, it does not present such a pleasing sight as the landscape around Zagazig, Tantah, and Kalioub, for the fields are by no means so trim and neat, and there is a considerable amount of waste lands which might easily be reclaimed by a more efficient system of drainage and irrigation ; but it has a great advantage over all parts of the Delta in being able to produce sugar cane of good quality. Below Cairo any cane which is grown is sold directly to the local population, who love to chew it in its natural state, whereas here in the Nile valley it is used for making sugar and molasses. The first to introduce the production of sugar on a large scale was the ex-Khedive, Ismail Pasha, and for this purpose he had to revolutionise

the existing system of agriculture. Before his time the country between Cairo and Assiout, having no great arterial canal, received its supply of water from the annual inundation, and consequently, like the higher portions of the Nile valley, it could produce only millet, wheat, beans, lentils, and similar crops; now, thanks to his exertions, it can be irrigated all the year round from the Ibrahimieh canal, which runs parallel with the railway for something like a hundred miles, and it can produce, in addition to the above-mentioned crops, both sugar and cotton. If cotton is very little cultivated, it is because sugar cane is, on the whole, more profitable.

Ismail Pasha did not confine himself to digging the great canal and teaching the inhabitants to adopt the new method of agriculture. Misapplying the sound principle that "if you wish a thing well done you must do it yourself," he appropriated the small holdings of the peasantry, transformed them into large Khedivial estates, constructed on each estate an agricultural railway and a sugar factory, and became the greatest sugar manufacturer in the world. This explains the numerous bits of narrow-gauge railways which we notice running parallel to, or crossing at right angles, the main line; as also the big blocks of buildings, with their rows of tall iron chimneys, which we see at almost every station. These enormous properties, with the factories and everything else appertaining to them, now belong to the State, but they are mortgaged to the holders of the Daira Sanieh loan, and administered by an

international council composed of an Englishman, a Frenchman, and an Egyptian.

The railway, which was constructed mainly for the purpose of connecting these great estates with Cairo and Alexandria, has its southern terminus at Assiout, the largest and most flourishing town of Upper Egypt. Assiout is sometimes called the Coptic capital, and not without reason, for the Copts constitute a very large, and by far the richest, section of the population. Nearly all the fine, large, well-built private houses, which attract the attention of the passing tourist, are found, on inquiry, to belong to wealthy Coptic merchants, who are all more or less closely related to each other by blood-relationship or marriage. Decidedly there seems to be some mysterious connection between Christianity and money-making! In the race for wealth the Christian may be sometimes outstripped by the Jew, but he is always far more than a match for the Mussulman. Look, for example, at any portion of the Turkish Empire containing a mixed population. In European Turkey it is the Greeks or the Bulgarians, in Asia Minor the Armenians, in Syria the Maronites who are speedily becoming rich, whilst Mussulman Turks and Arabs, notwithstanding their privileged position in the political and social organism, are, with few exceptions, sinking deeper and deeper into poverty and debt. As long as the Moslems remain a privileged caste, and the officials of all grades are allowed freely to peculate, extort, and oppress, so long a certain semblance of equilibrium between the

two creeds may be maintained; but as soon as complete political and social equality in our sense of the term is established, or, in other words, as soon as capital obtains in the East the influence which it possesses in western Europe, the Mussulman must go to the wall and humble himself before triumphant Christianity. It is unfortunately not by missionary effort, theological discussions, or the spontaneous growth of humanitarian principles, but by the harsh, heartless action of immutable economic laws, aided by the diplomatic and military forces of aggressive European Powers, that the triumph of Christianity is being secured in the western provinces of the Mohammedan world.

Those who have paid attention to this interesting problem—it has never, as far as I am aware, been seriously studied—have generally assumed that the superiority of the Christian rayah lies in the fact that he has closer intellectual relations with Christendom, and that consequently he is apt to imbibe more of the enterprising commercial spirit of the Western nations. Others suppose that the key to the enigma is to be found in ethnological peculiarities—the majority of the rayahs being of Aryan stock, whilst the majority of the dominant caste belong to the lower Turanian races. A great deal may be said in support of both of these theories, but neither of them explains satisfactorily the commercial superiority of the Copts over the Mussulmans in Upper Egypt. As a necessary commentary to this statement I must say a few words about the

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past history and present position of the Coptic community.

The Copts[1] are the purest descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Having always displayed a strong repugnance to intermarry with other religious communities, they have preserved in a remarkable degree the type of features depicted on the ancient monuments. Though separated from the Greek Church only by a few abstruse theological dogmas, the Egyptian Christians never fused with the numerous Greek element which inundated the Delta when Egypt was a Roman province. On the contrary, they systematically resisted Hellenising influences, stubbornly retained their old language, and hated the Byzantine domination so cordially that, when the Arabs conquered the country in the year 638, they hailed the representative of the Caliph as a liberator! Many of them soon adopted the dominant creed, and gradually blended with the Arabs, who passed into the country as conquerors and colonists. The apostasy was not, however, so rapid and general as it has sometimes been represented. The great mass of the people seem to have remained, for a time, true to the old faith, and finding that the administrative and fiscal oppression of the Moslems was scarcely less severe than that of the Greeks, they repeatedly attempted to throw off the new foreign yoke. Though

[1] The word Copt or Kopt is, in all probability, simply the root of our word Egyptian. This explanation will be more readily accepted if we remember that the Egyptians always pronounce the G hard, and that they usually confound the hard G and K. Between Gypt or Kypt and Kopt there is little phonetic difference.

we possess merely very imperfect records of the period in question, we have evidence of no less than six serious insurrections between the years 725 and 831, each of which was suppressed with terrible severity and followed by new measures of oppression. Even after all serious resistance was at an end, the oppression and maltreatment continued, and it was during the long period of unprovoked, intermittent persecution that the great mass of apostasy took place. The native records give no connected account of the great religious transformation which gradually reduced the Christians to the position of an insignificant minority, but they contain incidental indications quite sufficient for the guidance of any writer who has carefully studied the spread of Islam in other countries.

According to the generally received principles of Mohammedan public law, the Christian rayahs, who loyally accept the domination of Islam, have a right to be protected in their lives and property, and may even be employed in the public service, but besides paying tribute as a return for this protection they must accept, as a class, a strictly subordinate position, and never aspire to complete political equality, or equal social consideration with the true believers. As a visible symbol of this inferiority, and in order to prevent the regrettable accident of a Mussulman inadvertently treating them as equals, they have generally—until quite recent times—been ordered to wear a distinctive costume, and to show in public certain marks of respect to their superiors. In spite of all social disqualifications and political disabilities,

a large portion of the rayahs have usually contrived to better their material condition and have thereby excited the jealousy and cupidity of the less fortunate among their Mussulman fellow-subjects; and when these evil human passions, in the disguise of religious fanaticism, have been awakened, the materials have been prepared for active, violent persecution. The spark which sets the inflammable materials in a blaze may be, on the part of the Christians, some real or supposed act of insubordination, some real or supposed political conspiracy, or simply some real or supposed want of becoming respect and humility towards a respectable or disreputable member of the dominant caste. All this is fully exemplified in Egyptian history. The social and political inferiority of the Copts and their successful efforts to better their condition by peaceable, legitimate means, are plainly shown by the numerous oft-repeated edicts imposing tribute, prescribing a distinctive costume, prohibiting costly apparel of the allowed shape and colour, expelling non-Mussulmans from all offices of State, and permanently excluding unbelievers from the public service. As typical illustrations of the way in which the latent fanaticism, or rather the jealousy and cupidity, broke out into active persecution, I may cite a few episodes incidentally related by the chroniclers. In 1283 a Christian secretary of the Emir caused a Moslem debtor to be arrested. The people were infuriated at this insult to the dominant faith, and when the Emir endeavoured to protect his subordinate they presented a petition to the higher

authorities, the consequence of which was the publication of an edict ordering all Christian secretaries of the Emir to become Mussulmans under pain of decapitation. Having thus gained a victory over their immediate ruler, the mob proceeded to celebrate the occasion by plundering the houses of the Christians. About twenty years later a new persecution was caused by an equally insignificant incident. An envoy from Mauritania was one day greatly scandalised by the sight of a Christian, dressed in rich robes and a white turban, riding a beautiful horse in one of the principal thoroughfares of Cairo, and receiving marks of profound respect from many of the passers-by. His Excellency of Mauritania was particularly enraged by the fact that the rich, influential Nazarene made his servants drive away importunate petitioners—some of them, perhaps, Mussulmans!—who bowed before him and even kissed his feet. Shocked by such insolence on the part of an unbeliever, the envoy made energetic representations and brought about a new persecution in consequence of which many Christians abjured their old religion. The third incident which I have to quote was still more serious. In 1321 several great fires took place in Cairo and other towns, and some one suggested that they had been intentionally caused by the Christians. The suspicion was confirmed by two Christian monks, who declared under torture, that they had attempted to burn Cairo, and that they belonged to a conspiracy the object of which was to avenge the wrongs committed on their co-religionists. A cruel persecution followed, in which

large numbers of the Christians were plundered and massacred or sold as slaves. But the most terrible persecution of all occurred in the year 1354. The Christians were again accused of pride, insolence, and the ostentatious wearing of rich apparel, and as the Government did not check the popular fanaticism the unfortunate rayahs experienced a genuine reign of terror. Many of them were seized by the populace and burned, and for some time the survivors hardly ventured to show themselves in the streets. In and around Cairo six churches and monasteries were demolished, and all over the country, especially in Upper Egypt, many of the churches were transformed into mosques. The Arab historian, Makrizi, says, that in his day almost every Mohammedan in Egypt had ancestors who went over to Islam at this period.

The systematic oppression of the Christians, diversified by occasional outbreaks of violent persecution, continued till the end of last century, when the number of Christians had fallen to about five per cent. of the population. During that dark period even those who remained Christians forgot their old language and adopted the Arabic dialect of the dominant caste; and in Lower Egypt, where the influence of the Central Government was stronger, Christianity almost entirely disappeared. Napoleon and his generals were the first to establish religious equality, and their example was followed by Mehemet Ali and his successors. Under the dynasty of Mehemet Ali, the whole native population, without distinction of creed, has been systematically oppressed

by a foreign administration composed of Turks and Circassians, and this change in the government had a wonderful effect in diminishing the old religious hatreds. Mussulmans and Christians, bearing a common foreign yoke, learned to live with each other on friendly terms, and two years ago, many people who knew Egypt well were convinced that the old religious animosity was completely extinct. Unfortunately, it has been revived by recent events. When the so-called national movement assumed the character of a patriotic Mussulman resistance to the Christian invader, the Mussulman fellaheen of Upper Egypt, many of whom have inconvenient obligations to Coptic creditors, conceived the idea of exterminating the native Christians, and there is every reason to believe that, if the campaign had been prolonged, wholesale massacres would have taken place. Even now it is by no means certain that the danger is past. Nearly all the native and foreign Christians with whom I have spoken on the subject are convinced that their lives and property are safe only so long as the British troops remain in the country.

Those who have had opportunities of observing the habitual obstinacy of the fellaheen, and their wonderful capacity for stolid endurance under suffering, may be surprised that so many of them were induced to abandon their ancient faith, and that in this respect they did not show, as a body, so much conservative tenacity as the Christian rayahs of European Turkey. For this apparently anomalous fact the ethnologist has a plausible explanation at

hand. The religion of the Arabian Prophet has always found acceptance among Semitic and Turanian races more readily than among nationalities of Aryan origin, and it must be admitted that the Egyptians, whatever their primitive ethnological affinities may have been, have at least a strong admixture of Semitic blood. Without impugning the partial correctness of this explanation, I venture to submit that more direct and more easily understood influences have been at work. So long as a nation, living under foreign taskmasters of a different creed, believes in its future emancipation, it clings to its faith as the sheet-anchor of its nationality and regards apostasy with feelings of horror, in which patriotism is quite as important an element as piety; but if it should happen to lose its hopes and aspirations of political independence—if it no longer sees, or dreams of, the possibility of one day turning the tables on its oppressors and avenging the wrongs and humiliation which it has endured—it loses one of the chief sources of its moral strength and soon learns to prefer apostasy to martyrdom. When in ordinary warfare it becomes evident that a position is hopelessly untenable, the bravest defenders, ready to fight to the death so long as there is a chance of ultimate success, may begin to listen to the counsels of prudence and end by running away. Now, the rayahs of European Turkey have nearly always had hopes of receiving aid from Christendom. Only during a comparatively short period—from the battle of Lepanto to the appearance of Peter the Great—

had they reason to believe that they were completely and permanently abandoned by the Christian Powers, and during this dark period, be it remarked, they apostasized in wholesale fashion. The Egyptian Christians, on the contrary, after their last vain effort in 831 to throw off the Mussulman yoke, had nothing to expect from their own unaided efforts or from the assistance of foreign co-religionists. No ray of hope, except perhaps for a moment in the time of the Crusades, ever brightened their dark political future, and we ought to be surprised, not that so many of them under constant pressure and frequent persecution accepted the dominant faith, but rather that any of them should have had moral strength and obstinacy enough to resist the temptations to apostasy. The 300,000 Copts, or whatever their number is, who still exist at the present day, constitute a signal proof that the fellah has in all ages possessed those powers of dogged, passive resistance and stoical endurance which he still so frequently displays.

Let us return now from this somewhat lengthy digression to the rich Coptic merchants of Assiout, who inadvertently led us out of the beaten path of the tourists and the guide-books. The digression has been, perhaps, a little tedious, but it has at least supplied us with materials for solving the problem as to the commercial superiority of the Copts over the Mussulmans in Upper Egypt. With these materials at our disposal we may at once dismiss the two theories to which I have alluded: that the Christian

rayahs belong to a higher race, and that, being in closer relations with Christendom, they have imbibed more of the enterprising spirit of the Western nations. The Mussulmans and Christians of Upper Egypt belong, as we have seen, essentially to the same race, and any admixture of Semitic blood which the former may have received, ought to have increased rather than diminished their aptitudes for commerce; for the Semitic nations—witness the Phœnicians, the Saracens, and the Jews—have always been distinguished for great commercial activity. Nor can we admit that the Copts have enjoyed closer intellectual relations with Christendom; for their peculiar religious tenets, their spirit of sectarian exclusiveness, their geographical position, their political disabilities, and their adoption of the prevalent Arab dialect, have all tended to isolate them from the Christian world; and the missionary efforts of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches have not affected the community as a whole, but have simply detached individuals and created little independent religious bodies. The solution of the problem is to be found rather in the local conditions. We may assume that the native Egyptians who are still Christians come of a stock highly endowed with that moral strength and tenacity of purpose which greatly helps to insure success in all spheres of human activity, and when we visit the Coptic and Mussulman schools we have no difficulty in discovering why the Copt should have, *cæteris paribus*, greater commercial aptitudes

than the Mussulman. In Egypt, as elsewhere, primary Mussulman education consists in teaching the Koran and the elementary principles of Arabic grammar, whereas, among the Copts, considerable attention is paid to arithmetic and book-keeping. Besides this, when the Mussulman becomes a merchant he must, if he wishes to respect the precepts of his religion, refrain from lending money at usurious interest, whilst his Christian rival is hampered by no such restriction, and in Egypt it is precisely by usurious money-lending that a man can most easily and rapidly become rich. All the information which I was able to collect about the Coptic merchants of Assiout and other towns, tends to show that they have derived their fortunes more from money-lending than from legitimate trade. They have now, I may add, very little reason to complain—in ordinary peaceful times, at least—of Mussulman persecution. Thanks to their wealth and social influence, they can generally obtain justice in the native tribunals and in the Governor's konak, and pretty frequently, they can perpetrate with impunity acts of injustice against poorer men, whether Christian or Mussulman. If the Governor happens to be honest and intelligent, and seeks to keep them within the bounds of legality, they at once begin to intrigue against him and endeavour, by calumnies and similar means, to procure his recall. When I last passed through Assiout I heard of a case in point. The new Governor, unlike his predecessors, had the habit of reading all official papers presented

to him for approval, and one day he detected two of his Coptic secretaries attempting surreptitiously to favour illegally a rich merchant of their own creed. Immediately he had the two delinquents summarily and severely bastinadoed in his presence, and from that moment constant and strenuous efforts have been made by the merchant and his friends to get a more indulgent Governor appointed. As it was feared that the Pasha might, on the next occasion, carry out his threat of having in future the bastinado applied to the real authors of such fraudulent transactions, the incident caused not a little uneasiness and indignation in the higher circles of Coptic society; and his Excellency's intemperate zeal, though applauded by some lewd fellows of the baser sort, was severely condemned by "respectable" public opinion.

Between Cairo and Assiout the Copts are to be found for the most part congregated in the towns as traders, artizans, money-changers, or subordinate officials. Above Assiout they are to be found in large numbers not only in the towns but also in the villages. In some districts they constitute, I am assured, the majority of the rural population, but as no trustworthy statistics of the different creeds have hitherto been published, all statements regarding their numbers must be accepted with reserve. Whatever their numbers may be, there is no doubt that the great majority of them live in Upper Egypt, and this fact deserves to be noted because it seems to show that the Central Government, whose influence was

always greater in the Delta and the lower part of the Nile Valley, must have played an important part in the spread of Islam, and that the native Christians had less to fear from popular fanaticism than from administrative oppression. In other words, the successive Mohammedan dynasties which reigned in Cairo, seem to have used their power for persecuting rather than protecting their Christian subjects. Now that something like religious liberty has been established, the Copts are free to emigrate northwards, and a decided movement, in that direction has, I am told, already set in. A few of the elder members of the community still wear the blue or black turban—one of the old distinctive badges of servitude—but the great majority have adopted the ordinary white turban of the Mussulmans, and in their general appearance and mode of life they differ little from their Mussulman fellow-villagers or fellow-townsmen. Certain acute observers declare that they can always detect a Copt both by his features and by certain words and expressions used only by the Christians, but I must confess for my own part that, except in those cases where the ancient type has been preserved in a remarkable way neither my powers of observation nor my modest philological attainments sufficed for the task of discrimination. Of the Coptic national character I do not feel competent to speak on my own authority, but I may quote the description given by Von Kremer, who is generally an accurate observer, and who spent many years in Egypt. "The Copt," he says, "is mostly of a gloomy,

grumbling disposition, greedy and fond of money in the highest degree ; at the same time, false, obsequious, and given to flattery, but impudent and domineering when he believes he can be so with impunity. On account of their aptitudes for book-keeping, the Copts are often employed in the government offices as scribes, but are in the highest degree open to bribery, and are especially addicted to intrigues and trickery." In justice to some of my friends, I must add that this unflattering description is not applicable to all members of the Coptic community.

From Assiout upwards we must proceed by water, for there are no convenient means of travelling by land, but we may escape the archæological temptations by avoiding Cook's steamers and dahabeeyahs, and travelling on the small postal steamers, which rarely allow their passengers more than a few minutes at the landing-stages. The soft, crumbling banks of the river ; the *sakkiehs,* worked by naked, dark-skinned fellahs ; the villages built of unburnt bricks and only half protected against the darting rays of the sun by the meagre shade of the tall palm-trees ; the equally meagre and much less graceful foliage of the dom-palm, whose stem and branches bifurcate with tantalising regularity ; the gigantic, fantastically-shaped pigeon houses, in which the native guano is prepared ; the long range of bold, high, cream-coloured chalk-cliffs standing out majestically against the cloudless, clear-blue sky—all this must be so familiar to every reader of the ordinary books of travel that I may refrain from any attempts at

description. At the end of the first long day we find ourselves at Girgeh, which looks rather picturesque in the moonlight, and the second day brings us to Keneh. Here those of the party who are interested in Ptolemaic architecture, visit, of course, and explore by candle-light the spacious halls and long subterranean passages of the famous temple of Denderah, which is only about two miles from the opposite bank of the river, whilst those of us who are more interested in the present condition of the country, visit the modern town, which is about a mile from the landing-stage. From one of the Coptic notables we learn that there is not much commercial or other activity in the place, but that on the whole the well-to-do inhabitants, like his worthy self, have not much to complain of. A few years ago the town and district was so overrun with robbers and brigands that life and property were very insecure, but the appointment of an energetic Mudir sufficed to restore order in a very short space of time. During the recent troubles the Mussulmans assumed a menacing attitude, and some of them talked wildly of exterminating the Unbelievers, and seizing their property, but the more prudent and influential members of the community thought it well to refrain from any drastic measures until the triumph of Arabi should be complete, and the Copts contrived to avoid any premature disturbances by feigning sympathy with the national cause. As soon as news was received of the defeat of Tel-el-Kebir and the British occupation of Cairo, the excitement immediately subsided, and very quickly the old amicable relations between the

two sections of the people were ostensibly re-established, but there is still fire smouldering under the ashes. Some outspoken Mussulmans declare that a mistake was committed in delaying the intended measures of confiscation, and that on the next occasion of the kind they will take a lesson from past experience. Meanwhile there is perfect tranquillity, and as large a measure of good government as is required to satisfy the modest local demands—the present Governor, a Circassian by birth, being a terror to evil-doers of all creeds.

Keneh is the point at which the Nile approaches nearest to the Red Sea, and is the terminus of an old overland route, now little used, between the Nile Valley and the Red Sea coast. It is somewhat surprising that at the present moment, when "promoters" favour Egypt with such a large share of their attention, and all sorts of ingenious projects are put forward for improving the communications between the Mediterranean and the far East, no one should have thought of reviving and improving the old Keneh-Kosseir route. All last winter we could hear on the terrace of Shepheard's Hotel, and in various public offices, animated discussions about the feasibility of digging freshwater ship-canals from Alexandria to Suez—about the desirability of establishing water-communication between the Mediterranean and the valley of the Jordan, flooding the Holy Land, fulfilling a prophecy of Ezekiel by transforming Jerusalem into a seaport, and joining the Dead Sea with the Gulf of Akaba—about the

possibility of carrying the largest mail steamers and the heaviest ironclads across the Isthmus of Suez on gigantic railway-trucks—about the necessity of creating an enormous artificial lake in Upper Egypt in order to regulate with mathematical accuracy the wayward inundations of the Nile—about the facility of constructing a railway across the inhospitable desert between Suakim and Berber in order to pacify the lawless tribes, and develop the natural resources of the Soudan. Each of these projects had its eloquent and more or less disinterested partisans, but no one, so far as I am aware, ever thought of extending the Assiout railway to Keneh and Kosseir, though a great deal might be said in favour of the idea. On the principle of "better late than never" I commend it to the careful attention of enterprising promoters, and to the favourable consideration of the credulous investing public; and I venture to think that, with a little professional assistance, a very plausible prospectus might be prepared. Let the following serve as a first rough draft: "Shortest and most convenient route between the Mediterranean and the far East. The proposed line of rail, connecting the commodious port of Alexandria with the flourishing historical town of Kosseir on the Red Sea, will shorten by ? ? hours the regular mail service between England and India, and may be used in cases of emergency for the rapid forwarding of troops to our great eastern dependency without the necessity of asking the permission of M. de Lesseps. Between Keneh and Kosseir many thousands of

persecuted Jews, or other interesting victims of religious and political fanaticism, may be colonised on both sides of the line, and the rapid increase of their material prosperity will not only secure the permanent predominance of British influence in that part of the world, but also increase the annual receipts of the Company. By the construction of a large port, spacious bonded warehouses, and a first-class hotel, Kosseir will recover its ancient prosperity, and become, as the neighbouring Berenice formerly was, the great emporium of Eastern trade. A first-class line of steamers, with excellent accommodation for passengers, will be established between Kosseir and Suakim, which possesses in the neighbourhood a magnificent sanatorium, and is the natural terminus of the Soudan railway. By thus bringing the Soudan within a reasonable distance of Cairo, it will be easy to suppress effectually the slave-trade of Central Africa, and an impulse will be given to Biblical research by facilitating exploration in the historic territories of the Queen of Sheba." If such a tempting prospectus can be dashed off at a moment's notice by a mere novice in the art of "promoting" what might not be done by an experienced professional? I may, perhaps, confess in strict confidence to the future committee, that I know nothing about the strip of desert through which the line is to run, and in which the unfortunate persecuted Jews are to be colonised, but in this respect I am in precisely the same position as the promoters of the project for digging a canal through the unexplored region

between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Akaba, and I think it may reasonably be presumed that the engineering difficulties cannot be very much greater than those of carrying first-class ironclads over the hundred miles of soft, moving sand which constitute the Isthmus of Suez.

Leaving Keneh—all unconscious of the commercial prosperity to be conferred upon her by the projected Grand Oriental Inter-oceanic Railway—some time about daybreak, we arrive towards noon at the famous plain of Thebes. To the right in the distance we perceive the Rameseum and the majestic Colossi, backed by the amphitheatre of high cliffs containing innumerable rock tombs, and to the left, by standing on tiptoe, we catch a glimpse of the architraves on the little forest of gigantic columns which is known as the temple of Karnak. A few minutes more and we are alongside the landing-stage of Luxor, looking up at the ruins of the great temple, in which stands the house of old Mustafa Agha, the British Vice-consul, so firmly imbedded that all efforts to expropriate him in the interests of archæology have hitherto proved unsuccessful. If we landed here we should find a comfortable hotel, a creation of the great Mr. Cook, the arch-enemy of dahabeeyah proprietors, Nile dragomans, and other species of tourist-extortioners; but for private reasons, which I need not thrust upon the public, I prefer going on to Erment, a village innocent of antiquities, about two hours higher up the river. Here I remain for a fortnight in order to collect information concerning the economic condition

of Upper Egypt, but I cannot conscientiously invite the reader to remain with me, for the accommodation leaves much to be desired, and the every-day life, in spite of the copious repasts and dancing-girl *fantaseeyas* provided for us by hospitable friends, is sure to seem monotonous and wearisome to any one who has no regular occupation and no special object in view. To live without grumbling in a room which has windows but no window-panes, and to which, consequently, flies, mosquitoes, lizards, bats, searching *khamseen* winds and other unwelcome visitors have free access, one must expect some considerable compensation, and for at least ninety-nine persons out of a hundred the village of Erment has no adequate compensation to offer. The result of my fortnight's questionings and cross-questionings will be presented hereafter to the reader in a condensed, systematic form, so he may continue his journey under the guidance of some other cicerone, and after visiting the interesting temple of Edfou—the twin-brother of that of Denderah—he may spend a few days very agreeably in the neighbourhood of the First Cataract, which he may reach the day after leaving Erment.

At the First Cataract ends Egypt Proper; beyond lie Nubia, the Soudan, and the Equatorial Provinces, in comparison with which, so far as area is concerned, Egypt Proper seems very insignificant. Whilst the area of Egypt, officially so-called, is equal to two-thirds of European Russia, the area of cultivated land between the First Cataract and the sea—including the Province of Fayoum, which lies outside the Nile

Valley but is watered by the Nile—is not so large as Belgium.

On each side of the fertile Nile Valley lies a vast tract of dry, sandy desert. The Western, or Lybian, desert is traversed by a long valley, parallel to that of the Nile, which was probably, at some time in the far-distant past, well watered and cultivated. A subterranean stream still percolates under the sand at the bottom of the valley; and, by coming occasionally to the surface, forms a series of oases. In the Eastern desert, which stretches from the Nile Valley to the Red Sea, there are no patches of verdure worthy to be called oases, but here and there, at the bottom of the irregular winding valleys, is to be found water sufficient for a few Bedouin families or for a little settlement of lonely Coptic monks. The nomadic and semi-nomadic population which finds a scanty subsistence in these wastes is called by the general name of Bedouins, but only a small portion of it—the tribes of the Eastern desert, between the Isthmus of Suez and the above-mentioned Keneh-Kosseir route—can make any claim to pure Arab descent. Above Keneh and Kosseir, the tribes are mostly of Nubian race, and those of them who have not yet succumbed to Arab influence, speak Ethiopian dialects. Those of the Western or Lybian desert all speak Arabic with more or less purity, but most, if not all of them, have a strong intermixture of Berber or Tuareg blood. The total number of Egyptian Bedouins, excluding those of Nubian origin, has been estimated at 100,000, but it may

be only a half, or it may be double, of that number, for no census has ever been attempted. Though averse to anything like regular administration, and decidedly prone, like all nomads, to raid-making and marauding, the Bedouins are easily kept under control by the Government, and do not constitute a serious danger for the sedentary population. In the year 1855 there was an insurrection among the western tribes in consequence of an attempt to subject them to the conscription, but it was easily suppressed, and was afterwards punished with unnecessary severity. Fortunately, the tribes are divided by frequent quarrels and traditional feuds, so that they are quite incapable of combining for any common purpose. What further facilitates the task of the Government in preserving order is that many Bedouins abandon their nomadic life and settle down as agriculturists. All along the border of the desert, and in some of the inner provinces of the Delta, a considerable portion of the rural population is of Bedouin origin, and among the landed proprietors are a number of Bedouin chiefs who retain their authority over even the still nomadic portions of their tribes. Being themselves within reach of the arm of the law, these Bedouin landowners present a convenient guarantee for the good behaviour of their relatives and dependants. Others of these tamed sons of the desert reside in the towns and likewise occasionally assist the authorities. We had last winter a signal example of this in the capture of the Bedouins who murdered Professor Palmer and

his companions. It was because one of the most influential chiefs of the Sinaitic Peninsula happened to be a respectable, well-to-do inhabitant of Cairo, that it was possible to bring these malefactors to justice. On the other hand, it was doubtless partly through men of this class that Arabi and his accomplices won the support of the Bedouins, some of whom still avow their sympathy with the national cause and their hatred of the foreign invader. Whether the source of this sympathy is disinterested patriotism, religious fanaticism, or the desire to obtain opportunities of marauding, I cannot pretend to say, but there is no doubt that the feeling exists, and I had on one occasion a little manifestation of it. Returning from a visit to the Kassr Karoun, a ruined temple situated in the desert south-west of the Fayoum, I was obliged to spend the night with a friend in a Bedouin encampment. Being under the protection of an influential man of the neighbourhood we were hospitably treated, but when about to depart next morning my friend overheard one of the Bedouins, by way of supplement to his morning devotions, devoutly consigning all ghiaours to perdition, and expressing the hope that Allah would prevent us from reaching our destination. As it seemed within the bounds of possibility that this fervent Mussulman might consider it his duty to lie in wait for us and assist Allah in the pious work of exterminating unbelievers, we thought it well to bring the incident to the knowledge of our host, who had professed great devotion to our protector and appeared

well disposed towards us. He promised to take the necessary precautions for our safety, and politely explained—with perhaps a tinge of irony in his tone—that the man in question came from a distant tribe who had not yet learned to appreciate foreigners, but he made no pretence of feeling surprise or indignation at what had occurred.

There is no doubt that the Bedouin colonisation has considerably increased, in the course of centuries, the amount of Arab blood in the rural population, but the fusion of the two races is a very slow process. The Bedouin, even when he becomes an agricultural labourer, enjoys exemption from the conscription and from the *corvée*, and considers himself much superior to the low-born fellaheen who have to bear both of these burdens. He may perhaps be induced to take a fellah's pretty young daughter as his wife, but he would never, if he has any "right feeling" about him, so far disgrace himself as to allow his own daughter to marry a fellah; and, indeed, without the check of his authority, the daughter would never think of committing such an act of social degradation. In the large towns—where there are no visible marks of distinction between the two races, and where all native-born Mussulmans are called Arabs in contradistinction to the Turks and Circassians—the fusion takes place much more easily.

This distinction between "Arabs" and "Turks" deserves to be carefully noted, because it has great social and political importance and played a very prominent part in the first phases of the recent

troubles. When the great Mehemet Ali, at the beginning of the present century, arrived in Egypt as a volunteer subordinate officer in the service of the Sultan, and began to lay the foundation of his ambitious schemes, he found the political and administrative power in the hands of the Mameluke Beys, a band of Circassian adventurers who had been imported into Egypt as fighting slaves and had gradually made themselves masters of the country. This extraordinary state of things had existed for many generations. As the Egyptian climate had a curious debilitating influence on the Circassian immigrants, the stock had to be constantly replenished by fresh importations, and the Beys were commonly succeeded, not by their own offspring, but by the members of their retinue who displayed the greatest talents for fighting and intrigue. The twenty-four most influential Beys divided the country amongst them and constituted a national council which took cognisance of all affairs affecting the common weal. Theoretically on a level with, if not superior to, the council of Beys, there was a Turkish Pasha, as representative of the Sultan, but his authority was, as a rule, more nominal than real, because he had not sufficient military force to control the Mamelukes. Mehemet Ali, by adroitly steering his course through the political chaos and dexterously intriguing with all the political parties, eventually became master of the situation. When he felt sure of the Albanian troops, who were intended to uphold the Sultan's authority, he used them to massacre treacherously 500 of the

Mameluke Beys, and then gradually replaced them by a native army officered by Turks and Circassians on whose loyalty and devotion he could implicitly rely. He did not, however, use largely the native element for the new administration which he put in the place of Mameluke misrule. Rightly or wrongly he believed that "the Arabs"—that is to say the genuine Egyptians, whether of Arabian or fellah origin—did not possess the qualifications required for the higher official posts. For the bureaucratic routine work he was compelled to use them, but for the command of the army, as well as for all posts of executive authority in the civil service, from that of provincial Governor down to that of ordinary policemen, he employed Turks or Circassians, with a slight intermixture of Armenians and Europeans. His immediate successors followed the same policy, so that the Turco-Circassian element habitually played the part of a dominant caste, whilst the rest of the population—Mussulmans and Christians alike—had to accept the position of an inferior race. The relations between the two classes closely resembled the relations between Englishmen and natives in India, with this important difference that whereas the English administration in India has gradually become purer and more efficient, the Turco-Circassian administration in Egypt has gradually lost its primitive vigour and become more corrupt.

Until quite recently the native Egyptians murmured little under the heavy foreign yoke, and never dreamed of attempting to throw it off. They had been

accustomed for centuries to live under the harsh rule of foreign task-masters, and seemed to accept their position of inferiority with fatalistic resignation. If Mehemet Ali, or Ibrahim, or Abbas, or even the liberal-minded, light-hearted Said—the immediate predecessor of Ismail—could come to life again and hear about the political aspirations of the fellaheen, they would certainly laugh the idea to scorn, and would probably recommend as the best corrective for all such absurd political vagaries, a liberal and vigorous use of the kurbash.[1] Even Ismail, though he sometimes in the course of his political intrigues feigned to be afraid of native discontent, and on one occasion produced the semblance of a popular riot in Cairo, never really feared any insurrectionary movement, and never believed in the possibility of any genuine political aspirations among the native population. Down to the last day of his reign, Egypt seemed to be one of the last countries in the world in which a serious national movement was to be expected, and when such a movement actually appeared, it took some time before official observers could believe their eyes and admit its existence. Again and again responsible statesmen declared on the evidence of reports received from agents on the spot, that it was a mere military conspiracy totally devoid of all popular sympathy and support, and not a few private persons, who had known Egypt well a

[1] A more correct transcription of this word (which designates generically the various instruments, such as sticks, straps, &c., used for applying corporal punishment) would be *kurbag* or *kurbadj*, but I have thought it better to write the word as it is commonly pronounced by Europeans.

few years before, arrived by *à priori* reasoning at the same conclusion.

All human errors and exaggerations tend to create their own antidotes, but unfortunately there are many people who have not the prudence and moderation to take of the antidote merely as much as is required to counteract the poison. The error of maintaining, in spite of all proofs to the contrary, that the insurrectionary movement enjoyed no popular support naturally produced an exaggeration of an opposite kind, and in certain circles the insurrection came to be spoken of as a genuine spontaneous manifestation of sublime patriotism. Thus, the large European public which took an interest in Egyptian affairs, became divided into two hostile camps, neither of which would admit of any concession or compromise. In the one, Arabi and his accomplices were described as vulgar military adventurers, who maintained their ephemeral authority by terrorising the loyal subjects of the Khedive, and who aimed solely at creating in their own interest a hateful military despotism ; in the other, the leaders of the movement were described as men of pure, disinterested patriotism—a little too pure, perhaps, for ordinary use—and the movement was represented as the laudable attempt of an oppressed nationality to obtain for itself the political freedom, good government, and impartial justice, which had long been denied it by ruthless oppressors.

It is time to abandon these extreme views, and to examine the subject in a calm, impartial spirit. It is

in this spirit that I have endeavoured to investigate it, and I now proceed to offer in a concise form the more important results of my investigations. As we have undertaken the difficult task of restoring order in Egypt, we ought to understand clearly the nature and origin of the recent troubles, so as to prevent, if possible, their recurrence.

CHAPTER II.

THE INSURRECTION AND THE NATIONAL PARTY.

Military insubordination—Insurgents in self-defence attempt political revolution—Sherif Pasha—Inflammable materials ignited—Attitude of the Powers—Sir William Gregory and Mr. Blunt—The Chamber of Notables—A Nationalist ministry—Condemnation of a Circassian officer—Naval demonstration—Turkish Imperial Commission—How the peasants were gained over to the National cause—Alexandria massacres—Conference of Constantinople—Attitude of the various Plenipotentiaries—Position of the Sultan when invited to send troops—Bombardment of Alexandria—Negotiations for Anglo-Turkish military convention—British military occupation—Successive phases of the insurrection—Conclusion.

The recent troubles, which have so profoundly modified the political condition of Egypt, were in their first phase merely a struggle between two rival coteries of military officers. In the Egyptian army, the rank and file, the non-commissioned officers, and the great majority of the officers up to the rank of colonel, were native Egyptians of fellah extraction, whereas nearly all the officers of higher rank, together with the holders of staff-appointments, were, like the Khedivial family and the Vice-royal Court, of Turkish or Circassian origin. Ever since the time of Mehemet Ali this small Turco-Circassian element, which habitually uses the Turkish language and

resists assimilation with the natives, has constituted, as I have said in the foregoing chapter, a dominant caste; whilst the great mass of the people, accustomed for centuries to serve foreign taskmasters of one kind or other, has accepted, if not without murmuring, at least without any effort at resistance, a position of social inferiority. The commencements of a liberation movement among these latter came, not from themselves, but from their despotic rulers. Said Pasha, the Khedive who immediately preceded Ismail, partly from personal motives which cannot conveniently be described in a book intended for the general public, and partly from good-natured unreasoning caprice, favoured and promoted some of his fellah soldiers, and Ismail, from political motives, continued the same policy, so that, at the accession of the present Khedive, not a few of the field officers and one or two commanders of regiments belonged by birth to that inferior class which had previously been prevented from rising above the rank of lieutenant. Some of them had close domestic relations with the palace, for Ismail, in order to attach the *parvenus* to the dominant caste and to his own person, had married them generally to Circassians of his *hareem*.

The Khedivial favourites who had thus been raised in the social scale thought naturally of further advancement. Having got their foot into the stirrup, they tried to vault into the saddle and take their place on a level with their Turco-Circassian comrades. Such ambitious presumption

could not be patiently borne by men who had always assumed as an axiom, that in the social economy of the universe, the Turk or Circassian was a superior being, intended by a wise Providence to rule over fellahs, and that the fellahs were an essentially unwarlike, inferior race, predestined to be for ever the dumb labouring class, for whom the whole duty of man consisted in working hard and obeying the superiors placed over them. A few individuals of this inferior class might by special favour be admitted into the dominant caste and be treated with patronising condescension so long as they remembered and tacitly admitted their essential inferiority; but as soon as they dared to assume airs of equality, and began to talk of their imaginary rights, they should be properly snubbed and taught better manners. The fellah officers on their part read the mysterious designs of Providence somewhat differently, and clung to the Koranic principle that all free Mussulmans are equal before Allah—without prejudice, of course, to the traditional principle of Oriental politics, that an inferior, when he happens to get the upper hand, may oppress without mercy his *ci-devant* oppressor.

So long as the watchful, energetic Ismail held the reins of government, the antagonism and mutual hatred of these two rival coteries were not allowed to come to the surface, and strict military discipline was everywhere constantly maintained, except on the one occasion already alluded to, when it suited the policy of Ismail to have a little military riot in Cairo, and

on that occasion the two coteries combined in the demonstration against foreign financial oppression. In the last days of his reign, it is true, Ismail had lost much of his power and prestige by various forms of foreign intervention, but he had still, down to the very day of his deposition, authority and vigour enough to maintain strict order and unquestioning obedience among all classes of his subjects, so that neither despotic Turco-Circassian nor ambitious fellah dared to give public expression to real or imaginary grievances, except in so far as Effendina allowed such insubordination for his own secret purposes.

With the accession of the young, weak, inexperienced Tewfik, who had been nominated by two distant foreign Powers notoriously jealous of each other, and who was kept under the control of their representatives, the whole character of government in Egypt underwent a radical change. The gradual destruction of the traditional, impersonal prestige of the Khedive was thereby completed, and the pernicious effects of this weakening of the central authority were no longer counteracted, as in the last days of Ismail's reign, by personal qualities such as political sagacity and unscrupulous energy. A vigorous, grinding despotism had been removed, without any other kind of strong government being substituted, and one of the disastrous direct consequences of this state of things was that a spirit of insubordination appeared in the army, and the two rival coteries prepared to enter on a struggle for mastery. At first it was believed that the young Khedive was inclined

to favour the ambitious aspirations of the fellah officers. One of his chief favourites was Ali Fehmi, a smart young officer of fellah extraction, who was married to a Circassian of Ismail's hareem, and who commanded at that time the regiment of the Guards quartered near the Abdin Palace. Being frequently brought into personal contact with the Khedive in the course of his official duties, Ali Fehmi soon established intimate friendly relations with his master, was invited almost daily to the Khedivial table, received frequently flattering marks of confidence, and was sometimes employed for conveying his Highness's wishes to Osman Riffki, the Minister of War. Osman Riffki, a genuine Circassian by birth and sympathies, felt aggrieved at receiving orders from a man whom he regarded as a fellah upstart, and undermined, it is said, the Khedive's confidence in his favourite. However this may be, it is certain that Ali Fehmi fell into disfavour, complained bitterly to his friends of undeserved neglect, and established intimate relations with other discontented officers. Among these latter was Colonel Abdel Aal, an active, excitable, gruff soldier, with an habitually stern expression indicative of decision and energy, and a lieutenant called Obeid, whom I have never seen, but who has been described to me as an unscrupulous, reckless madcap. Had the ranks of the malcontents been filled exclusively by men of this type the movement which was preparing would probably never have gone beyond the limits of an insignificant military conspiracy, but unfortunately it was joined, from various motives, by men of very

ifferent calibre, the chief of whom were Arabi Bey, ho was soon to become dictator, and Mahmoud Sami 'asha, the future president of the revolutionary abinet.

In appearance, Arabi is a big, strong, broad-iouldered, good-natured fellah. His fez thrown 'ell back displays a broad, massive forehead, sur-iounting large, soft eyes, which have in ordinary ioods a kindly, dreamy expression. There is an ndefinable something about the man which im-resses favourably all who come in contact with him, ıd for those who understand his native Arabic, the ıly language he can speak, there is a singular charm his conversation. His stock of useful and theo-tical knowledge is unfortunately not at all in oportion to his powers of expression, so that his ve of discoursing sometimes leads to a lamentable splay of ignorance; but when speaking with reigners he wisely confines himself as a rule to ıgue moral principles or commonplace subjects ithin his competence, and when he converses with s own countrymen his ignorance is cloaked or oned for by his marvellous mastery of his mother-ngue and by his habit of confirming what he says appropriate quotations from the Koran—an art hich he acquired, or at least perfected, in his youth, hen studying Arab grammar and Mussulman theo-gy in the Azhar university. He had been removed Said Pasha from active service because he had posed and denounced as sacrilegious a general order berating the soldiers from the restrictions prescribed

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by the Koran for the annual Ramazan fast, and Ismail Pasha, who reinstated him, persistently refused him promotion, and had determined, it is said, at the moment of his deposition, to render "the eloquent babbler" harmless by transporting him to the White Nile. At that time his voluble rhetoric was devoted to recommending the strict observance of moral and religious precepts, to disseminating ideas of universal brotherhood among all nations and all creeds, and to inculcating generally the ordinary principles of Oriental Freemasonry, with the adepts of which he was, I am told, at one period in intimate relations. Even when he had become the recognised leader of an aggressive national movement against foreigners and foreign influence, he never entirely emancipated himself from his old philanthropic mysticism; for, in the calm intervals between his inflammatory speeches, which were calculated to promote anything rather than international fraternity and religious toleration, he could still, without any apparent consciousness of logical inconsistency, indulge in eloquent outbursts of world-wide, fraternal philanthropy. Like all men liable to be intoxicated by the flow of their own rhetoric, he could be wildly inconsistent without being hypocritical. A dutiful son, a good husband, a kind father, and on the whole an upright, respectable man, he was never the determined, stoical hero, or the blind, uncompromising fanatic he has sometimes been represented. If he ultimately carried persistence far beyond the limits of prudence, his con-

duct is to be attributed, not to any extraordinary tenacity or immovable faith in the ultimate success of the ideas which he represented, but partly to his political ignorance and partly to the fact that his hot-headed partisans prevented him from accepting a compromise. At the first serious check he precipitately abandoned his grand schemes of constitutionalism and fellah domination; and when in prison awaiting his trial, he frankly declared with every appearance of sincerity that the welfare of his country was to be found, not in the national independence of which he had been the self-constituted champion, but in the loyal acceptance of English rule. Perhaps it may occur to the reader that it might be possible, by diligent search, to find a specimen of the Arabi type of human nature among our own leading public men; but any inquiry in that direction would lead me too far from my present purpose, and I willingly leave the subject to some one more competent to deal with historical parallels.

The second important personage who was prepared to assist, though he did not at once join, the discontented officers, was a man of very different type. Mahmoud Sami did not claim to be of pure fellah extraction; on the contrary, he was rather ashamed of any fellah blood which he had in his veins, professed to be descended from one of the old Mameluke Beys, learned to speak Turkish fluently, rose in the civil service by means which will hardly bear minute scrutiny, married a lady of the Khedivial family, and was generally regarded as belonging to the dominant

caste. He had none of the vague philanthropic aspirations or dreamy enthusiasm of Arabi, but much more political knowledge, diplomatic cunning, and self-conscious, personal ambition. His appearance made upon me a very unfavourable impression, but as I only saw him in prison, and was told that he was then much changed, I refrain from drawing a portrait which might perhaps do him injustice. However he may have looked in the days of his prosperity, there can be little doubt as to his real character. Truculent or obsequious as occasion demanded, he always showed himself to be one of those supple, sharp-witted, daring intriguers, who are so often to be met with in the Eastern political world. Of the enmity which he showed to Tewfik in the later phases of the crisis there are various explanations. Some people relate that he had received a mortal insult from Ismail and had consequently vowed vengeance against the whole family of Mehemet Ali, and they cite as an illustration of his revengeful spirit the well known fact that he killed with his own hand the paramour of his first wife, as well as her mother, whom he believed to have been privy to the intrigue. For my own part, I am inclined to believe that he was actuated by prospective ambition rather than by retrospective vengeance, and that his enmity to the Khedive, which was not greater than that of his accomplices, was merely part of a well-considered plan for making himself Khedive of Egypt. But in this I am anticipating. At the time when Ali Fehmi, deeply wounded by what he

considered the Khedive's capricious injustice, consulted with Abdel Aal and Arabi about the best means of forwarding the interests of the fellah officers, Mahmoud Sami was still ostensibly a loyal member of the Riaz Cabinet. He had already, however, conceived the idea of using the malcontents for his own purposes, and was patiently awaiting an opportunity of secretly assisting them. A convenient opportunity soon presented itself.

Ali Fehmi and his accomplices considered that the best way of advancing their interests was to agitate among their brother officers, and cause petitions to be presented to the Khedive. Osman Riffki, the Minister of War, and Riaz, the Prime Minister, determined to put a stop to this species of insubordination, and for this purpose they proposed that the three ringleaders should be arrested. The subject was discussed at a Cabinet council, and it was unanimously resolved that the three chief agitators, Ali Fehmi, Abdel Aal, and Arabi, should be arrested next morning, but as it was feared that resistance might be offered, the Cabinet decided that a ruse should be employed: the three should be invited to the Kassr-el-Nil barracks, ostensibly for the purpose of receiving orders about a forthcoming marriage in the Khedivial family, and when they had thus been separated from the men of their own regiments, they should be placed under arrest and tried by court-martial. Mahmoud Sami, as Minister of the Evkai (mortmain property consecrated to religious and benevolent purposes), was present at the delibera-

tions, and affected to concur in the decision, but as soon as he had left the council chamber, he caused the officers to be informed of the trap which had been prepared for them. In the course of the evening they met and consulted as to what should be done, and finally they adopted a proposal of Ali Fehmi's lieutenant, the madcap Obeid, that they should go to the Kassr-el-Nil barracks, and that he should come with the men of his company and liberate them. Next morning everything occurred as had been arranged. When the arrested officers were being examined, Obeid appeared with his men, broke into the council room, maltreated the members, liberated the prisoners, and conducted them in triumph to the palace, where they demanded from the Khedive the dismissal of the War Minister and the redress of their grievances, the principal of which was the undue promotion of Turkish and Circassian officers. The Khedive, having no means at hand for quelling the revolt, had to yield to the demands. Promises of redress were given, and Mahmoud Sami, the secret ally of the mutineers, was named Minister of War in the place of the Circassian, Osman Riffki. As a further concession, two decrees were issued, the one increasing the pay of the troops, and the other instituting a commission under the presidency of the new War Minister, to examine and report upon the existing army organisation. The aims of the commission, which included Arabi among its members, soon became apparent. It proposed that the colonels should have the nomination of the officers in their

respective regiments, that the army should be increased to 18,000 men, so as to provide places for officers on half-pay, and that promotion should be regulated by examination, so as to exclude Turco-Circassian favouritism. Evidently, the malcontents aimed at getting the army into their own hands, and they very soon completely succeeded. The increase of pay and the proposal to increase the chances of promotion—measures insidiously recommended to the Khedive by Mahmoud Sami as the best means for securing the loyalty of the troops—were universally attributed, not to the Khedive, but to the three colonels, and from that moment the leaders of the agitation could count on the support of the whole army, with the exception of the Turco-Circassian officers, who formed a numerically insignificant minority.

To have gained the great bulk of the army, and to have placed a secret ally in the post of War Minister, seemed, perhaps, at first, quite sufficient to secure the desired changes in the military organisation ; but the colonels soon began to perceive—with the help of suggestions from Mahmoud Sami, who aimed at higher things—that they must go much further than they originally intended. Having once become mutineers, and having aroused by their success the hatred of the dominant caste, they ought in common prudence to take precautions for their future safety. They knew their opponents too well to imagine that the past would be forgotten, or to hope that the defeat which the old masters of the country had sustained would

long remain unavenged. From the public acts of the Government, as well as from the confidential information regularly received from Mahmoud Sami and other secret sympathisers, it soon became evident that preparations were being made to re-establish and consolidate the old order of things, and to remove from their posts those who seemed likely to offer resistance. The colonels and their associates were of course aware that they would be the first victims of the reaction, and accordingly they began to devise means of defence. They saw clearly that any new promises from the Khedive would not meet the exigences of the case, and that in order to be permanently secure from attack they must replace the Turco-Circassian system of government by one which would be completely under their own control. If the Khedive would accept their conditions—and there was reason to believe that he might throw in his lot with them in the hope of liberating himself from the irksome tutelage of Riaz Pasha and the foreign Controllers—he might be retained as nominal ruler; but if he refused to accept the conditions, and maintained an uncompromising attitude, he must make room for some one else. In any case, it was necessary to get rid of the energetic Prime Minister, Riaz—an uncompromising antagonist and the mainstay of the opposite party—and with this object in view a great military demonstration was made in front of the Abdin Palace. On that occasion the Khedive displayed such indecision and lack of energy that he was suspected by many people of being in league with

the colonels,[1] and the immediate result of the demonstration was that the vigorous despotic Riaz was replaced by the amiable, liberal-minded, indolent Sherif Pasha, who would probably make large concessions, and who could be in no case a formidable antagonist. Thus, with the rapidity of growth which characterises all kinds of Egyptian vegetation, an act of military insubordination had grown, during the short space of seven months, into a political revolution. A few months more and the little coterie of discontented officers, who now clamorously demand the dismissal of a native Prime Minister, will openly defy his Majesty the Sultan and all the Great Powers of Europe.

In the appointment of Sherif Pasha the colonels and their associates had a singular stroke of good luck. They wished to enlarge the basis of their action, and they had already, perhaps, bethought themselves of Ismail's expedient for overthrowing a powerful hostile ministry by the semblance of a patriotic national movement; but if they had been left to their own resources they would certainly have failed to secure for their schemes the favourable consideration of any foreign Powers, and they would probably have experienced considerable difficulty in formulating the idea of a national representation in an acceptable practical form. The name of Sherif—a man who had an old-established reputation for

[1] Sir Auckland Colvin, who played an important part in the incident, and had the best opportunities of closely observing the Khedive, believes these suspicions to be entirely unfounded.

prudence, loyalty, and genuine patriotism, and who enjoyed the confidence and affection of all who knew him—gave to the movement an air of respectability and moderation, secured for it in Europe a certain amount of sympathy, and prevented the English and French Governments from taking immediately any decided repressive measures. At the same time Sherif aided the party of action by supplying them with a ready-made scheme of constitutional reforms. The scheme, which provided for a consultative National Assembly, had been carefully prepared by him during the preceding reign as a palliative for the prevalent administrative abuses, and it was now re-cast in a liberal spirit in the hope that the future delegates would be induced to side with the moderate members of the Cabinet and resist the threatened military dictatorship.

This raising of political issues gave to the movement a new character and a much wider basis; for it ignited a great deal of inflammable materials which had been gradually accumulating during Ismail's reign.

Ismail's reckless financial policy and merciless exactions, together with the pressure exerted by foreign financiers, had raised among the Egyptian educated classes a strong feeling of discontent, and had suggested the idea of limiting the arbitrary Khedivial power and getting rid of the Anglo-French Control which was supposed to rule the country in the exclusive interests of the foreign bondholders. In this wide-spread hostility to the

Khedivial power and to foreign influence, we must distinguish several elements. First, there was a considerable amount of imported *doctrinaire* liberalism among the younger men who had received a foreign education. They had no difficulty in perceiving that government in Egypt was very far from coming up to the standard which they had formed by reading foreign books on political philosophy and constitutional law. The Khediviate was in their eyes a political monstrosity, which had not even the advantages of a well-regulated despotism; and they believed that the only means of materially diminishing the prevalent abuses and of saving the country from ruin was to limit the arbitrary, autocratic power by liberal representative institutions, and to separate carefully the legislative, the executive, and the judicial functions of the Government. Secondly, there was a strong feeling of hostility to the Anglo-French Control, which was naturally extended to the Khedive, Tewfik, as its avowed ally. This feeling proceeded from various motives. By the doctrinaires the Control was condemned because it had confined its attention to the method of collecting taxes and neglected financial, administrative, and political reforms of a more radical kind; by the great land-owners it was hated because the Law of Liquidation, in cancelling the forced loan commonly known as the Moukabbalah, had sacrificed their just claims for compensation to the exigences of the foreign creditors; by the native officials and the class which had fattened on Ismail's prodigality

it was cordially detested because it curtailed the opportunities of peculation, reserved many lucrative posts for foreigners, and prevented the reckless squandering of the public money; and in the unofficial public, actuated more by vague sentiment than by well-defined reasons, it was looked upon with aversion as the representative and the instrument of foreign financial avidity. Lastly, the Control was unpopular among all men animated with Egyptian or Mussulman patriotism because it was regarded by them as a dangerous political instrument in the hands of two aggressive Christian Powers. The British occupation of Cyprus and the establishment of a French protectorate in Tunis had awakened in many minds the belief that, sooner or later, one or both of these Powers would attempt to take complete possession of Egypt.

All this inflammable material was rapidly becoming ignited when the Chamber of Notables met on 26th December 1881. Any one well acquainted with the situation might have foreseen that the party of action, which aimed at obtaining popular support, could not confine themselves to limiting the Khedivial power by constitutional restrictions, but must likewise seek to eliminate foreign interference. This latter part of the programme must necessarily create complications with foreign Powers, but there was reason to believe that international jealousies would prevent armed intervention. Such was the logical conclusion to be drawn from the attitude and action of the various Cabinets. When the Sultan, in reply

to a request made by the Khedive in the first moments of alarm after the second military demonstration, was preparing to send Turkish troops to Alexandria, the English and French Governments intervened to prevent him, and when he thereupon suddenly despatched Ali Nizami Pasha and Ali Fuad Bey to Cairo as Imperial Commissioners, the English and French Cabinets immediately sent two ships of war to Egyptian waters and informed the Khedive that he might count on their support against any undue interference of the Turkish envoys. A little later, the two Powers assumed a very threatening attitude by declaring through their respective agents that they were jointly resolved to guard against all internal and external causes of complication which might menace the existing order of things, and that any dangers to which the Khedive's Government might be exposed would find them united for its defence; but these brave words failed to produce the effect anticipated, and the failure is easily explained. The two Cabinets had launched the threat before they were firmly resolved to follow it up immediately, in case of necessity, by the use of force; and when they found, as might have been foreseen, that it produced violent indignation in the military faction, they sought to attenuate its significance in order to leave a door open for possible compromises. The military leaders, with genuine Oriental acumen, interpreted the facts as a proof of weakness, and they were confirmed in this view by certain non-official advisers, who assured them that the joint declaration was mere

brutum fulmen; that the two Cabinets, never really united, were too jealous of each other to act in concert; that the movement enjoyed popular sympathy in England and might count eventually on French official support[1]; and that if the two Cabinets should determine on joint action, they would be prevented from interfering by the Eastern Powers. This last assertion seemed to be confirmed by the fact that Germany, Austria, Russia, and Italy protested against any foreign interference in Egypt without their consent, and the Sultan could accordingly declare with conviction that he had succeeded in forming a European defensive coalition against the aggressive designs of France and England.

Among those who encouraged the leaders to disregard the danger of foreign intervention were two Englishmen, who happened to be at that time in Cairo: Sir William Gregory and Mr. Wilfred S. Blunt. The former seems to have been actuated merely by a very natural sympathy with what he considered a genuine popular effort to obtain political liberty and good government. The latter was influenced by considerations of a more abstruse kind. From a

[1] It would seem that this assurance was not entirely destitute of foundation, for M. de Blignières, the French Controller-General, in his public letter to M. Clémenceau, says: "Pendant toute la durée du ministère de Chérif Pacha, le chef du vrai parti national, nous (*i.e.* the Controllers) n'avons jamais cessé d'être en parfaite communauté d'idées. . . . . Lorsqu'il a du quitter le pouvoir, *lorsque j'ai compris que les chefs du parti militaire, qui l'avaient renversé, pouvaient compter sur la bienveillance de notre gouvernement*, ce jour-là, ne me faisant aucune illusion sur les conséquences nécessaires de cette politique nouvelle, j'ai résigné mes fonctions."

careful study of the past history and present condition of Islam, Mr. Blunt had come to the conclusion that a great liberal Mussulman revival was at hand, and that the centre of the movement would be Egypt. The appearance in Cairo of a National Party, containing men who aspired, according to their own statements, to prove that the essential principles and spirit of Islam were not inconsistent with material and political progress, seemed to confirm his anticipations; and believing in the capacity of his friends to realise their aspirations he urged them to continue resolutely in the path they had chosen.

Feeling thus tolerably secure against the danger of foreign intervention, Arabi and his friends, who could now style themselves the leaders of the National Party, determined to rule the country under the mask of constitutionalism, and to restrict foreign supervision to the precautions formally established by international agreement for the protection of the bondholders' interests. They had induced Sherif to accept office by giving him a solemn promise that they would in future refrain from meddling in politics and leave the decision of the political questions to the Chamber of Notables, but in reality the Notables were mere puppets of which they pulled the strings, and through which they made their demands. The most important demands which they made were that the Ministers should be completely under the control of, and responsible to, the Chamber; and that the influence of the Anglo-French Controllers should in future be confined to the

revenues specially assigned as mortgages for the public debt. This was tantamount to throwing down the gauntlet to England and France, and Sir Edward Malet, the English Consul-General, prepared to pick it up. He had been from the beginning of the crisis the confidential adviser of the Khedive, and had generally counselled reasonable concession and compromise, but he now became convinced, in common with Sir Auckland Colvin, the English Controller, that the real aim of the Nationalists was to expel all foreign influence; that further concessions or compromises were useless; that an open conflict was inevitable; and that it would be well to curtail the period of chaotic uncertainty by accelerating rather than retarding the crisis. Sherif Pasha seems to have come to the same conclusion, for he resigned in disgust. His place was taken by Mahmoud Sami who now threw off the mask and joined openly the Nationalists, while the post of War Minister was given to Arabi, and the other seats in the Cabinet were distributed among sympathisers of lesser note. Thus, for the first time, was formed a homogeneous Ministry of the revolutionary party.

The Nationalist leaders were now completely masters of the situation, but the little group of Circassian officers who had been the original antagonists of the fellah colonels were still in the country and still unpunished. They were not very formidable either numerically or in any other respect, but it was thought advisable to get rid of them at once and for ever; so they were arrested and charged with

having conspired against the life of Arabi, who had now begun to assume the airs of a dictator. Tried summarily by court-martial, and subjected, it is said, to torture, they were condemned by their enemies to dismissal from the service and banishment to the White Nile, "from which exiles rarely return." Against this arbitrary procedure the representatives of England and France considered it their duty to remonstrate, as they had previously remonstrated against similar procedure being used with regard to Arabi and his accomplices after the first military revolt. What had hitherto been a contest between the Khedive and his Ministers thus became an open contest between the Cabinet and the two foreign representatives, and the incident led directly to the Anglo-French naval demonstration.

The naval demonstration was a compromise between the English Government, which wished to solve the difficulty by Turkish armed intervention, and the French Government, which deprecated the proposed landing of Turkish troops in Egypt as likely to revive the smouldering insurrection in Tunis. For a moment it seemed to have the desired result, for it produced a transitory panic, during which the leading Nationalists sought a reconciliation with the Khedive and tried to exculpate themselves; but the effect was of very short duration. Soon it was discovered that there were not twenty ships, as at first reported; that there were no troops on board; and that the Sultan, so far from joining in the menace, had formally protested against it. The National Party thus became stronger

than before, and more than ever disposed to defy Europe, so that when the English and French Consuls demanded in a peremptory, threatening tone that the Cabinet should resign and the three colonels be removed from Cairo, the demand was refused. The Ministers did, indeed, resign almost immediately afterwards, but they did so as a protest against the Khedive's having "unconstitutionally" accepted the Anglo-French ultimatum without their consent, and a few days later his Highness was compelled by systematic intimidation to reinstate Arabi—nominally as Minister of War, but in reality as dictator.

In the above-mentioned ultimatum the two Western Powers had declared that they would insist on their demand being complied with, and the demand had been refused, or at least, evaded. An incident of the kind generally leads to the immediate use of armed force, but neither of the two Governments was prepared at the moment to take such decisive measures. In France M. Gambetta, who had urged energetic military action, was no longer at the head of affairs, and his successor, M. de Freycinet, was afraid to embark in a new "adventure" like that of Tunis, whilst England was not yet ready, either in a military or a diplomatic sense, to undertake a campaign in Egypt. It was agreed, therefore, between the two Cabinets, that the Sultan should be requested to send a Special Commission to Cairo in order to restrain, if possible, the revolutionary party, and overtures were made to all the Great Powers for convoking a European Conference to consider the Egyptian Question.

The Turkish Imperial Commission proved as fruitless as the Anglo-French naval demonstration. Indeed the one served as a kind of counterpoise to the other. The Sultan's aim naturally was not to reinforce but to counteract Anglo-French influence in Egypt, and to supplant it eventually by his own authority. By accepting his intervention England and France confessed themselves worsted and opened the door for a host of intrigues. His Majesty was not slow to take advantage of the opportunity, and tried to play a complicated double game. Dervish Pasha, the First Commissioner, was instructed to support the Khedive, and, if possible, intimidate the leaders of the military party, whilst Ahmet Essad, the Second Commissioner, was instructed to conciliate Arabi and his friends, and assure them that they had in the Sultan a sure friend and ally. The Third Commissioner's duty was to act as a spy on his two colleagues, and he in his turn was closely watched by a secretary, who sent secret reports direct to Constantinople. Altogether the commission was a very characteristic illustration of Abdul Hamid's peculiar state-craft; but in spite of — or rather, perhaps, in consequence of—the wonderful Oriental ingenuity displayed in its organisation, it completely failed in its object. Few state-documents are more amusing than the confidential reports of the various members, who were all playing at cross-purposes, and all complaining of each other. The only people who, so far as I am aware, derived any advantage from the Commission, were one of the Chief Commissioners

who carried off as *bakshish* something like 40,000*l.*, and, notwithstanding a solemn promise to share it equitably with his accomplices, selfishly kept it all to himself; and two of the subordinates who sold to the Khedive, for 200*l.* and 400*l.* respectively, the keys to the telegraph ciphers by which the Sultan communicated with the Chief Commissioners.

The conduct of the Commission confirmed the well-founded belief that the Sultan would never concur in any armed intervention by the two Western Powers, but there was now grave reason to fear that he might not be able to prevent it, or that in order to prevent it he might send his own troops. These two eventualities were equally disagreeable to the leaders of the National Party, and it was deemed necessary to take precautions against both. The military preparations were actively pushed forward, and, in order to frighten, if possible, the two Western Cabinets, and in any case to show a bold front, efforts were made to gain the support of the ignorant masses who had hitherto remained outside of the movement. The means chosen for this purpose were well calculated to produce the desired effect. All over the Delta, and to a lesser extent in Middle Egypt, the fellaheen were deeply indebted to Greek and Levantine usurers, and consequently it was an easy matter to stir up in the villages a bitter hatred against foreigners generally. From numerous emissaries traversing the country in all directions the peasants learned, to their surprise and delight, that Arabi had cancelled their debts, and that he would permanently

protect them against their oppressors. At the same time an appeal was made by these same emissaries to the religious feelings of the population. The cry of "Islam in danger" was raised, and all good Mussulmans were called upon to aid the Champion of the Faith in his efforts to resist the threatened invasion of greedy, cruel unbelievers who wished to enthral the country. In this way the cupidity and latent fanaticism of the peasantry were excited, and the National Party greatly increased the number of its adherents.

The fanatical excitement thus produced among the masses found its natural expression in the Alexandria massacre of the 11th of June. From that moment armed intervention became inevitable, but some European statesmen still clung to the hope that war might be averted by diplomacy, and with this laudable object a conference of ambassadors was convoked in Constantinople. It did not succeed in preventing hostilities, but it served the useful purpose of bringing out into bold relief the attitude and policy of all the Great Powers with regard to the Egyptian question, and its meagre records deserve to be carefully studied, for they contain some valuable hints for our future action. In the present brief summary of events I cannot do more than indicate some of its main features.

At the moment when the Conference was convoked the British Government did not foresee the possibility of our being allowed to act independently, and accordingly it wisely prepared to avoid the inevitable

complications of an Anglo-French expedition by inviting the Sultan to restore order in Egypt by means of Turkish troops. A proposal to this effect, made by Lord Dufferin at one of the early sittings, was unanimously accepted in principle as the least objectionable solution, but in formulating the precise terms of the invitation some divergences of opinion became apparent. The Austrian Ambassador, who greatly preferred Turkish to Anglo-French intervention, and who had at that moment various reasons, independent of the Egyptian question, for wishing to conciliate the Turkish Government,[1] sought to spare as far as possible the Sultan's susceptibilities. His French colleague, on the contrary, endeavoured to insert in the invitation such conditions and restrictions as would either insure its rejection or at least make the Sultan appear to act not in his capacity of Suzerain but simply as the mandatory of Europe. This attitude of M. de Noailles was quite in harmony with the traditional policy of his Government, which has long aimed at excluding the Sultan's influence from Northern Africa in order to secure a free field for the extension of French influence and "colonisation"; and there were special reasons for upholding this policy at that time, for the landing of Turkish troops in Egypt would not merely be a serious blow to French prestige in that part of the world, but might revive on French territory the serious insurrection

[1] Among these reasons may be mentioned his desire to conclude the long-deferred convention for the junction of the Austrian and Turkish railways.

which had been produced among the disaffected Arab tribes by the Tunisian incident. As it was necessary, however, to preserve at least the appearance of the *entente cordiale* with England and to conciliate the other Powers, M. de Noailles had to make some concessions, and at last, by the efforts of Count Corti, the Italian Ambassador, who acted at once as president and as "honest broker," a compromise was effected. Certain restrictions were indicated, but great pains were taken to gild the pill.

His Majesty, on receiving the invitation, found himself in a very difficult position. As temporal ruler of the conglomerate Ottoman Empire he had every reason to despatch troops without delay, because if he left the insurrectionary movement unchecked it might soon spread from the banks of the Nile to the Hedjaz, Syria, Mesopotamia—in a word, to every province where the population, being Arab, frets under the Turkish yoke; whereas by the prompt military occupation of Egypt he would instantly quell the insurrection and might hope to transform his nominal sovereignty over that province into something like genuine administrative authority. Abdul Hamid, however, is not merely temporal ruler of the Ottoman Empire; he has received from his ancestors the title of Caliph, and he aspires to make that empty title a living reality. His shadowy prestige in the Mussulman world is as dear to him as his temporal power within his own dominions, and he systematically endeavours to increase and consolidate both. Pursuing this double policy he

found himself completely paralysed by the turn which Egyptian affairs had taken. Arabi, the mutinous colonel, might have been arrested and shot without awakening any sympathy or indignation except among his immediate friends and accomplices; and Arabi as leader of a national movement could have influence only in Egypt or, at most, among populations of Arab nationality; but Arabi as champion of Islam was venerated by all true believers, to whatever race or nationality they might belong. How could a Caliph, at the bidding of ghiaours, attack this heroic defender of his country against the encroachments of aggressive Christendom? If his Majesty committed such an act of sacrilege he might be branded as a Kiaffir by the whole body of the Ulemah from Marocco to Bokhara, and their fetwas of excommunication might be indorsed by the highest living authority, the Grand Sherif of Mecca, who was suspected of being secretly in league with the leaders of the National Party. So at least thought several pious influential authorities in Yildiz Kiosk, and the Sultan naturally shrank from exposing himself to such a danger. Before he could make up his mind on the subject the whole situation was changed by the conflict between the *de facto* Egyptian Government and the British admiral, which resulted in the bombardment and destruction of Alexandria.

As a direct consequence of this untoward incident Lord Dufferin informed his colleagues in the Conference that his Government would now be obliged to take a more active part than it had intended in the work of

restoring order in Egypt; and Lord Granville, in accordance with the system of joint action which had hitherto been adopted, invited the French Government to co-operate. Much to the surprise of uninitiated onlookers, France hesitated. A few months before, the invitation would have been eagerly accepted, but since that time a great change had taken place in the French political world. The dislike to all kinds of political adventures, which had been produced by the disclosures regarding the Tunisian expedition, was now strengthened by a mysterious, panic-like apprehension that Bismarck was pushing France into new foreign complications in order to attack her on her eastern frontier; and there was no longer at the head of affairs a strong man determined to uphold French influence in Northern Africa, and capable of imposing his will on the Chamber. According to what was considered the best sources of information, an Egyptian expedition ought not to be undertaken with less than 60,000 men, and M. de Freycinet knew very well that he would not be allowed to embark on such a serious enterprise. He confined himself therefore to asking from the Chamber a small grant, sufficient to make a semblance of co-operating with England in the defence of the Suez Canal, and he went so far as to promise that no troops should be disembarked; but even that modest demand encountered factious party opposition, and was finally rejected by a majority of the deputies.

France having thus voluntarily withdrawn from the position she had held in Egypt, the invitation was passed on to Italy; and here again a surprise

awaited the uninitiated spectators. They naturally assumed that a Power which had been for some years the ambitious, impatient rival of France in Northern Africa, and which was still smarting under the humiliation of her expulsion from Tunis, would gladly have availed herself of an opportunity of supplanting France in Egypt, from which she had been excluded when the Anglo-French Control was established. The assumption was plausible, but it was not justified by events. New influences had in the meantime come into action. The national movement in Egypt had awakened in Italy a considerable amount of what might be called "Garibaldian feeling"; and this popular sympathy with an oppressed nationality had been much intensified by the fact that Italy's great rival in Northern Africa was one of the "oppressors." When France withdrew from her position of oppressor Italy could not consistently take her place, and a decision had to be taken before public opinion had time to change. So far, therefore, as public opinion was concerned, the Italian Government had reason to decline rather than accept the invitation; and it had at the same time reasons of another kind for refraining from active intervention in Egyptian affairs. It was very anxious at that moment to re-establish friendly relations with France, and to carry out successfully a great financial operation for replacing the depreciated paper money by a metallic currency. Both of these objects would have been seriously imperilled by military preparations. Besides this, the Cabinet of Rome had already

made overtures for joining the Austro-German alliance, and did not wish to take any decided step in foreign affairs without the express assent of Prince Bismarck. Now Prince Bismarck was then, as before and afterwards, maintaining with regard to the Egyptian question an attitute of sphinx-like reserve, and when consulted as to what Italy should do, he is said to have replied in plain language that she should do what she considered most consistent with her own interests. Taking all these facts into consideration M. Mancini and his colleagues thought it well to refrain from joining England in her active intervention, and sought to keep up a semblance of active participation in the question by putting forward an utterly unpractical project for establishing an extraordinary kind of international maritime police in the Suez Canal. This project received the honour of being talked about once or twice in the Conference, and then died a natural death.

The invitation to co-operate, having been thus declined by France and Italy, became general, but none of the Powers showed any inclination to accept it. England was thus compelled to act without European allies; but she was not yet entirely untrammelled, for the Sultan had in the meantime accepted the collective invitation of the Powers, and it was necessary to arrange the conditions of joint action by a military convention with the Porte. It might be plausibly maintained that the convention ought to be made with the concurrence, or at least the assent, of the Conference, and this gave to any

Power which might desire it a convenient opportunity for attempting to subject to European control the future action of the British Government. The opportunity was immediately seized by the Russian Ambassador.

The policy of the Russian Government was influenced partly by Russian public opinion, and partly by the traditional policy of the St. Petersburg Foreign Office. Among the Russian educated classes there was still a vivid recollection of the Congress of Berlin, in which Russia had to bow to the decision of Europe and forego many of the advantages obtained by her heroic army; and there was a not unnatural desire that England, who had created the Berlin Congress and had obstinately insisted on the whole treaty of San Stefano being submitted to it, should now be placed likewise under European supervision. Apart from this desire for reprisals, it seemed to far-seeing politicians—and the Russian, be it remarked, though habitually improvident in his private affairs, generally looks in political questions so very far ahead that the prosaic interests of his contemporaries hardly come within his field of vision—it seemed, I say, to far-seeing Russian politicians very undesirable that the Suez Canal should fall into the hands of any strong Power, for the canal forms part of the direct waterway between the Black Sea and the eastern coast of Siberia, and the day may come when Russia will have the same reasons for keeping clear her communications with these distant provinces as England now has for protecting her communications with India.

Even at a less remote date Russia may possibly be at war with England, and in such an eventuality it would not be desirable that England's communications with India should be in any way unnecessarily facilitated. So much for public opinion; now for the views of the official politicians. In the Russian Foreign Office it has been long, if not an axiom, at least a pretty generally received principle, that the best way for Russia to accomplish her manifest destiny in the East is to come to an amicable arrangement with England. The famous project for the partition of Turkey which the Emperor Nicholas inopportunely communicated to Sir Hamilton Seymour, is still in existence, and ready to be again put forward if a favourable moment should present itself. According to the scheme of compensation therein suggested, Russia should take the Bosphorus and Dardanelles, and England should take Egypt. But if England, without making any formal, moral or immoral, engagement with her rival, should quietly take possession of Egypt at a moment when Russia is not prepared to seize the *quid pro quo*, the whole scheme inevitably breaks down, the reserve fund for buying off English opposition is lost, and the realisation of the manifest destiny is indefinitely postponed.[1]

[1] I am aware that the phrase "manifest destiny" is sometimes used ironically, but I employ it here in all seriousness, because, as it seems to me, the interest which Russia has in obtaining the command of the Straits is so much greater and more permanent than the interest which any other Power or coalition of Powers has in preventing her, that she will in all probability ultimately attain her object.

Both the vague popular opinions and the well-considered views of the responsible statesmen had an influence on M. de Nelidoff, the Russian representative in the Conference. As a diplomatist of the modern type and trained in the Ignatieff school, he naturally inclined to the idea that diplomacy should draw inspiration from national sentiment, at least when that sentiment is not in conflict with the views of an autocratic Government. Now here he had before him a case in point. National sentiment and official views concurred in the idea that the action of the British Government should be kept under European control, and the best means of attaining this end seemed to be to insist that the proposed Anglo-Turkish military convention should be prepared by, or at least submitted to, the Conference. Having communicated this view to several of his colleagues without receiving much cordial support, he proceeded to the British Embassy and suggested it to the British Ambassador. Lord Dufferin thought that England could not reasonably be expected to submit to the approval of foreign Governments the precautions which she considered necessary for the safety of her army, and finally declared that if any proposal in that sense were made in the Conference he would be reluctantly compelled to withdraw. As the breaking up of the Conference would have destroyed the best instrument for controlling English action, this reply proved the death-blow to M. de Nelidoff's suggestion, and the Turks found themselves, in the negotiations for the

military convention, face to face with the British Ambassador.

In these negotiations the British Government had to take very careful and very stringent precautions against disloyalty and bad faith. It was in possession of tangible proofs that the Sultan, whilst affecting to frown on the insurrectionary movement, had been in constant secret communication with the insurgent leaders, and had encouraged them in their designs; and it was well aware that this equivocal attitude of the Turkish Government, aided by the popular sympathy which is naturally engendered by community of religion, had produced among the Mussulman Turks a widespread sympathy with Arabi and his partisans. There was reason, therefore, to fear that the Turkish contingent might be employed to assist rather than repress the national movement, or that the individual soldiers might fraternise with, and refuse to fight against, their co-religionists. To prevent such contingencies it was considered absolutely necessary that the movements of the Turkish troops should be practically under the control of the British commander-in-chief, and that before a Turkish soldier had landed in Egypt the Sultan should issue a proclamation branding Arabi and his accomplices as rebels.

If the Sultan found it difficult to accept the invitation to restore order in Egypt by means of his own troops, he found his position infinitely more uncomfortable when he had to choose between forced inaction and co-operation in a subordinate capacity with a foreign Christian Power. Had he been allowed

to act independently he might perhaps have discovered ways and means of avoiding an open conflict. The simple appearance of a strong Turkish contingent might possibly, it was thought, overawe the insurgents; or a large section of the Egyptians might be induced by secret emissaries and pious exhortations to rally round the famous green standard of the Prophet; or the leaders might be cajoled, intimidated, or kidnapped—in short, a hundred contingencies and expedients naturally occurred to the minds of cunning, unscrupulous, Oriental intriguers such as are to be found plentifully in Yildis Kiosk. And even if all pacific expedients should fail, a little wholesome severity might be used without much danger of serious consequences. After all, a long-suffering Caliph may, without seriously exposing himself to the charge of infidelity, chastise even good Mussulmans when they refuse to obey him; and any popular odium which a chastisement notoriously demanded by ghiaours might create, would be in some measure compensated for by the increase of military prestige. But to suppress the insurrection in co-operation with a Christian Power and under the humiliating conditions imposed by the British Government—that was a very different matter! All hopes of an amicable compromise would be cut short by the proclamation declaring Arabi a rebel, and all the possible contingencies and ingenious expedients by which a pacific solution might be attained would be excluded by the presence of the English troops. The Caliph would appear, without any disguise, as

the subordinate ally of ghiaours, and would incur all the odium of repression without any of the prestige of victory. Taking all this into account we need not feel any surprise that the Sultan and his advisers were very indignant, and that the Turkish plenipotentiaries made frantic efforts to cut a loop-hole in the convention. Their efforts however were unavailing, for they had before them an antagonist as acute and as agile as themselves, who deciphered their secret intentions and successfully parried their most dexterous thrusts. There is a false idea abroad that Lord Dufferin's great services to his Government consisted simply in prolonging the negotiations. Such a service would not have entitled him to much credit, for any second-rate diplomatist can prolong negotiations indefinitely when his opponent is not in a position to crush him by an ultimatum. What Lord Dufferin really did, and what justly advanced him to the very first rank of living diplomatists, was this: by a happy combination of sound judgment, resolute action, and consummate tact, he contrived to secure for his Government, so far as the Conference was concerned, complete liberty of action without wounding the susceptibilities of any foreign Power; and by watchfulness, acuteness, and dexterity he successfully prevented the Turks from wriggling out of the conditions and restrictions which his Government thought necessary to impose upon them. Though often obliged to differ from his European colleagues he never created amongst them any personal hostility, and though working in an Oriental

atmosphere and checkmating Oriental antagonists he never exposed himself to the charge of trickery or unfairness.

The natural reluctance of the Sultan to compromise himself in the eyes of the Mussulman world and the obstinacy of the British Ambassador in preventing any dangerous loop-hole being made in the military convention protracted the negotiations to such an extent that before the convention could be signed the battle of Tel-el-Kebir had been fought and the British troops had entered Cairo without meeting any further resistance. The British Government then informed the Porte that a Turkish contingent was no longer required, and the negotiations were accordingly broken off.

By the victory of Tel-el-Kebir and the rapid advance on Cairo, the insurrection was instantaneously extinguished, and all traces of the national movement and of the religious excitement immediately disappeared. The leaders voluntarily surrendered to the British authorities; the soldiers threw away their arms and accoutrements, ran home as fast as their legs could carry them, put on their long blue shirts and felt skull-caps, resumed their ordinary occupations, and were ready to swear that for months past they had never quitted their native villages; the professors of the Azhar, who had been stirring up the popular fanaticism, recommenced their lectures on the general principles of Arab grammar and the abstruse puerilities of Mussulman theology; the Governors of provinces who had raised levies and

collected "patriotic contributions" for the national cause showed equal zeal in executing the orders of the re-established Khedivial Government; and the dignitaries who had taken part in the great Assembly of Notables which decreed the deposition of the Khedive now hastened to welcome him back to Cairo with every appearance of loyalty and devotion. During the month of November, I often strolled through the native quarters of Cairo and visited many of the mosques without ever observing the slightest manifestation of hostility or fanaticism. In Tantah, too, which has the reputation of being the most fanatical town of Egypt, and in which a general massacre of the Christians took place the day after the burning of Alexandria,[1] I strolled through the streets and bazaars without being in the least molested, and I had a long friendly conversation with the chief of the famous mosque which contains the tomb of the venerated Seid-el-Bedawee. Though there were no British troops anywhere except in the immediate vicinity of Cairo and Alexandria I travelled without escort through some of the least frequented parts both of the Delta and of Upper Egypt, and I found everywhere among all classes the greatest friendliness and hospitality. Throughout the length

[1] According to testimony which I received from eye-witnesses on the spot this massacre was stopped by the energetic and courageous intervention of a rich Mussulman proprietor of fellah extraction, called Ahmet Bey Menshawi. His name deserves to be recorded, for, though a native Mussulman without any tinge of European education, he saved the lives of many Christians, natives and foreigners, on the day in question, and protected, lodged, and fed a considerable number of them on his estate until the end of the war.

and breadth of the country, during a sojourn of more than six months, the only manifestation of hostility to the foreigner which came under my observation was the little incident in a Bedouin encampment, which I have described in the preceding chapter.

Having thus examined briefly in chronological order the main incidents of the insurrection, let us now withdraw to a little distance and look at the episode as a whole. In this way we shall be better able to understand its real character, the successive phases of its development, how far it deserves to be called a national movement, and what are the best means to prevent its recurrence.

The successive phases of the insurrection may be conveniently designated thus: first, military insubordination; secondly, political agitation; thirdly, national defence; and fourthly, Mussulman resistance to aggressive Christendom. In accordance with those four phases Arabi appears successively in four distinct characters; as a mutinous colonel, resisting Turco-Circassian favouritism; as an eloquent tribune, struggling for constitutional liberty; as a patriot defending his country; and lastly, as a Mussulman Paladin fighting against the ghiaour.

By close inspection we can discover a thread of logical sequence running through these successive phases. Military insubordination, though momentarily successful, exposed the leaders to personal danger, and in order to guarantee themselves permanently against possible reprisals by the rival faction, they had to get the Government under their own control.

The means they adopted were political agitation and the creation of representative institutions in which they were certain to have a commanding voice. In order, however, to obtain the cordial support of the civil administration and of the landed proprietors, who constituted an overwhelming majority in the Chamber of Notables, it was necessary to put forward a programme for curtailing the powers, and in great measure destroying the influence, of the Anglo-French Control. The programme was vetoed by the two Controllers, and their veto was supported by their respective Governments; but Arabi and his friends, believing that England and France would not venture, or would not be allowed by the other Powers, to support their demands by force of arms, refused to modify the programme, and the political agitation for constitutional liberties rapidly developed into a national resistance to foreign domination. In a Mohammedan country threatened by a Christian Power any patriotic sentiment which may exist in the people has always a tendency to transform itself into religious fanaticism, and in Egypt at the time in question the transformation was systematically encouraged by the nationalist leaders for the purpose of averting Turkish armed intervention. A Sultan who had zealously disseminated the principles of Panislamism and who aspired to play the part of œcumenical Caliph, would hardly venture, it was thought, to run the risk of scandalising the whole Mussulman world by helping unbelievers to suppress a movement which had for its avowed object the defence of Islam.

We are now in a position to decide the much-debated question whether the insurrection deserves to be called a national movement. If by this somewhat vague term we mean simply a movement which commands the sympathies of a large majority of the population, then the episode which I have been describing deserves to be so designated. Whilst frankly admitting that success might have brought disenchantment, and that the movement, if it had not been suppressed by foreign intervention, might have ended in an oppressive military dictatorship which would have produced general discontent, we may confidently assert that nearly every class of native Egyptians sympathised, wisely or foolishly, with the professed aims of Arabi and his adherents. The army naturally sympathised with a man who procured for it increase of pay and increased chances of promotion; the civil officials of every degree, from the Cabinet Ministers and heads of departments in the capital down to the Sheikhs-el-beled and tax-collectors in the villages, naturally sympathised with efforts to destroy an irksome foreign control, which diminished the opportunities of peculation and reserved for foreigners some of the most lucrative official posts; the few honest men who had liberal political aspirations naturally sympathised with a programme for constitutional reform; the Azhar university naturally sympathised with an attempt to exclude the influence of Christian Governments; the deeply-indebted fellaheen naturally sympathised with a party which promised to cancel their debts and deliver them

from the power of the usurers; and every one who had a spark of Egyptian patriotism or Mussulman fanaticism naturally sympathised with the effort to resist the invasion of a foreign Christian Power. We must not, however, apply to Eastern affairs our own Western standards, or seek in the Egyptian insurrection the characteristics which we would expect to find in a national movement among any highly civilised European nationality. The number of honest, courageous, personally disinterested men, ready to sacrifice their lives for an idea or for party interests, was, to say the least, extremely small; and the number of habitual trimmers who waited to see how the cat would jump and sided with the party which seemed most powerful, was enormously large. At the most critical point of the constitutional struggle the notables oscillated between Arabi and the Khedive. On the days when it seemed probable that England and France would energetically intervene, the Khedive's palace was thronged with visitors, and Arabi's house was deserted; and on the alternate days when the telegraphic intelligence dispelled the fears of foreign intervention, Arabi's house was crowded, and the Khedive was visited only by foreigners. Once clearly master of the situation, Arabi received from all quarters unreserved expressions of sympathy and support. If he did not, as is sometimes alleged in his defence, employ terrorism to support his authority, it was simply because he did not require to do so; but he showed by the summary way in which he got rid of the Circassian

officers that he had no scruples about employing this means when he considered it necessary. When these old antagonists had been removed there was no longer any danger of active opposition, and there was, for the reasons above stated, little or no secret hostility, except among the Copts, who were in danger of being massacred by the Mussulmans. It must not, however, be supposed that the general sympathy which he awakened was accompanied by any strong resolve to support him to the death, or by any great readiness to make material sacrifices for the cause which he represented. He was enabled to raise a large force because he had the conscription machinery at his disposal, and the soldiers once enrolled obeyed him as they would have obeyed any other general in command; but I never heard of any volunteers presenting themselves until the struggle was regarded as a religious war, and even then the number of such enthusiasts (who came exclusively from Upper Egypt) was extremely small. Some assistance, it is true, was obtained in the form of so-called "patriotic gifts," but it would have been more accurate to have designated this source of revenue by the term "forced contributions." The great majority of the fellaheen and landed proprietors preferred to give expression to their patriotism in petitions and addresses, and the local authorities had often great difficulty in making them understand that grain and horses would likewise be gratefully received. I know at least of one instance where a Sub-governor, in order to get the required

amount of grain, had to convoke the Sheikhs-el-beled of his district and encourage their zeal for constitutional liberty by a liberal application of the bastinado. In justice to this worthy official I ought perhaps to add that when the Khedive's power was re-established he displayed his zeal for his Highness and his own strict impartiality by convoking the same village-elders a second time, and causing them to be again bastinadoed—this time because they had contributed by their "patriotic gifts" to the success of the insurrection. Whether the victims preferred the bastinado in the name of Arabi to the bastinado in the name of Tewfik, deponent knoweth not; but no doubt if there was amongst them some man of philosophical temperament, he must have indulged in some such reflection as this: that, amidst all the political vicissitudes and social changes which Egypt has experienced during many thousands of years, there has been always at least one constant, unchanging factor—the eternal Kurbash!

The fact that the humble fellah colonel successfully defied not only the Khedive, but also the Porte, the two controlling Powers, and the whole of Europe, may be easily explained by the homely adage that "too many cooks spoil the broth." The illustrious guardians of Egyptian public tranquillity were so numerous that no one of them was individually responsible, and no one of them could obtain free elbow-room, whilst they were all so jealous of each other, or so indifferent, that united action was impossible.

CHAPTER III.

ORIENTAL DESPOTISM AND EUROPEAN INTERFERENCE.

Fundamental causes of the insurrection—Strong Khedivial power replaced by weak ministerial autocracy, tempered by foreign control—The Anglo-French Control and its reforms—Defects of the institution—Complaints of the National Party—Necessity of examining the Egyptian administration as a whole.

In the preceding chapter I have indicated in a general way the causes and real character of the insurrection, and we are now in a position to declare that Arabi was not, as the British Government so long believed, or affected to believe, a military adventurer of the common Oriental type who succeeded accidentally in creating a military despotism; but if we wish to make a thorough diagnosis of the disorder from which Egypt has suffered and is still suffering, and if we wish to consider the best means of preventing its recurrence, we must examine more carefully the unhealthy condition in which the revolutionary germs were engendered. The inability of the Khedive to cope with the revolution in its early stages is generally attributed to his personal defects, but this explanation is, to say the least, incomplete. It is quite true that Tewfik does not possess the

sagacity and unscrupulous energy of his predecessors, but it is equally true that he neither inherited the prestige, nor possessed the freedom of action, which they enjoyed.

The Khediviate under its founder, Mehemet Ali, and his two immediate successors, Ibrahim and Abbas, was a vigorous, intelligent, personal despotism of the Oriental kind, untempered by Western notions of legality. If a man disobeyed orders or was suspected of any tendencies to insubordination, he was summarily and severely punished without going through the intricacies of European judicial procedure. In the time of Said (1854-63), the system of government received a tinge of humanitarianism from the personal character of the ruler, but even "the merry, witty Frenchman," as Said was sometimes termed, was as impatient of opposition, and as ruthless in suppressing insubordination, as any of his predecessors. When some Bedouin tribes revolted and fought against his troops, they were literally exterminated by his orders, and when he heard one day that some of the professors of the Azhar were sowing sedition among the students by insinuating that he was not a good Mussulman, he drove immediately in an open carriage to the sacred building and caused the respected zealots to be publicly bastinadoed in his presence by one of his Turkish *kahwasses*. At the time of his death the arbitrary power and traditional prestige of the Khediviate was still unimpaired. During the reign of his successor Ismail the change began. By

prodigality and imprudence, Ismail drifted into financial embarrassments, and the Khedivial independence and prestige were rapidly undermined by foreign financial intervention, and finally destroyed by foreign political control. Discontented, ambitious, enterprising men, whose fathers had trembled at the very names of Mehemet Ali, Ibrahim, and Abbas, saw, with surprise and delight, that a Khedive could be seriously embarrassed and resisted with impunity by ordinary judicial functionaries, and that, when at last driven to bay, he turned upon his opponents, he could be quietly deposed and sent out of the country by two unarmed Consuls-General. The old vigorous paternal despotism was replaced by a strange, weak, mongrel kind of government, the scientific definition of which would overtax the ingenuity of the most learned German professor of Public Law. It was not a despotism in the ordinary sense of the term, because the nominal head of the State was an amiable, docile young prince, whose attention was directed chiefly to the progress of public instruction, and who signed mechanically the decrees which had been prepared in his name without any initiative or active co-operation on his part. It was not an oligarchy, because the influential men in the country who did not happen to be members of the Cabinet took no part in the direction of affairs, and even within the Cabinet the ordinary members—that is to say, all the members with the exception of the President and the foreign Controllers—acted simply as heads of departments. It was certainly not a democracy, for the Chamber

of Notables which had been created by Ismail was never convoked, and there was no other regular means of ascertaining popular opinion. Without making any pretensions to scientific accuracy, I should describe it roughly as Ministerial Absolutism, tempered by foreign financial control and weakened by foreign diplomatic supervision. So far as the native element in this complex organisation was concerned, the real ruler was Riaz Pasha, the President of the Cabinet, and he ruled, it must be confessed, in rather despotic fashion; but many of the forms of constitutional government were regularly observed. The Ministers were supposed to be collectively responsible for all measures adopted, and the measures acquired legal force by the formality of the Khedive's signature. When petitions or complaints were presented to his Highness, he passed them on to his Ministers as a constitutional ruler should do, and consistently refused to interfere with the decisions of his responsible advisers. By this arrangement the principles of constitutional government were respected, but at the same time the Khedive's influence and prestige in the eyes of his subjects were greatly impaired.

The people had long been accustomed to look up to "Effendina" as the source of all political and administrative power, and they had habitually regarded him, if not as the redresser of all grievances, at least as the unfettered and irresponsible dispenser of favours. Mehemet Ali had made petitioning an essential part of his system of government, and used it as a convenient instrument for detecting the

negligence and injustice of his untrustworthy officials. He examined personally every petition presented to him, and spent a great part of his time in redressing the grievances complained of. If a suppliant did not receive back his petition, torn up as an intimation that it did not deserve attention, he was sure to learn very soon that the all-powerful master had taken measures to protect him against injustice. After Mehemet Ali's death the petitions gradually received less and less attention, but for some time the people continued to believe that the Khedive examined them, and was free to grant them if such were his royal pleasure. When they discovered that Tewfik, as he himself occasionally took pains to explain to them, could not grant any petition without consulting Riaz, they naturally concluded that Riaz was more powerful than his nominal master. The upper classes, who were not in the habit of presenting petitions, had other reasons for coming to the same conclusion. They knew that all important matters were discussed and decided by Riaz and the Controllers, and that the Khedive's consent was little more than a mere formality.

European intervention had thus undermined and displaced the arbitrary power, but it had not destroyed it, for Riaz, whilst paying a certain outward respect to European public opinion, and striving conscientiously to prevent injustice and improve the administration, governed pretty much in the same despotic fashion as the old Khedives. If there was a considerable difference, it was a difference of degree

rather than of kind. By the efforts of the Liquidation Commission and of the Control, the pressing financial difficulties which Ismail had created had been removed and the financial administration had been in some measure reformed. The fellah, therefore, was no longer obliged to give his last piastre to the tax-gatherer, nor was he any longer in danger of being compelled to give up his land to gratify the insatiable land-hunger of an unscrupulous autocrat; for the despotic minister Riaz was pecuniarily honest, and did not desire, like the despotic Ismail, to transform Egypt into a private estate, and if he had shown any such acquisitive tendencies, they would have been checked by the Control. But in the administration generally, much of the old arbitrary spirit and of the old injustice was still rampant, and it must be admitted that for this unsatisfactory state of things Riaz was in some measure to blame. An energetic administrator of the Oriental rather than the European type, he had more faith in discipline than in justice, and was firmly convinced that it would be impossible to maintain order and collect the taxes if the arbitrary authority of the officials were diminished or the old habits of unquestioning submission in the population were disturbed. He was little disposed, therefore, to listen to complaints against his subordinates, and these subordinates, feeling sure of impunity, acted only too often in the ordinary style of uncontrolled Oriental officials. In justice, however, to Riaz it must be added that, even if he had wished to act in a less arbitrary way, he

had not always the means at his disposal, for Egypt possessed, and still possesses, nothing which deserves the name of a court of justice for the punishment of native offenders. When he found, for example, that certain districts were infested with malefactors who could not be punished in a regular legal way, he caused some of them to be transported without trial to the Soudan. As he could not make personal investigations on the spot, he was obliged to act on the reports of the local authorities, and consequently it is not at all improbable that among the exiles there were some victims of official covetousness or private vengeance; but we may presume that there was some justification for this arbitrary mode of procedure, for we find that the leaders of the military faction, who denounced the practice and brought back the exiles after Riaz's fall, were themselves obliged to act as Riaz had done.

Though the total amount of injustice committed under Riaz was unquestionably much less than what had been committed under Ismail, the amount of popular discontent was probably much greater. Like the rats in the fable, the Egyptians can accept silently from "a lion of good family" a great deal which they would indignantly resent if imposed on them by one of their own species. Ismail had inherited the halo bequeathed by the great Mehemet Ali to his successors, and though harassed by importunate foreign creditors and humiliated by foreign diplomatic agents, he preserved always something of the majesty which doth hedge about a king. The great mass of

the people, therefore, bowed to his orders with fatalistic resignation, as if they had been the decrees of irresistible Destiny, and the few who in the last days of his reign may have secretly felt inclined to resist, remembered the fate of the once powerful Mufettish.[1] But who was this Riaz that he should reign over them? He was by birth a Jew, the son of a renegade, or himself a renegade, and many Cairenes could remember seeing him as a gaudily-dressed, long-haired boy in the household of Said Pasha, whilst younger men had known him as a subordinate official in the Ministry of the Interior. Bottom might put on the lion's head and roar as terribly as any king of the forest, or as gently as any sucking dove, but the other players and a large section of the audience knew very well whose the voice really was. Whatever Riaz's powers as a ruler may have been, he had not, and could not have, the prestige and moral influence of a Khedive. Nor had he the freedom of action which an autocrat like Ismail possessed, and which would have enabled him to cope with the insurrection when it was still in the initial stage of military insubordination. He was obliged to go through the formality of consulting

[1] During my stay in Egypt I obtained a curious concatenation of evidence proving that Ismail Sadyk, commonly known as the Mufettish who was the instrument and accomplice of Ismail in the systematic fiscal oppression and the desperate financial expedients which disgraced the reign of that unscrupulous Viceroy, did not die of *delirium tremens* or meet a violent death, as is commonly supposed, on board the Nile steamer which conveyed him to the First Cataract, but was transported across the desert to Dongola, and there strangled some time after his arrival.

with his colleagues, and amongst them, as we have seen, there was a traitor who forewarned the three colonels that they were about to be arrested. He was trammelled, too, by the watchful supervision of the English and French diplomatic agents. They insisted that he should act towards the mutineers according to Western notions of legality, but they could not compel his opponents to observe the same rules of the game, and they could not create that general atmosphere of legality which enables a European Government to cope with malefactors without using their weapons. Lastly, his position was rendered insecure by the fact that his authority was not autonomous but derived from the Khedive, and might be at any moment withdrawn. If the Khedive could be induced by persuasion or intimidation to dismiss him, he would be obliged to retire, and the great obstacle to successful insurrection would thereby be removed. This contingency, foreseen by the mutineers, was realised by the second military demonstration, and Arabi, with instinctive sagacity, hastened to employ the best means for acquiring the popular influence and prestige which the Khedive had lost. He accepted, after the fashion of Mehemet Ali, all petitions which were presented to him, and immediately gave effect to them in a direct, patriarchal way without paying any attention to bureaucratic formalities. Whilst Tewfik could do nothing with petitions but hand them over to his Ministers, who generally paid no attention to them, Arabi could immediately redress grievances of every kind—*ergo,*

according to Egyptian logic, Arabi and not Tewfik must be the real ruler.

From that moment Arabi was practically master of the country, for the Egyptians, like most Orientals, are very shrewd in distinguishing between real and apparent authority, and they highly appreciate the wisdom of their own homely adage: "Dance before the monkey in the day of his power!" The big, brawny, fellah colonel could not claim to be a descendant of the great Mehemet Ali, but perhaps he was, as some people began to whisper, a genuine descendant of the Prophet. In any case he had no Jewish or renegade blood in his veins, he could quote the Koran as fluently and as appositely as the most learned doctor of the Azhar, and above all he possessed and exercised without control what was considered by Egyptians the most essential attribute of sovereignty, the power of granting petitions.

Thus the last shreds of the mantle of Mehemet Ali, which had descended upon, and been worn with dignity by, his immediate successors, were pinned on to the uniform of a military upstart. Whenever Arabi appeared in public he was saluted with profound respect, whilst the nominal ruler was looked on, and spoken of, with something very like contempt. The two junior members of the military triumvirate shared in some measure the respect and favour of the populace, for profound diplomatic sagacity was supposed to lurk under the good-natured expression and unassuming air of Ali Fehmi, and no man in Egypt could look more stern, scowl more gloomily,

twist his moustaches more significantly, or strike a military attitude more successfully, than Abdel Aal. The trimmer, Mahmoud Sami, the intellectual leader of the movement, preferred working behind the scenes, and never became a favourite of the gallery. If these four men really wished to establish liberal institutions and good government, they ought to have allied themselves with Sherif Pasha, and with the representatives of England and France, all of whom were ready to co-operate in any moderate project of practical reforms ; but instead of adopting this wise course and making temporary concessions to suit the exigences of the moment, they uncompromisingly put forward extreme demands, quarrelled with the Controllers, compelled Sherif Pasha to retire in disgust, threatened the Khedive, intrigued with the Sultan, excited religious fanaticism, and brought about a foreign military occupation.

Our investigation, so far as it has yet proceeded, tends to show that European interference in Egyptian affairs modified the political machine in such a way as to render it very liable to dislocation. The English and French Governments neglected the simple truth that it is always hazardous to put new wine into old bottles, and that consequently, in any such experiment, adequate precautions should be taken beforehand to prevent an explosion. Before passing judgment, however, on the Anglo-French *condominium,* we must examine the other side of the account, and try to determine how far the Dual Control conferred real benefits on the Egyptian

people. Did the Control improve the administration and lighten the financial burdens, or was it merely, as has sometimes been asserted, a new instrument of fiscal oppression, invented and maintained for the purpose of "spoiling the Egyptians"?

There is no doubt that the Control was originally established in the interests of the bondholders. When Ismail Pasha found himself in 1875 on the point of foundering in the storm of financial embarrassments which his recklessness and prodigality had created, he applied to the British Government for competent financial advisers, in the hope, doubtless, that England would, in some way or other, help him out of his difficulties; but Lord Derby, who was then at the Foreign Office, showed himself extremely reluctant to interfere officially in Egyptian financial affairs, and the Khedive, after many fruitless efforts to find some other way of escape, was reluctantly compelled to come to terms directly with his creditors and accept the arrangement proposed by Messrs. Goschen and Joubert as the bondholders' representatives. An essential point of the arrangement was that an English and a French Controller should be appointed for five years—the one to control the collection of the revenue and the other to control the expenditure. These two officials, though nominally in the service of the Khedive and paid out of the Egyptian Treasury, were in reality the representatives of the national creditors, and it was no part of their duty to work for the prosperity of the country or to oppose the merciless exactions of the

Government, except in so far as a certain degree of prosperity was required for the regular payment of the coupons, and a certain amount of oppression might ruin completely the over-burdened taxpayers. It is needless to inquire whether they took personally a higher view of their functions and perceived that the bondholders' interests were closely bound up with good government and the permanent prosperity of the people. Whatever their views on this subject may have been, they were powerless to make any radical improvements in the existing order of things, for Ismail could still do as he liked, and he had no intention of mending his ways. After the usual manner of unrepentant spendthrifts when brought face to face with their creditors, he had concealed part of his liabilities and exaggerated his assets, and consequently the Goschen-Joubert arrangement, founded on the wilfully falsified data which he supplied, was too heavy for the country to bear. When the intensified application of the kurbash and other desperate expedients for obtaining ready money proved insufficient to meet the required payments on the debt, Ismail attempted to obtain a reduction of the rate of interest, and with this object in view he became for a time the pathetically eloquent advocate of the oppressed fellaheen. He had even the effrontery to represent himself as the unwilling, innocent instrument of foreign financial rapacity—as a most inoffensive, kind-hearted, well-intentioned sheep which had been compelled, much against its will, to put on wolf's clothing! His

pathetic appeals fell, however, on incredulous, unsympathetic ears, and it must be confessed that the scepticism and apparent hard-heartedness of the creditors were in some measure justified by the notorious bad faith and love of trickery which Ismail had previously displayed, and by the strong presumption that any decrease in the rate of interest on the debt would simply increase the means of viceregal prodigality without lightening the burden of the unfortunate taxpayers. This presumption was confirmed by the fact that all proposals for reducing the interest on condition of strengthening the Control were indignantly rejected, and by the equally significant fact that the Viceroy obstinately refused to participate in the sacrifice he recommended, by disgorging the enormous amount of peasants' land which he had illegally appropriated. Still, on the other hand, it must be admitted that the Control occupied an invidious position, because the retribution for the sins of the Viceroy fell not so much on the august culprit as on the innocent rural population, who had taken no part in the contracting of the debt and who had derived little or no advantage from the money received. They had now to suffer a greater amount of oppression and extortion than they had ever before endured, and the Control gave a kind of European sanction to the proceedings. Had any village Hampden, therefore, arisen from among the fellaheen at that time and denounced the Control as an accomplice in the Khedive's iniquity, he would have deserved sympathy and support; but we must

be careful not to confound this Control of the time of Ismail, which came to an end on the appointment of the Nubar-Wilson ministry in 1878, with the new Control of a very different kind, which was created, after the accession of Tewfik, by the decree of November 15, 1879. This latter, which was recently attacked by the National Party, was, technically speaking, merely the old Control revived; but in reality it was very different in character and functions. The whole situation, in fact, had been profoundly modified by important events which had occurred in the short interval between the demise of the old and the birth of the new institution. Let me recall briefly these important events.

The pathetic appeals of Ismail in favour of his overtaxed subjects, and the evident impossibility of much longer paying the coupons at last induce the bondholders and the Cabinets of London and Paris to entertain a proposal for modifying the Goschen-Joubert arrangement; but the consent to lower, if necessary, the rate of interest is made dependent on the very unwelcome condition that a searching inquiry shall be made into the causes of the financial embarrassments. Ismail feigns to submit to the condition, and in spite of his covert opposition a very curious and instructive investigation is made, but before the Commission of Inquiry has completely terminated its labours, the fertile brain of the Khedive invents a new trick for getting rid of the inconvenient intrusion into what he is pleased to consider as his private affairs. The trick

consists in the apparent establishment of constitutional government with collective ministerial responsibility, and the English and French Governments are induced to give the experiment a fair trial on condition of Mr. Rivers Wilson and M. de Blignières being appointed members of the new Cabinet, with a certain right of veto; but before the hybrid international Ministry is many weeks old, Ismail determines to get rid of the new check on his arbitrary, capricious power. The expedient which he adopts has at least the merit of originality. Having failed, as we have seen, in his ingenious low comedy of "the sheep in wolf's clothing," he now puts on the stage a broad farce, in which he plays for the benefit of a European audience the ridiculous part of an unwilling representative of outraged national feeling. An imaginary National Party behind the scenes is supposed to feel indignant that an Armenian Christian (Nubar Pasha) should be Prime Minister, and two foreigners (Wilson and de Blignières) influential members of the Cabinet; and some adherents of this Party, complaining that their pay is in arrears, make a violent public demonstration against the unpopular Ministry. In these circumstances, what is a prudent, well-intentioned Khedive to do? Evidently in the interests of public tranquillity he must insist on the Prime Minister resigning, and when the imaginary National Party continues to clamour, he must make a further concession to it by dismissing the two foreigners. So far all goes smoothly and well, but when the

reconstituted Ministry proceeds to modify arbitrarily the existing arrangements for the payment of the foreign debt a German Consul, whose name is not among the *dramatis personæ,* suddenly rises in the midst of the audience and announces that what is taking place on the stage must not be supposed to invalidate the engagements which have been made with foreign creditors. This unexpected interruption of the programme recalls the vice-regal actor to the uncomfortable exigences of real life and produces a profound sensation in the Anglo-French section of the audience. The English and French Cabinets suspect that the energetic action of the German Consul may be simply the prelude to diplomatic intervention on the part of the other Powers, and they begin to fear that their exclusive *condominium* is in danger. They hasten therefore to bring the farce to an end. At their urgent request the Sultan intervenes, Ismail is expelled from the country, his son Tewfik is appointed Khedive, and the Control is re-established.

This new Control was ostensibly the old Control revived, but in reality it was a very different institution. The modifications introduced corresponded to an important change which had taken place in the policy of the two Western Cabinets. The English Government had long shown a strong repugnance to assuming any direct responsibility in Egyptian administration, and had restrained France from proceeding further than itself in that direction, but it had ultimately drifted into a policy of creating

what was virtually an Anglo-French Protectorate. It may be difficult to define accurately the functions of the Control in this new arrangement, because the joint Protectorate was never established in due legal form; but it may be asserted without fear of contradiction, that the Controllers, whatever their legal status may have been, were certainly no longer the representatives of the bondholders or of the local usurers. This became quite evident as soon as the work of liquidation began. By the terms of the Khedivial decree the Controllers were to act as intermediaries between the Liquidation Commission and the Government, and in this delicate mission they defended the country against the exorbitant demands of the creditors. Their efforts, it is true, were not always successful. They consented, for example, to an act of injustice in permitting the abolition of the Moukabbala without adequate compensation to the native landowners, and they accepted for the amortisation of the debt a system which has, as I shall hereafter show, a very injurious effect on the material prosperity of the country. But if we take their activity as a whole and regard it impartially we must recognise that they had the interests of the country at heart. Even before the liquidation was settled they began a series of financial reforms tending to remove a part of the taxation and to distribute the remaining weight more equitably among the taxpayers. The best way, perhaps, of conveying a general idea of what they aimed at and what they accomplished is to enumerate in

chronological order the measures which the Government, at their suggestion and with their assistance, adopted and carried out during the year 1880. On January 17, twenty-eight different taxes, which were peculiarly onerous and irksome to the people, and which brought into the Treasury about £377,000, were abolished. At the same time the incidence of the professional tax was improved, and the smaller villages were freed from the octroi dues, which gave a trifling sum in proportion to the trouble and expense of collection. To provide for the deficit caused by this remission of taxation, a privileged category of land known as *Ushuri* was more heavily imposed. Next month, steps were taken to carry out more efficiently and more rapidly the cadastral survey, on which alone a strictly equitable system of land revenue can be based. On February 25 a Khedivial decree laid down the principle that the collection of the land revenue should be adapted to the peculiarities of farming in each district, so that the small cultivators, by paying successive instalments at the most convenient seasons, should be relieved from the disagreeable alternative of borrowing at usurious rates, or selling the standing crops at ruinously low prices.[1] As a further check on the abuses from which the peasantry had to suffer, each peasant received a printed schedule showing the amounts he had to pay under the various heads of taxation, and the dates at which

[1] This was, I am assured, not a new idea, but simply a return to the old system which existed in the time of Mehemet Ali and Abbas.

the various sums must be paid. On March 25 the antiquated cumbrous system of collecting the revenue in kind, which still existed in Upper Egypt, was formally abolished and a regular procedure established for distraint and sale of real property, in cases of non-payment of taxes. For the supervision of these reforms a number of travelling inspectors were appointed, and their occasional visits to the villages had some little influence, we may hope, in checking the abuses of the arbitrary power wielded by the corrupt rural authorities.

One of the spheres of official activity in which the arbitrary power had been from time immemorial most grossly abused was that of forced labour, and here the efforts of the Government and the Control encountered special difficulties. It was a comparatively easy task to abolish, or, at least, greatly to diminish, forced labour on the State Domains and on the lands of private proprietors, but it was impossible to abolish it for certain works of public utility. Egypt, it must be remembered, is a very peculiar country. It is simply a fertile oasis created by the Nile in a vast expanse of sandy desert, and the ancient Egyptians may well be excused for paying divine honours to the great river which gave them the means of existence. Old Father Nile has been indeed at all times a most generous parent to his numerous family, but he has always demanded that his beloved children should do their proper share in the creative work. The fertilising waters which he supplies so liberally from his inexhaustible storehouse in Central Africa must

be disseminated and retained by canals and embankments, and as he happens to be, like most very generous people, a little capricious and thoughtless in the bestowal of his favours, special measures have sometimes to be taken to prevent ruinous inundations. It is necessary, therefore, even in ordinary times, that a large portion of the inhabitants should annually take part in the laborious work of keeping the canals and embankments in proper repair, and on special occasions, when a great inundation is imminent, all the adult males of a district may be called out at very short notice. In these circumstances the Ministry and the Control could not think of entirely abolishing forced labour, as some of their unofficial European advisers recommended, but they turned their attention to the means of regulating it and of replacing it to some extent by machinery.

It need hardly be said that the reforms inaugurated by the Control looked much better in the Controllers' annual reports than in real life. No amount of wisdom and energy could possibly, in the space of one or two years, eradicate the abuses and corrupt practices which had flourished luxuriantly for centuries. Many amusing anecdotes are told to illustrate this simple truth, and many more, doubtless, could be collected or invented; but such incidents, real or imaginary, should not blind us to the broad fact that in the regions of finance and taxation the foundations of order and legality were laid in the place of chaos and arbitrary power. We must remember that in the latter years of the reign of Ismail

Pasha the Egyptian Treasury was nearly always in desperate financial straits, and when the heavy regular taxation, aided by credit operations of a very questionable kind, no longer sufficed to stave off the crisis, a peremptory Khedivial order was commonly given to raise a certain designated sum from the peasantry. The sum was apportioned in arbitrary fashion by the Minister of Finance among the provinces, by the provincial authorities among the villages, and by the village-sheikhs among the individual peasants. Under the Control, on the contrary, the Treasury was never allowed to sink into financial difficulties, no desperate expedients for obtaining ready money were required, taxation was fixed at a comparatively moderate rate, the taxes were collected at the seasons most convenient for the peasantry, and each peasant, though he could not always resist the unjust exactions of the Sheikh and the village-treasurer, knew at least exactly how much he was legally obliged to pay. These modest beginnings required of course to be developed, and it was necessary to wait for some years to appreciate their full effect, but some significant symptoms of improvement became at once apparent. By the security afforded to the cultivator, land rose rapidly in price. Capital which had been previously employed in making loans to the Treasury at usurious interest began to flow in the healthier directions of industry and commerce, and the ordinary rate of interest fell considerably. The Customs revenue, which serves as a tolerably accurate thermometer for the general well-being of the popula-

tion, showed a remarkable increase, and the rapid rise of Egyptian Funds indicated clearly that there was increasing public confidence in the progress of the country. Within three years the value of the Unified Debt rose £35,000,000, and in the space of a single year the Consolidated Debt, as a whole, rose, in round numbers, from £65,000,000 to £78,000,000 sterling. All this time the coupons were regularly paid without difficulty, and at the end of 1880 there was a surplus of £373,676.

It was at this moment, when the Control and the Government were labouring earnestly and not without success for the welfare of the country, and when a few years of perfect tranquillity were required to consolidate, develop, and extend the reforms, that the leaders of the military revolt suddenly burst into the administrative laboratory, like the proverbial infuriated bull into the china-shop, and with much sound and fury insisted that the whole administration and the work of further reform should be handed over to them and their adherents. Some European sympathisers with the National movement confidently believe that, if the demand had been complied with, the reform movement would have been continued and accelerated. Without venturing to make positive predictions, I may say that I cannot feel implicit confidence in the success of financial reforms which are to be carried out by a military triumvirate besieged by a swarm of clamorous adherents, who naturally expect to be rewarded for their political support.

Whilst thus endeavouring to do justice to the

Control for what it did and what it proposed to do, I must remark that I am by no means an uncritical admirer of the institution. Though it worked tolerably well during the short period of its activity, it carried in its vitals the seeds of a fatal disease—a disease all the more dangerous from its liability to produce a European epidemic. The undeveloped germs lay in its dual nature. Ismail Pasha, in bidding farewell to Egypt is reported to have said to some of his English and French acquaintances: "My unfortunate country will be your Schleswig-Holstein." He expected that the Anglo-French *condominium* in Egypt would inevitably, like the Austro-Prussian occupation of the Elbe Duchies, produce a conflict between the two parties chiefly interested, and that his unfortunate country would be condemned to pay the *pots cassés*. If the prediction has not been realised, we have to thank fortuitous circumstances on the indefinite continuance of which no prudent statesman could reckon. The exceptionally cordial relations between the English and French Cabinets, the unwillingness of the French Government to create new difficulties and assume new responsibilities so long as the Tunisian problem remained unsolved, the general repugnance of all the Powers to reopen the Eastern Question, and the singularly fortunate choice of the Controllers—these and other minor influences all contributed to bring about the wonderful result; but the harmony was liable to be broken at any moment, and then Egypt would have become the arena for struggles totally foreign to Egyptian

interests. Difficulties about Anglo-French commercial treaties and such matters, which ought to be confined to London and Paris, would have had their *contrecoup* in Cairo, and Egypt might have had to pay for concessions in negotiations with which she was nowise concerned. Even whilst the harmony existed, the evil effects of the dual principle were only too apparent. In all the administrative departments in which the foreign element had gained a footing, it was considered necessary to preserve a kind of equilibrium between the two foreign nationalities, and this supposed necessity often resulted in the appointment of two officials to do the work of one. When the French head of a department happened to be animated with patriotic zeal to increase the influence of his country, he sometimes thought that the best means of attaining this laudable end was to put into his department as many fellow-countrymen as possible without examining very closely their capacities for the posts intrusted to them; and this patriotic zeal was only too often encouraged by the French Foreign Office. I know, for example, of one case where a French official, on being offered a difficult and important post in the Egyptian administration, modestly remarked to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who wished to send him to Egypt, that his previous career hardly fitted him for the position and that he would probably have great difficulty in mastering the complicated details of the department in question. "You must not hesitate," replied his Excellency, "on that account. Your main duty in Egypt will be

not to occupy yourself with administrative details but to uphold and extend French influence." Some of my French friends in Cairo, whilst admitting this tendency of their countrymen, assured me that English officials did likewise. If this statement is true, and I am not prepared to say that the English officials did not retaliate, it simply confirms what I assert, that the number of foreign officials was unnecessarily multiplied in consequence of Anglo-French rivalry, and that the choice was not determined by their real or supposed efficiency. A striking example of this was afforded by the Cadastre. When this comparatively small department was reorganised after the war in accordance with practical requirements, it was found necessary to dismiss about eighty officials who were utterly useless, and who were for the most part foreigners.

But it was not merely in the unnecessary multiplication of officials that the dual nature of the Control had an injurious influence ; it always tended to paralyse any department under the direction of foreigners. The English and the French spirit of administration has each its practical merits, but it is doubtful whether the two can be successfully amalgamated, and it is certain that they were never successfully amalgamated in Egypt. The rough-and-ready, practical Englishman, ever willing to assume responsibility and to use without delay the means which happen to be at his disposal, seems to his timid, methodical, French colleague an administrative barbarian ; whilst the scrupulously accurate, theory-loving Frenchman,

always anxious to be formally correct and logically consistent, is regarded by his English colleague as a bureaucratic pedant. In an administration composed of such discordant elements, we must not expect to find much cordial, harmonious co-operation. Here again we may find an illustration in the Cadastre Office. Before its reorganisation it was under the direction of two officials who had radically different views as to how the survey should be made. The French director aimed at producing, regardless of expense, beautiful, mathematically accurate maps of the village lands ; his English colleague, on the contrary, wishing to economise time and money, aimed at producing merely a survey sufficient for practical purposes with a view specially to an equitable readjustment of the land revenue. Being both men of tolerant, conciliatory disposition, they remained on friendly terms and made mutual concessions, but the progress of the work was very seriously retarded by the dual nature of the direction, and the results were very far from being satisfactory.

These inconveniences of the dual system were intensified by national differences of temperament. The Frenchman is, as a rule, lively, quick of conception, and inclined to be violent ; whilst the Englishman is stiff, slow of understanding, and apt to be obstinate. A machine made of such different materials could hardly work without a good deal of unnecessary friction. It was bad enough when one element was subordinated to the other, but it was much worse when they were placed on the same level without any third party

to control both. In certain cases the situation was still further complicated by the introduction of an Egyptian—theoretically on the same level as the two Europeans. In order, therefore, to have a complete picture of international administration in Cairo, we must peep into a mixed Council, in which the Egyptian element is also represented. There stands the fluent Frenchman, gesticulating with vivacity and rapidly drawing unpractical conclusions from hasty generalisations and abstract principles; before him stands erect his English colleague, with his hands pushed down to the bottom of his pockets, trying to explain, in an Anglo-Saxon French dialect of his own invention, the simple, practical remedy which he proposes; and in the background, at the other side of the table, sits the stolid Egyptian Pasha, who is always satisfied with things as they are, and for whom to-morrow is as to-day, eying his colleagues silently with an expression of benignant compassion not unmixed with dignity, and wondering vaguely in the lower depths of his sluggish internal consciousness why God in His infinite goodness saw fit to create such a race of dissatisfied, impatient, self-tormenting mortals.

Taking into consideration all these grave defects of the Dual Control in the wider sense of the term, we must confess that it laid itself open to the violent accusations brought against it by the National Party. In passing judgment on the men who recklessly provoked a revolutionary crisis culminating in a foreign occupation, let us admit frankly that, by whatever

personal motives they may have been actuated, they had real grievances to complain of. The number of foreign officials was in some departments much larger than was required, and their quality did not come up to the requirements even of a very modest standard. What determined appointments was often, as I have said, not the interests of the country, but a certain kind of patriotism, falsely so called ; and if I am to tell the whole truth, I must add that in some cases the motive was even of a lower kind than pseudo-patriotism. Appointments were made, I am ashamed to say, not only by French officials, but also by my own countrymen, for which it is difficult to find any higher motive than the desire to provide a comfortable berth for a relative or a friend. This would have been only natural in a native administration, but it ought not to have existed in a foreign element whose *raison d'être* was the reform of native abuses. The foreign element, whilst creating a higher popular ideal and increasing the popular exigences, did not itself realise the ideal which it had created or fulfil the exigences which it had engendered.

The National Party, being desirous of reducing foreign influence to a minimum, naturally reproached the Control with doing too much—with overstepping the limits assigned to it and interfering in all branches of the administration. Other critics, both native and foreign, have condemned the Control for having done too little—for having confined itself to financial reform and neglected the other conditions of national welfare. For my own part I am inclined to range

myself in the latter rather than the former class of critics. The Control was originally, as I have said, simply a financial institution for protecting the rights of the bondholders, but when it was revived after the accession of Tewfik it was made an instrument of the Anglo-French Protectorate. As representative of the two Western Cabinets, which repeatedly professed their solicitude for the material and moral welfare of the Egyptian population, it ought not to have confined its attention to the taxpaying capacities of the population. Unfortunately it retained to the end a tinge of its original sin. The reader will be better able to understand this reproach and to appreciate the exigences of the present situation if we glance at the Egyptian administration as a whole.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EGYPTIAN ADMINISTRATION.

Great number and small salaries of the officials—The scribes—The Copt, the Mussulman, and the Syrian—Complicated system of accounts and administrative procedure—The administrators—Typical Mudirs—The Beys and Pashas of Cairo—Riaz Pasha—Sherif Pasha—Nubar Pasha—European forms and Oriental spirit—Native law courts—The Anglo-French Control in its relations to administrative reform—Necessity of studying the daily life of the peasantry.

There is perhaps no people in the world more submissive to authority and more easily governed than the Egyptians, and yet there are few peoples so plentifully supplied with, not to say burdened by, officials. Leaving out of account the numerous unsalaried Sheikhs-el-beled, of whom there are several in every village, and whose acquaintance we shall make in a future chapter, the total number of functionaries of various kinds is roughly estimated at 21,000, so that the official class in the narrower sense of the term comprises something between one and two per cent. of the adult male population. Fortunately for the Egyptian taxpayer the services which most of these persons render to the State is not considered to have a very high pecuniary value. As the total amount annually expended on salaries is

only about one million and a quarter sterling, and as the higher native officials and foreign specialists are pretty highly paid, we must conclude that the lower ranks of officialdom receive a very scanty pittance. This conclusion is quite in accordance with numerous facts which have fallen under my observation, for I have found that in the provinces many of the scribes in the Government offices have to content themselves with salaries varying from one pound to thirty shillings a month. In spite however of the smallness of the remuneration the supply is greater than the demand. Whenever a vacancy occurs there is sure to be a considerable number of eager candidates, each one of whom zealously canvasses all who are supposed to have any influence, direct or indirect, open or clandestine, on the nomination, and urges in eloquent terms his special qualifications and aptitudes for the vacant post. Every youth, in fact, who has been initiated into the elementary mysteries of the three Rs, aspires to enter the public service, not generally with an idea of rising to a high place in the administration, but simply in the hope of securing an easy, tranquil existence, by receiving a regular monthly allowance, and picking up the crumbs which accidentally fall from the official table.

Of the numerous functionaries who form collectively what is called the administration only a very small proportion have any right to be called administrators. The great mass of them are simply clerks who pass the working hours of their monotonous life in writing to dictation, copying, registering, keeping accounts, and

doing similar kinds of routine office-work, and who employ any originality or ingenuity they may possess in devising means for obtaining *bakshish.* This position affords them little scope for exceptional talent, and little prospect of high distinction. A scribe may be an admirable calligraphist, or a master of the technicalities of official style, or an adept in the most useful art of making himself agreeable to his superiors; or, on the other hand, he may be an idle, worthless fellow with nothing to recommend him: his acquirements or defects will in all probability not modify very profoundly the course of his official life. The talents—especially that of currying favour with superiors—may secure for the possessor a certain amount of advancement, but will not carry him beyond the post of *bash-katib*, or head of a department; whilst the defects, though they may occasionally call forth a reprimand more forcible than elegant, will not lead to permanent exclusion from the service. The scribes form, in short, a peculiar class, which has many of the characteristics of an hereditary caste—the higher posts being filled up from the lower ranks by seniority or favouritism, and the lower posts being given to the boys who are informally introduced into the office as apprentices by their parents or relatives, and who work gratuitously till a vacancy occurs.

If a census were taken of the Egyptian scribes according to religious confessions, it would be found, I believe, that the Christian Copts are very much more numerous than the Mussulmans. Wherever

arithmetical work has to be done, Copts alone are employed, and it is only in those bureaux where a good Arabic style is required, that Mussulmans are to be found in large numbers. The explanation of this fact has been already indicated in the introductory chapter, where I spoke of the peculiarities of the Coptic population in Upper Egypt. When at school the little Copt is well drilled in arithmetic and bookkeeping, but never reads the Koran, and consequently never acquires a knowledge of literary Arabic, which is very different from the modern vernacular; the little Mussulman, on the contrary, devotes his whole time at school to learning the Koran by heart and acquiring the elementary principles of Arabic grammar. In after life, therefore, the Copt is generally a good bookkeeper, but lamentably deficient in literary power; the Mussulman, on the contrary, knows little or nothing about figures, but easily acquires a correct and elegant style. Like the Mussulman, I have always refrained from any attempt to penetrate into the mysterious *arcana* of Egyptian arithmetic, but one external peculiarity of the system has been frequently forced upon my attention in rather a painful way. When going over a column of figures the Copt invariably chants them in a loud semi-nasal tone which is anything but agreeable, and he is capable of indulging in this monotonous chant for hours at a time. Imagine half a dozen such chanters trying vigorously in a small room to drown each other's voices, and imagine in an adjoining room, separated only by

a thin, wooden partition, an unfortunate foreigner, who has only European nerves, condemned to listen from morning till night to the inharmonious din, and at the same time to concentrate on rather abstruse subjects any little intellectual power he may possess. Let the reader, I say, try to realise the position of such an unfortunate, and he will be disposed to judge leniently any undue rancour which I may show with regard to Coptic scribes and any undue preference which I may display for the taciturn Mussulman clerks, who silently evolve, from their stores of Koranic phraseology, long, elegantly worded instructions to the subordinate local authorities or diffuse, ingenious apologies for the delinquencies or negligence of their immediate superiors. I trust, however, that my recollection of the hours of self-imposed torture may not seriously bias my judgment; and I proceed at once to give evidence of my desire to be impartial by stating frankly that from the moral point of view there is not much to choose between the Coptic and the Mussulman official of the lower ranks. In the matter of bribery, peculation, and extortion there is a very unlaudable rivalry between them, and I am not prepared to say which of the two creeds carries off the palm.

In Cairo this nether world of Egyptian officialism is, of course, more numerous than in the provincial towns, and, though composed of pretty much the same elements, presents some shades of difference. In the provinces the scribes often wear the ordinary costume of the middle classes—a long black robe and a white

turban—and don the Turkish fez only when they wish to give themselves a more official appearance; in the capital they habitually wear the fez, and many of them, in imitation of Turkish officials, affect the semi-European Stambouline, which closely resembles the coat of an English High Church clergyman. Intellectually, too, we find among the clerks of the central administration certain symptoms of foreign influence. Though the corrupt Arabic dialect commonly used by all native Egyptians is the language which they habitually employ, some of the Mussulmans can speak and write Turkish, and many of them, both Mussulmans and Christians, are more or less acquainted with French. In certain offices which have been remodelled according to foreign ideas, or in which technical knowledge is required, there is a sprinkling of foreigners; and standing half way, as it were, between the Europeans and Egyptians, are a number of Syrian Christians, who have been educated in the French schools of their native province, and who have come to make their fortune in a country not yet overstocked with men of their own type. The young Syrian is becoming, indeed, a common and rather conspicuous typical figure in this section of Cairo society. Clever, quick-witted, supple, and persevering, possessing boundless self-confidence, a showy superficial education, and an innate talent for intrigue, he pushes his way with an energy and success which excite the envy and jealousy of his timid, plodding, slow-witted rivals. When he succeeds in getting his little finger into one of the chinks of the

official barrier, he quickly makes an aperture large enough to admit his whole body; and as soon as he has comfortably installed himself and established a vague moral superiority over the other occupants of the bureau, he strives to introduce a retinue of relatives, friends, and acquaintances of his own nationality, with a clannish loyalty that would rejoice the heart of an ultra-patriotic Scotchman. Thus the lower regions of the Egyptian official world, hitherto in the exclusive possession of natives, are now being invaded by a swarm of enterprising adventurers from Beyrout, the Lebanon, and Aleppo. The invasion is looked upon by the native Mussulmans with that dignified, fatalistic apathy which the true Moslem so often displays regarding the mysterious vicissitudes of human affairs, and this passive attitude on their part will probably continue so long as their interests are not more directly threatened; but the Copts, whose special province is attacked and who are being gradually expropriated, are already seriously alarmed, and consequently feel a certain sympathy with the cry of "Egypt for the Egyptians." This sympathy was freely expressed during the earlier phases of the recent troubles. So long as the National movement remained free from all tinge of Mussulman fanaticism, and aimed at expelling foreign influence from the Government and foreigners from the administration, it found not a few warm adherents among the Coptic clerks in the public offices, who were being not only trammelled in their peculation by the Anglo-French Control, but also distanced in the race for promotion by their Syrian rivals.

The existence of such a numerous army of scribes and bookkeepers presupposes, of course, a complicated, roundabout system of administrative procedure, and an equally complicated system of accounts. These two questionable blessings were hardly to be expected in Egypt; for, until recent times, the country was governed by men who could for the most part neither read nor write, and who ought, therefore, it would seem, to have regarded with no favourable eye a complicated administrative mechanism which they could not understand, and which, consequently, they could not control. The anomaly may, however, be explained. With regard to the fiscal administration, the Arabs and succeeding conquerors confined their attention to the grand totals and left the details to the native Copts, in whose hands this sphere of official activity has remained down to the present day. Now the Coptic or old Egyptian system of arithmetic and bookkeeping was from the beginning extremely complicated, and those who had the exclusive acquaintance with the art had reason to resist rather than encourage simplification. A Europeanised, witty member of the Coptic community, in explaining this matter to me, told me, half in joke, that he had once been obliged to examine some old official accounts, and that he had ever since felt proud of his ancestors. They had shown, he said, a marvellous ingenuity in constructing a system of arithmetical labyrinths, which had enabled them to keep out all intruders and to maintain their hold on the administration during centuries of continuous social inferiority and intermittent religious

persecution. Their position is now seriously threatened by the simplification of accounts effected by Mr. Fitzgerald, an Englishman, and Blum Pasha, an Austrian—two amiable, accomplished gentlemen, who have proved more formidable antagonists than the whole series of fierce Arab, Mameluke, and Turkish conquerors; but enough of the old system still remains to require the employment of a very large number of Coptic arithmeticians. As for the inordinate amount of official correspondence, copying, and registration, which compels the higher functionaries to spend a great part of their time in affixing their seals to documents which they have not always time to read, it is of much more recent origin. It dates from the time of Mehemet Ali, and is the natural result of creating a highly centralised administration after the French model in a country where the supreme authority wishes to be ubiquitous and omniscient, and where the great majority of the officials, being timid, apathetic, and incapable of initiative, prefer always to ask for instructions rather than act on their own responsibility.

The career of a scribe does not, as I have said, lead generally to fame and fortune. A youth who has the noble ambition to climb up into regions higher than the post of *bash-katib* must choose a different path. If he seeks distinction in the local administration, he had better begin by being a Mussulman, for no Copt or other species of Christian has the slightest chance of being made Governor of a province. In the second place he should have higher

educational attainments than are generally possessed by *katibs,* and it is absolutely necessary, whatever his educational qualifications may be, that he should secure—supposing he does not already possess it—the patronage of one or more influential personages. Thus prepared, he may solicit the post of *Muawin,* who is a kind of apprentice or assistant to a *Mudir* or *Nazir-kism,* and in due time, by the aid of his talents and patrons, he may himself become, first a *Nazir-kism* and ultimately a full-blown *Mudir.* The Mudirs, I should state, are the Governors of provinces, of which there are fourteen in Egypt Proper. They are the local representatives of the Khedive under the direct orders of the Minister of the Interior, and exercise, if not direct authority, at least a right of supervision over all branches of the administration within the limits of the respective provinces committed to their charge. The Nazirs-kism are the Sub-governors who represent the Mudirs in the Kisms or districts into which the provinces are subdivided.

The Mudirs are of course very important personages, whose authority is all the greater from being nowhere clearly defined, and the prosperity of the province depends in great measure on the honesty, energy, and administrative talent which they happen to possess. Nearly all the older ones are of Turkish or Circassian descent, for neither Mehemet Ali, Ibrahim, nor Abbas ever intrusted to men of fellah origin positions requiring prolonged energy and personal prestige. Said and Ismail were the first to raise

fellahs to high rank; and most of the fellah Mudirs owe their appointment to the notorious Mufettish, Ismail Sadyk (1870—76), who found that rich village-sheiks and uneducated landed proprietors, desirous of obtaining social consideration and local influence, were ready to pay for their nomination much larger sums than the ordinary men of the career, and were much more dexterous in squeezing the last piastre out of the overtaxed peasantry.

Among the men who are at present Mudirs, or who have acted as such and hope to be some day reappointed, we find a great variety of characters and qualifications. There are, for example, still a few specimens of the old school—men like A—— Pasha, who derived his first and only notions of government from Mehemet Ali, and who has ever since conscientiously, according to his lights, followed the lessons received from his old master. His lights, it is true, have not been very brilliant. Mehemet Ali's system of government, when reduced to its simplest essential elements, consisted of two principles of action: to strike terror into the hearts of evildoers and to develop to the greatest possible extent the natural resources of the country. A—— Pasha, having none of the creative genius of his master, and never having been able to obtain a clear idea of how the resources of a province can be developed, has always confined his attention to the first of the two principles, and has never spared the kurbash or the halter in his efforts to carry it out. He can boast that on the whole his efforts have

been attended with considerable success. Once, for example, he was appointed Mudir in a province of Upper Egypt where brigandage, housebreaking, murder, and general lawlessness had reached such a height that the respectable members of the population lived in a state of perpetual fear. The first thing he did on arriving at his post was to erect three gibbets in the market-place, and for some time thereafter, on the weekly market-days, each gibbet displayed regularly at least one victim. During the informal criminal investigations which preceded the executions, he mercilessly tortured the accused and the witnesses, and looked on at their sufferings with a callousness that astonished even the most experienced, hardened spectators—answering sometimes their protestations of innocence and prayers for mercy with a cynical innuendo or a flippant jest. Even after an interval of more than twenty years, the scenes were recalled with horror by the eye-witness who described them to me—a man who had been himself a Mudir and who was generally not much troubled with humanitarian squeamishness. By this barbarous method he speedily inspired universal terror and re-established security of life and property. At a later period of his career, and in another province, when it was no longer possible to execute malefactors publicly without trial, he caused some criminals, who would not confess, to be beaten to death in prison, and others to be blinded so as to prevent them from continuing their habits of brigandage. Nor did he confine his severity to those who committed crimes

of violence. Scrupulously honest himself, he insisted upon honesty among his subordinates, and when he discovered that any of them had been guilty of extortion or peculation, he summarily inflicted condign corporal punishment on the culprits. It was a case of this kind which caused him finally to be placed on the retired list, the bastinadoed *katib* having accidentally influential protection at head-quarters; and now the old man lives quietly in Cairo, deploring the present degenerate times, in which "administration is weakened and disorganised by ignorant dreamers who imagine that the fellah can be kept in order and made to work without a liberal use of the stick." Among the Mudirs actually in office there are none who quite come up to his ideal. The few who are of the same type as himself, all men of Circassian origin, understand that times have changed, and that consequently they must not give free rein to their natural tendencies.

A much more frequent type now is that of which B—— Pasha may be taken as a representative. He is neither pure Circassian nor pure fellah, but a mixture of the two, and he can make no pretensions either to the relentless ferocity or the incorruptible honesty of his ex-colleague above described. Though firmly convinced, like the great majority of his countrymen, that the stick must always necessarily play an important part in Egyptian provincial administration, he uses it in what he is pleased to consider the bounds of moderation. Unlike the Mudirs of the terrorist school, he takes little interest

in criminal investigations, and leaves them to the regular judicial authorities, except when they seem likely to yield some pecuniary advantage to the investigator. In the other categories of his official occupations it is likewise the personal pecuniary advantages that he has chiefly in view, but he prefers to loosen the purse-strings of his victims by cunning and persuasion rather than violence; and the method seems to have its advantages, for he has amassed a considerable fortune without officially compromising himself or exciting any unusual amount of unpopularity. Most of the rich men in the town where he resides, though they have been repeatedly obliged to pay him black-mail, are loud in his praises, and not without reason, for he has greatly aided them in the accumulation of their wealth. They know by experience that the most convenient methods of becoming rich in Egypt require a certain amount of secret official protection, and they are not so unreasonable as to suppose that the protection is to be granted without remuneration. If they have a complaint to make against their amiable Governor, it is that he is rather given to sensual indulgence, including an immoderate use of strong drinks, so that after office hours it is not always easy to obtain a private interview; and when a private interview is obtained, his Excellency is not always in a fit condition to transact business. Even an Excellency and a good Mussulman is not always entirely exempt from the weaknesses of ordinary mortals, and Egyptian public opinion,

especially in the provinces, is not, as a rule, inexorably severe.

As a specimen of the Mudirs of pure fellah descent, we may take C—— Pasha, who is at present out of office, but who is actively intriguing to be reappointed. He is one of those *omdehs*—influential landed proprietors of fellah origin—who were suddenly raised by the Mufettish, for reasons already explained, to the post of Mudir, without having served the usual apprenticeship. When speaking with foreigners whom he believes to be liberal-minded and humane, and whom he imagines to be ignorant of his antecedents, he sometimes poses as the paternal protector of the oppressed rural population to which by birth he himself belongs; but this view of his character and activity would not be indorsed by any truth-speaking landed proprietor or peasant of his native province. When they had him as Mudir he contrived within three months to recoup himself with interest for the £3,000 which he had paid for his nomination, and he used his official power for revenging himself on several of his wealthy neighbours with whom he had long-standing family feuds. As an emancipated slave is often the hardest of taskmasters, so a man who has sprung from the fellah class is often a more unjust and more extortionate official than the Turk or Circassian who belongs by birth and family traditions to the dominant caste. The Turk or Circassian may be oppressive, cruel, and brutal, but he has generally a sense of personal dignity which prevents his descending to the mean-

ness and petty tyranny in which the fellah *parvenu* unblushingly indulges. So at least I have been often assured by men who belonged to neither of the two classes, and who had ample opportunities of observation, and certainly the conduct of C—— Pasha was a case in point.

A much more genuine friend of the peasantry is old D—— Pasha, the Governor of a neighbouring province. He never poses as anything in particular, his intelligence is decidedly not above the average, and he is rather short-sighted intellectually as well as physically; but he honestly tries in a good-natured, kindly fashion to fulfil the duties of his position. His kindliness of disposition does not prevent him from making use occasionally of corporal punishment, but he never uses it in a brutal fashion like some of his colleagues, and he never appeals to the kurbash until the other means of pressure have been exhausted. His favourite means of persuasion are scolding and exhortation, and nature has kindly allowed him to indulge inordinately in this propensity by providing him with a loud, harsh, grating voice, which enables him to shout and scream for hours without interruption. I can speak on this point from personal experience, for I once occupied for several days a room adjoining his office, and I was obliged during that time to modify considerably my preconceived notions about the maximum capacity of the human vocal organs. Rumour says that in the reign of Ismail he consented to act as an instrument of the Viceroy's system of fiscal extortion, and I

have no difficulty in believing such reports, for he is not a man of strong convictions or great independence of character; but the best authorities add that he showed no unnecessary zeal in the carrying out of his instructions, and that he merely did as much as was absolutely necessary to prevent his being dismissed. On the whole, therefore, he enjoys a good local reputation. In the estimation of his colleagues he does not stand nearly so high. Many of these regard him with secret contempt, because he has passed the greater part of a long life in the public service and is still almost as poor as when he entered it. Others, while appreciating his honesty and good intentions, condemn him for his want of intelligence and energy, and think that he ought to be placed at once on the retired list.

Prominent among the critics of the latter class is E—— Bey, who represents among the Mudirs the young, refined, elegant section of Egyptian administrators. Educated in Paris and attached for some time to the Viceregal household, he has all the polished manners and something of the education of a Parisian of good family, and he naturally considers himself as socially, intellectually, and morally superior to the great mass of his colleagues in the local administration. He feels that in an Egyptian provincial town, where there are no social or intellectual resources, he is rather *dépaysé,* but he considers it his duty to make such sacrifices to the good of his country, and he has reason to hope that the Khedive will soon requite his services by giving

him a place in the central administration, which would enable him to live in Cairo. In his opinion the great radical vice of the administration, local and central, consists in the habit of filling the most important posts in the service with stupid, useless, "decorated antiquities," to the exclusion of intelligent, energetic, young officials of his own type. Some people, who profess to know him well, insinuate that, in spite of his vigorous denunciations of official corruption, his own hands are not quite clean; but I am bound to say that I have never been able to obtain any proof of these uncharitable insinuations, and I am reluctant to believe that a man of such refinement and enlightened views should be unable to refrain from the ordinary vulgar vices of Egyptian officials.

The Sub-governors, *muawins*, and other immediate subordinates of the Governors, I need not attempt to describe, because they are merely junior members of the same class, and the majority of them will, in the ordinary course of official promotion, themselves become Mudirs. As a rule they take their cue from their superior. If the superior happens to be an honest, intelligent, energetic man, they try to be so likewise, or at least they restrain their evil tendencies within prudent limits. If, on the contrary, the Governor is a man of the type of B—— Pasha above described, they know that they may with impunity indulge in the vices for which he is notorious, and the majority of them are pretty sure to take advantage of the tacit permission to peculate and extort.

Closely connected, and yet not quite identical, with the class to which the provincial Governors and Sub-governors belong, is the privileged group of Cairo Beys and Pashas, from which the Ministers and other high official personages are generally drawn. A provincial Governor may become member of the Cabinet and thereby enter the privileged group—witness Ismail Eyoub Pasha, recently Minister of the Interior and Omar Lutfi, who was Governor of Alexandria at the time of the massacres and is now Minister of War, but the men who belong to the group by birth rarely become provincial administrators. Possessing generally a certain amount of fortune, and preferring the immediate vicinity of the Khedive and the enjoyments of Cairo society to the official oblivion and monotonous life of a provincial town, they do not covet the place of Mudir, and seek rather to make their career in the central administration. Though the majority of them are of Turkish or Circassian origin, and many of them habitually speak Turkish in preference to Arabic, they have all become so thoroughly Egyptian in character and feeling, that they are entirely innocent of any Turcophil sympathy with the effete military despotism of Stamboul, and would energetically resist any attempt on the part of the Sultan to transform his nominal sovereignty into real power. If we cannot be independent, they say, then let us have enlightened European, rather than barbarous Turkish, domination.

In this group the three most prominent figures—*facile principes*—are Riaz, Sherif, and Nubar; the

first of Jewish, the second of Turkish, and the third of Armenian, origin. Of the two first, I have already spoken incidentally, but as their names are frequently mentioned in the European press, and as they are probably both destined to play still very important parts in Egyptian history, I ought perhaps to add a few words of description. Riaz is a small, thin, delicate-looking man, of anything but prepossessing appearance, and the unfavourable impression which he at first makes upon a stranger is intensified by a harsh, nasal tone of voice, and a total absence of that calm dignity of manner which we are accustomed to expect in an Oriental. He is not possessed of any great natural fluency, and when he is speaking with foreigners his difficulties are increased by the fact that he learned French somewhat late in life. All these defects however rather increase our respect for Riaz's character, for they prove the existence of that strong will and tenacious perseverance which enabled him, without any external natural advantages, and without any extraordinary intelligence, to outstrip more highly gifted rivals. Another title to our respect is that in a corrupt moral atmosphere and without hereditary fortune he has remained pecuniarily honest. As an administrator he has considerable natural aptitude, and he has had great experience, so that perhaps no man living knows as well the details of the Egyptian administrative system, but he has neither the broad views nor the political instincts which would entitle him to the name of a statesman. Though he was long used

as an instrument by the English and French Governments during the time of the Dual Control, he was always patriotically jealous of foreign influence and never cordially sympathised with any attempt to introduce foreign principles and foreign institutions into his native country. If he remained on good terms with the Controllers, it was because they confined their attention chiefly to fiscal details and financial operations, with which foreigners, in his opinion, were alone competent to deal. Without pretending to judge of European nationalities, he believed that Oriental nations could be well ruled only by a strong, enlightened, paternal despotism, and that the adoption of the approved Western expedients for controlling the central administration or its local representatives would result simply in confusion and anarchy. For Egypt his ideal was a highly centralised administration under his own uncontrolled direction, and as soon as he convinced himself that Lord Dufferin's programme was inconsistent with this ideal, he resigned his post as Minister of the Interior, and retired temporarily into private life.

A striking contrast to Riaz is presented by Sherif Pasha, the present Prime Minister. His bright, genial, sympathetic face, and his lively, jaunty manner make it difficult to believe that he is by birth a Turk, and that he has spent the greater part of his life in the East. In some respects he is more a European than an Oriental. He is frank, honest, and loyal, a gentleman in manners and feelings, tolerably well

educated, speaks French correctly and fluently as if it were his mother tongue, and has always professed sympathy with popular liberty and constitutional government. His Oriental defects are a want of prolonged energy and logical perseverance, and an indomitable love of ease and comfort. In the time of Ismail he did not altogether conceal his disapproval of the prevalent tyranny and abuses, but he had not the courage or energy to resist, protest, or remonstrate. With the aspirations of the National Party, after Ismail's deposition, he in some measure sympathised, and on the fall of Riaz he consented after some hesitation to accept the post of Prime Minister and carry out a policy of constitutional reform ; but when he found that the Chamber of Deputies was under the leadership and control of men with revolutionary aims who were ready to provoke foreign political complications he retired in disgust. To Lord Dufferin's programme, on the contrary, he has always given a loyal support, and he is now endeavouring, not very energetically perhaps, but at least honestly, to carry it out.

The third member of the trio differs very much from both of the others. In natural abilities he is immeasurably superior to either. It has been my lot to be brought into contact with not a few Oriental statesmen and diplomatists, but I have never met one who could for a moment bear comparison with Nubar. With the extensive general knowledge, and the broad, liberal, enlightened view of European statesmen of the first rank, he combines the suppleness and

subtlety of mind, the power of adapting himself to circumstances, the rapidity of conception and the fertility of resource of the genuine Oriental, and to all this he adds a charm of manner, and an artistic power of lucid explanation and graphic description peculiarly his own. Many years before a National Party had been heard or thought of, he conceived the plan of introducing legality and good government into Egypt, with the technical assistance and moral support, but without the political domination, of the foreigner. It is well known that with this aim in view he succeeded, after many checks and disappointments, in creating the International Law Courts—not indeed in the form he desired, but in a form which was a great improvement on the preceding institutions—and when the history of Ismail's reign comes to be written with something like full knowledge, it will be seen that it was Nubar who systematically undermined the arbitrary power of the tyrannical, unscrupulous Viceroy, and greatly contributed to bringing about his deposition. For reasons which can easily be surmised, he has not yet obtained in the new *régime* the place to which his previous activity entitled him, but no doubt sooner or later he will again come to the front. Meanwhile, it is much to be regretted that, with the remarkable qualities which he possesses, and sympathising as he does with Lord Dufferin's programme, he should not yet have played a prominent part in the work of reorganisation.

Among the junior members of this group there are some men of promise, who will doubtless be

members of future Cabinets, such as Tigrane Pasha and Yakoub Artin Bey, both of Armenian origin, and Butros Pasha and Wassif Bey, both of whom are Copts. When we regard, however, the group as a whole, we are not disposed to take a very sanguine view of the prospects of constitutional government in Egypt. Men who have always lived in contact with a personal, despotic government have naturally more of the bureaucrat and the courtier than of the statesman. In appearance, language, manners, and habits the Pashas and Beys of Cairo are more than half Europeanised, but in the inner recesses, in the fundamental conceptions and secret springs of action, they have preserved, to a large extent, the old Oriental traditions. The Ethiopian may don European costume, but he does not change his skin. It is only snakes that change their skins, and the new skins which they put on are remarkably like the old ones which they have discarded.

In this respect the Beys and Pashas of Cairo represent very fairly the Egyptian administration as a whole. When viewed from the outside it appears thoroughly European. It has, for example, its Council of Ministers, its Ministries of the Interior, Foreign Affairs, Justice, Finance, Public Works, and Public Instruction, its Audit Office, and its Law Courts—in a word all the principal Government offices which we find in the great European capitals. In the provinces likewise it has its Governors and Sub-governors, its councils, permanent commissions, inspectors, engineers, judges, schools, and, in short,

all the institutions which are supposed to insure public order and develop the material and moral well-being of the people. If we wish, however, to preserve the illusion, we must not examine the details or the results, for a close inspection would show that though the mechanism is European the mode of working it is emphatically Oriental. All grades of the administrative hierarchy, from his Excellency the Minister down to the village-sheikh and the rural policeman, are animated with an arbitrary despotic spirit, a contempt for legality, and a sublime indifference to private rights when these happen to conflict with the interests of the Government or its representatives. In the higher spheres this arbitrary character is concealed by external forms and mitigated by a regard for appearances, but the lower we descend the more clearly it stands forth in its repulsive nakedness, until it assumes at the bottom of the scale—and sometimes even considerably higher up—the undisguised form of unmitigated brutality. The ordinary subordinate official rarely makes even a pretence of respecting the rights of private individuals, unless he has reason to fear that the infraction of them may have disagreeable personal consequences for himself, and as, in his dealings with the ignorant, submissive fellaheen, he has little or nothing to fear from official or other kinds of retribution, these unfortunates are generally treated with an injustice, brutality, and cruelty, of which those who have never lived in the East can hardly form an adequate conception. Whenever a difficulty arises, even when it

might be easily prevented or removed by the exercise of a little ordinary intelligence, recourse is immediately had to the kurbash as the time-honoured and most convenient means of solution. A Mudir, for example, instead of taking measures for the prevention of crime or organising some regular means of detecting and arresting criminals, prefers to remain inactive till the commission of some serious crime of which he is obliged, for some exceptional reason, to take official cognisance, and then he causes a large number of people, chosen more or less at random, to be arrested and unmercifully beaten, in the hope that some of them may confess or give testimony which will lead to the detection of the culprits. In this case brutality has at least an object, but often it is practised by the minor officials simply from habit. A native policeman, for example, who wishes to make a fellah move on, will generally begin by giving him a sharp blow or a violent push, though a simple request would serve the purpose equally well, and if any remonstrance is made by the victim it is regarded and summarily punished as an act of insubordination.

By these and similar radical vices, a detailed description of which would more than exhaust the reader's patience, the Egyptian administration shows its essentially Oriental character and betrays its Turkish origin. Though dressed in European costume, it is a child not of Western Europe but of Stamboul. Even Mehemet Ali, the founder of modern Egypt, who was far more intelligent than Turkish

Pashas generally are, was a ruler of the Turkish type, and his successors inherited more of his defects than his good qualities. It is often said that the Turks are good administrators, and that they have proved their right to the title by preserving for centuries a hybrid empire composed of mutually hostile nationalities. This is a mistake. What the Turks really possess, and what has enabled them to maintain so long their political position in Eastern Europe and Western Asia, is not administrative talent in our sense of the term, but military bravery and the other manly qualities of a vigorous dominant race, assisted by the Byzantine diplomatic cunning which had its home in Constantinople long before the Turanian hordes of Islam crossed the Bosphorus. In spite of the European influence and European ideas which have gradually penetrated into the Turkish empire, the Turkish Government remains what it was at the time of the conquest—a military despotism, profoundly indifferent to the welfare of its subjects, and confining its attention exclusively to the warding off of foreign invasions, the prevention or suppression of native insurrections, and the collection of the taxes. In Egypt the task of government has been exceptionally easy. Since the extermination of the Mamelukes and the subsequent expulsion of the Albanians by whom the Mamelukes were destroyed, there has been little necessity or scope for Byzantine statecraft. The great mass of the population have always shown themselves submissive and docile, and if the Turkish dominant caste had possessed any real administrative

talent, they had an excellent opportunity of exercising it. But what have they really done? They have easily maintained a certain semblance of order by ruling with a strong hand, and some of the Viceroys have developed the material resources of the country in order to obtain the pecuniary means required for realising their ambitious schemes, nowise identical with the interests of Egypt; but no serious attempt has ever been made to replace the wholesale, indiscriminate, arbitrary use of the *kurbash* by even-handed justice or to supplant in the people the feeling of slavish fear by some higher motive for loyalty. As to respect for the law, the existence of any such feeling is a physical impossibility; for Egyptians, like other people, can only respect what exists or what at least they believe to exist, and no one, so far as I am aware, indulges in the pleasing illusion that there is any law in Egypt so far as natives are concerned.

With regard to this matter I once had a curious conversation with a high official in what is euphemistically termed the Ministry of Justice—on the principle, I presume, of *lucus a non lucendo*—for, according to the evangelical maxim, "By their fruits ye shall know them," the term Ministry of Injustice would be a much more appropriate designation. This worthy official, who has a great reputation for extensive and accurate knowledge regarding the department in which he is one of the brightest luminaries, on being asked by me what were the laws according to which the judges in the civil and criminal courts decided the cases brought before them, replied at first in an

evasive way, and after a good deal of hesitation he remarked that there were a great many ministerial circulars. "And these circulars," I said, "are no doubt methodically arranged and carefully indexed so as to form a systematic body of jurisprudence." My interlocutor, fearing perhaps that I should request him to show me the collection and the index, refrained from indorsing my supposition, and confined himself to some vague remarks, from which I drew the conclusion that the judges were guided more by the light of nature than by any written or printed laws. Now I am quite ready to admit that the absence of codified legislation may not be a very great evil in a country which possesses a body of intelligent, upright judges, familiarly acquainted with an unwritten, traditional system of jurisprudence; but Egypt unfortunately possesses nothing of the sort. Any clear judicial conceptions which may have existed in the time of the early Arab dynasties have long been undermined and obliterated by the traditional, systematic corruption and casuistry of the Kadis, and anything which may have survived this long process of disintegration must have been rendered confused and obscure by recent attempts to supplant gradually the old Koranic law by modern French legislation. Supposing for a moment that the judges of what are sometimes termed "the reformed native courts," to distinguish them from the old courts of the Kadi, were well-educated, conscientious, hard-working men, they would find it very difficult, if not impossible, to evolve anything practically useful out of an undigested

chaotic conglomeration of old Koranic and modern Napoleonic jurisprudence, diluted by the diffuse lucubrations of successive uneducated, muddle-headed Egyptian Ministers of Justice. But the judges in question are anything but well-educated, conscientious men. Not one in a dozen of them has ever received an elementary juridical education, or a decent education of any kind, and as for their conscientiousness, I may say briefly that until the establishment of the International Courts, which take cognisance only of cases in which the interests of foreigners are concerned, the idea of a judge on Egyptian soil being incorruptible probably never dawned on the Egyptian mind. Perhaps some fellah of extraordinary originality and vigour of mind may—by the careful abstraction of everything he had ever seen or heard—have attained to the abstract ideas of impartiality and incorruptibility; but he could hardly think of combining his new abstract ideas with his conception of a judge—a cunning, greedy, unscrupulous rascal, ever ready to decide in favour of friends and relatives, or to sell his decision to the highest bidder. The truth is that the native law courts, like the other branches of the administration—though some of them are Europeanised in external appearance—are all in reality Oriental to the core, in the worst sense of the term. If they were to be suddenly abolished, I am not at all sure that any very serious evil consequences would result, for in a country where everything is directed by the arbitrary will of the authorities, laws are a mere ornamental appendage to the received system of government, and the

uniformity and stability which they are intended to create are entirely out of place. When any temporary uniformity of action is required it can be most conveniently attained by ministerial circulars, which, if not issued simultaneously, do not require to be logically consistent with each other.

Having stated in a general way that the Egyptian administration by its defects and its vices betrays its Turkish origin, I may perhaps be supposed to favour the idea that it might be improved by introducing the native fellah element. To prevent misconceptions I may state that I do not hold this view, and that it is not confirmed by experience. The introduction of the native Egyptian element into the higher grades of the official hierarchy has produced a certain amount of weakness and additional confusion without removing or even diminishing the radical vices of the system. The man of fellah origin, when raised to a position of responsibility, naturally seeks to imitate the manners and customs of the class into which he has been admitted by the favour of the Khedive or the patronage of a Pasha, and he generally adds some vices of his own, such as the inordinate love of gain, which is, as a rule, much stronger in the Egyptian and the Arab than in the Turk. But perhaps, say some people, the native Egyptians, if they had been entirely liberated from Turco-Circassian rule as the National Party desired, might have created for themselves a pure and efficient administration. I confess I cannot find many facts in support of that

opinion. A five years' experience in the East, and a considerably longer experience of human nature in general, make me somewhat sceptical with regard to the hypothetical predictions of the foreign sympathisers with the Egyptian National movement. Men who have been born and bred in an atmosphere of arbitrary despotism do not easily get rid of the moral poison which they have partly inherited from their ancestors and partly inhaled from the experience of everyday life. The Oriental easily and rapidly learns to use with fluency the truisms and cant phrases of Western philosophical Liberalism, but he is slow to acquire the political judgment, the respect for legality, the pecuniary honesty and the other qualities commonly displayed by European statesmen and officials, and, whatever his own personal qualities may be, he is powerless to create in the masses or even in the upper ranks of society that mysterious controlling power of strong, healthy, enlightened, public opinion which is an essential condition of liberal, constitutional government. The fellaheen, long oppressed by foreign taskmasters, do not even possess certain elementary qualifications displayed by some other Mussulman populations of the Turkish Empire, as, for example, the sturdy feelings of honesty, truthfulness, and self-respect which we find so generally among the Turkish peasantry of Asia Minor. I have even grave doubts as to whether the native fellaheen element could create a decent administration on the despotic principle, for one of the most prominent traits of the

Egyptian national character—far more prominent than in the dominant caste—is the incapacity to invent or adapt means for any given object, even in the petty concerns of everyday life, and this incapacity generally manifests itself in utter helplessness as soon as there is any unexpected modification of customary routine. Any one who has lived in immediate contact with the native Egyptian population must have daily and hourly had his temper severely tried by this national peculiarity, and must have gradually formed a very low estimate of Egyptian intelligence so far as the talent of invention and organisation is concerned. But we need not waste more time in speculating or arguing about unrealised hypothetical contingencies; we shall have quite enough to do if we confine our attention to facts and practical considerations.

My immediate object in giving here a brief description of the Egyptian administration was to put the reader in a position to judge for himself how far the Anglo-French Control fulfilled the whole duty of a Protectorate. He will probably have already come to the conclusion that the Control, by restricting its efforts to the reform of the financial administration took a very narrow view of its duties, as the representative of the two protecting Powers. But was it not preparing to extend gradually the sphere of its influence and to undertake administrative reforms in the widest sense of the term? I think not, and I may quote here as a characteristic incident one of the facts which tend to confirm my opinion. An

enlightened, influential Egyptian, when out of office, suggested one day to one of the Controllers that the material and moral welfare of the population could be most effectually advanced by a radical reform of the native tribunals, and he was proceeding to explain how the arbitrary spirit of the administration and all the innumerable abuses to which it gave rise could be corrected only by this means, when he was suddenly interrupted by his interlocutor, who asked with a triumphant air: "What need have the peasantry for tribunals when I am here to protect them?" The reply displayed on the part of the speaker an egregious amount of self-confidence and a lamentable ignorance of the real condition of the rural population. He evidently did not know or suspect that whilst he was sitting in his office in Cairo, devising means for diminishing the expenditure, increasing the revenue, and improving generally the financial situation, the fellaheen in the provinces were being oppressed and robbed by the village-treasurer, the Sheik-el-beled, the rural policeman, the Nazir-kism, and the Mudir, without any means of resistance or redress. It was of no use to apply to the judges, for they always sided with the stronger or the richer party. It was of no use to apply to the Governor, because he could not well check or punish malpractices in which he himself indulged, and he did not like to encourage the habit of petitioning which tends to weaken authority. As for the foreign Controller in Cairo who imagined himself a universal protector of the oppressed, the peasants had never heard of his

existence, and even if they had known of his benevolent intentions very few of them would have imprudently undertaken a long journey in the vague, uncertain hope of obtaining from him momentary relief.

On the whole, however, it is hardly to be regretted that the Controllers took a somewhat narrow view of their duties and refrained from attempting any general administrative or judicial reforms, because such an attempt would probably have had little practical result and might have troubled prematurely the cordial relations existing between the two Western Cabinets. In financial matters the English and French Controllers had little difficulty in working cordially together because financial science, in so far as it had to be applied in Egypt, does not admit of much difference of opinion and does not afford much scope for the display of national prejudices ; but, if any great administrative or judicial reform had been attempted, the radical differences between English and French conceptions would at once have become apparent. It was better, therefore, if Egyptian administration was to be thoroughly reorganised, that the work should be undertaken by one Power, English or French. The work of reorganisation has been further facilitated by the retirement of Riaz Pasha, who imagined, like the Controller above mentioned, that there was no necessity for reformed tribunals or any similar check on the minor officials, and that the best means of correcting the prevalent abuses consisted of increased bureaucratic discipline under his own direction.

A much more serious, though much less generally known, accusation which has sometimes been brought against the Controllers is that they took a very short-sighted view of the financial situation, and did not perceive that the rural population were not only oppressed and impoverished by corrupt officials but at the same time threatened by a serious economic crisis. This is a matter which deserves our most serious attention, not merely because it must be taken into consideration in finally passing judgment on the Control, but also because the supposed danger, if it has any real existence, should be constantly kept in view during the work of reorganisation. No administrative, judicial, or political institutions, however cunningly devised, can secure the welfare of a people, if the economic conditions on which its material well-being depends are in an unsatisfactory state. We must, however, prepare ourselves for a serious examination of the subject by making the acquaintance of the peasantry themselves and questioning them as to their means of livelihood. For this purpose I must request the reader to accompany me on a visit to an Egyptian village. If he kindly consents, I shall endeavour to make the visit as brief as is consistent with the object in view, for I am as impatient as he is to come to the region of practical conclusions, and I am aware that we have still a long way to travel before reaching the summit of the intervening ridge from which it is possible to view the Egyptian Question as a whole.

CHAPTER V.

THE FELLAH AT HOME.

Outward aspect of an Egyptian village—A poor fellah's household—History of the family—An Omdeh, or village notable—A representative of the fellah middle class—A dinner at the Omdeh's—Egyptian etiquette—The village Kadi—The Copernican system of astronomy demolished—Reasons for studying the Egyptian rural commune.

A FELLAH village, when seen at a distance through the clear Egyptian atmosphere, has the appearance of a dirty-brown, shapeless mass of ruins, half concealed in a grove of palm-trees. When you approach near enough to distinguish the houses, it may assume the appearance of a rudely-fortified inclosure, with a small citadel and square towers placed at irregular intervals, some on the outer wall and some within. There seems also to be a second, minor citadel, with diminutive, fantastic turrets, and an elegantly-shaped dome, constructed evidently for religious rather than warlike purposes. A closer inspection dispels this second illusion. What seemed to be a continuous wall of defence turns out to be merely the windowless walls of closely-grouped, flat-roofed dwelling-houses; the square towers and bastions, with their loopholes for

musketry, resolve themselves into the upper stories of a few houses of larger dimensions, with long slits in the wall for light and ventilation; the gloomy, frowning citadel is found to be merely the hareem and the guest-chamber of the unwarlike, uxorious *Omdeh*, as the chief notable of the place is commonly called; the second, minor citadel, with the fantastic turrets, is simply a gigantic dovecot; and the dome which looked so imposing is a modest monument built of unburnt bricks to perpetuate the memory of a revered saint who enjoys a very restricted local reputation. All that remains of the illusion is the sporadic palm-trees, rearing their feathery heads so high that they hardly give any shade, and the dark-brown colour of the houses, built of those same unbaked native bricks which the Children of Israel were ordered to make without straw. Here and there, perhaps, the modern spirit of innovation may be detected in the form of a little bit of whitewash, but when it occurs it is so small that it does not disturb the general dusky effect. In the foreground we have a pond of stagnant, half-putrid water for the development of human epidemics and cattle plague; irrigated fields with various crops of gigantic stature; male and female peasants in picturesque costume; children in their native nudity; buffaloes with uncouth forms suggestive of antediluvian existence; donkeys great and small, which have none of the laziness and stupidity for which the Western representatives of their race are proverbial; and perhaps a line of camels with stately, measured gait, and dreamy, long-suffering expression of coun-

tenance. In the distance we catch a glimpse of the reddish-yellow desert, and the Libyan or Arabic range as a background, whilst the brilliant, cloudless sky of the sunny South completes the picture. Such scenes are familiar, not only to those who have travelled in Egypt, but likewise to all who have visited a few modern picture-galleries. What is much less known, and what I mean to describe, is the internal economy of such a village, and the everyday life of the inhabitants, which is not by any means so tranquil and destitute of human interest as is generally supposed. The fellah has his troubles and his joys, his fears and his hopes, his good luck and his misfortunes, like other mortals; and if his life has never yet been depicted by novel-writers of the naturalistic school, it is because it has not yet been studied by competent, sympathetic observers. I can recommend it to novel-writers of that school who are in search of a subject. If they examine it closely, they will find ample scope for picturesque grouping, psychological analysis, and pathetic description; and they may even discover, here and there, a little bit of the tragic element, which helps to enliven the monotony of commonplace naturalistic descriptions. For my part, I have simply to give such unvarnished facts as may be collected by an unimaginative observer.

Let us begin by visiting the house of a poor member of the community so as to get an idea of fellah life in its simplest form. In a blank wall about eight feet high, composed of unburnt bricks, and veneered with a coating of sun-dried mud, we

find a small door, through which no one above five or six years of age could pass without stooping. As this is the only entrance, we conclude that the proprietor does not possess a horse, buffalo, cow, or any of the larger kinds of agricultural implements, and that any hopes he may have of acquiring live stock in the immediate future do not soar above the possession of a cat, or a few barndoor fowls, and perhaps a diminutive donkey. A glance at the interior confirms this conclusion. The inclosure consists of three small courts—if a space twelve feet by six can be dignified with such a name—connected by holes in the partition walls, similar in size to the entrance. The first court is occupied almost entirely by a windowless mud-hut, covered by a flat roof of maize stalks mixed with clay. This small structure is at once the kitchen and winter-bedroom of the whole family, comprising a married couple, the mother of the husband, and two young children. A large, flat-topped brick stove, about two and a half feet in height, which takes up two-thirds of the dark interior, is used in the daytime for baking the bread and cooking the scanty fare, and at night in winter it serves as a bed for all the inmates without distinction of age or sex. During the warm summer nights a family bedroom is extemporised by the simple process of spreading a bit of reed-matting on the ground in one of the other "courts." In the first of these are two hollow mud pillars about three feet high, for storing the grain and other domestic provisions, and around these primitive provision-chests are collected half a dozen lean

chickens, evidently very anxious to make a closer acquaintance with the contents. In the third or innermost court there is nothing but a small mud hut, the door of which is fastened by a native wooden lock—an ingenious contrivance which I have not seen anywhere but in Egypt, and which, if really indigenous, proves that at some period of history there must have been an Egyptian less destitute of mechanical ingenuity than his countrymen of the present day. Without making a personal inspection of the little hut, we can construct with tolerable certainty an inventory of the objects which it contains. There will be the gaudily painted wooden trunk, in which the wife, when a bride, brought her modest *trousseaux* to her new home; the few articles of wearing apparel and female ornament not actually in use; some copper cooking utensils, and a little pot of *kohl*, used for painting the rims of the eyelids, either with a view to preventing ophthalmia, or simply for purposes of female coquetry. My private conviction is that the *kohl* is kept for æsthetic rather than medicinal purposes, and this conviction of mine is not a mere baseless supposition. First, I know that Fatma, the mother of the family, has never from her youth upwards had any faith in medicines, and that whenever any member of the household is ill, the only remedies which she employs, and which she finds to be very efficacious, are little scraps of paper on which the village Fikki has inscribed one of "the beautiful names of the Deity," or some equally potent cabalistic sign. If the evil is of an ordinary kind,

the scraps of paper may be simply hung round the neck of the patient; but if it obstinately clings to the vitals, then one of the charms must be rolled up into a little ball and taken internally, in which case the cure is certain—at least as certain as anything can be in human affairs. In Fatma's pharmacopœia, therefore, such remedies as *kohl*, which has admittedly no supernatural power, cannot hold a very prominent place. Secondly, I happen to know that Fatma has, like a good many members of her sex, a secret fondness for admiration. I do not mean to insinuate that in essentials she is unfaithful to her husband. Far from it. Her old mother-in-law, who exercises a very strict and constant supervision over all her actions, would willingly give a certificate of her fidelity. She values her husband's affection much more than any momentary, fortuitous look of admiration from a stranger, but she thinks that "the light of a dark eye in woman," which is intensified by the use of *kohl*, helps to secure the former without diminishing the chances of the latter. The former is to her the paramount interest of life, for if it were lost—which Allah in His mercy forbid!—her domestic happiness, apart from sentimental considerations, would be seriously endangered. Her husband, once indifferent to her, would probably, in spite of his poverty, soon take unto himself a younger spouse, and the harmony which has hitherto reigned in the household would be at an end. Foreseeing the possibility of this calamity, she has not trusted to mere human precautions, but has bought for a good many piastres from her spiritual

adviser a very potent charm for the preservation of marital affection, and she always wears it as an amulet round her neck, half concealed by her silver-gilt necklace. The use of *kohl* is, therefore, merely a subsidiary means, intended to make assurance doubly sure; though she prudently "keeps her powder dry," the real mainstay of her hope is in God and in the magical power of amulets.

The incidental mention of *kohl* has led me into a somewhat lengthy digression. Let us return to the inventory of the family effects. The articles which I have enumerated constitute all the movable property of the family, unless we include under this term the little stock of millet in one of the hollow pillars, and the half-dozen lean chickens aforementioned, which have been taught to subsist by their own exertions. The premises therefore, though by no means spacious and anything but commodious, are quite sufficient for all practical wants, and if the live stock should be hereafter increased by the addition of a few kids, lambs, or even a donkey, no additional accommodation will be required, for the new comers can sleep comfortably in close proximity to the family without any danger of bipeds and quadrupeds interfering with each other's comfort.

The head of this modest household, Hassan by name, is a poor man, but, on the whole, a respectable member of society. He has, in that prudent, moderate degree which is commonly called "the golden mean," the ordinary vices, such as timidity, trickery, and mendacity, which are requisite for a

man in his humble condition ; and the bastinadoing which he has repeatedly received in the course of his life has been, perhaps, not always quite undeserved. But he has never been guilty of any great crime, and in a country like Egypt, where corporal punishment is lavishly dispensed by every one who has a little legitimate or illegitimate authority, bastinadoing does not entail, among the poorer classes, any loss of social consideration. If a Bey or Pasha, found guilty of corruption, extortion, cruelty, and all the other crimes which men in authority have opportunities of committing, should, by some hardly conceivable combination of improbable circumstances, make personal acquaintance with the kurbash, the whole fabric of political and social order would be in immediate danger of crumbling to pieces, but among humble fellahs, who have no feelings of personal dignity, and who are supposed to be impervious to all ordinary means of persuasion, the kurbash is at once the most necessary and the most convenient instrument of administration. Without it, if we are to believe the most accredited native authorities, it would be impossible to maintain order, collect taxes, make judicial investigations, or fulfil any of the multifarious duties of official life. In a word, the Egyptian functionary without his kurbash would be as helpless as a boatman without his oars. It is not surprising therefore that Hassan's reputation has not suffered from his having been repeatedly chastised in the ordinary patriarchal way, and that the physical pain which he endured on those occasions,

even when undeserved, has not excited any permanent indignation either in himself or in the bosom of his family. His good wife Fatma was naturally sorry for him when he came limping home with swollen feet, but she is far too practical a woman to nurse sentimental grievances or to mourn long over the fact that her husband has had the same misfortunes as her father, her brothers, and all the other men she has ever known. Like a commonplace Oriental she takes life as she finds it, and applies her innate, unreasoned, fatalistic philosophy to all spheres of her experience. In no sphere does she display it more conspicuously than in that of her maternal bereavements. When you see her returning from the canal with her earthenware pitcher poised on her head, and her long blue veil drawn half over her face, in deference to the religious precept—very carelessly observed in Egypt—that a woman should not show her countenance to strangers of the other sex, you might readily assume that her graceful, elastic figure, only half concealed under the thin, loose, flexible, dark blue garment which constitutes her whole attire, had never known the fatigues and sufferings of maternity; but in reality she has borne no less than six children, and of these only two have survived. Though by no means a heartless mother, she did not grieve and mourn long when the little ones were successively taken from her. She had never heard about "the survival of the fittest," as a scientific dogma, but she had remarked within the restricted limits of her own experience and personal observation that weakly

children generally die, especially if they happen to be born at the seasons when their mothers have little time to attend to domestic affairs, and she knows that a sickly child, instead of being a help to the family, is a burden to itself and its parents in this busy, hard-working world. It is foolish, therefore, to buy charms or amulets to protect such from the evil eye or the angel of death. Reflections of this kind did not prevent her from wailing loudly and weeping bitterly when the little ones had ceased to breathe and were taken away to be buried in a lonely, sandy knoll at a little distance from the village, but in the course of a few days the wound to her maternal instincts gradually healed, and she was then ready to admit that Allah did well to take weakly children to Himself.

Hassan was not always as poor as he is now. When his father died some twenty years ago, the family possessed twenty-five acres of good land, with all that was necessary to cultivate them, and lived in a large house with a stable, in which were a pair of buffaloes and a donkey. He and two of his married brothers remained united under the authority of the eldest one, and for a time things went well with them—especially during the American war when cotton was in great demand and brought unheard-of prices. Grain, too, was pretty high in price, and the members of the household who were not required for the cultivation of the paternal acres made good day wages in a neighbouring cotton plantation belonging to the Omdeh. Hassan, who was then a mere boy, earned

during the cotton-picking season as much as two and a half piastres a day, and put his earnings into the common family purse. At eighteen he married Fatma, and already the tide of fortune had begun to turn. The price of cotton, which was by far the most profitable crop, had fallen to less than a half, and the Government took to demanding the payment of the taxes a year or two in advance. In these circumstances it was impossible to make the two ends meet. A Greek who had settled as a little shopkeeper in the village came to the rescue of the distressed family by lending them money to pay the taxes, but the relief was only momentary and created an additional burden, for in a few months the tax-gatherer demanded more money, and the Greek insisted on the payment not only of the money which he had lent but also of as much again by way of interest. There was no money in the family purse, so the kurbash was applied, but without effect, and things looked very black indeed, till the Greek money-lender proposed to buy the standing crops. By dint of long and laborious bargaining he was induced to raise his first offer to about two-thirds of the real value, and the money thus obtained was spent, after deducting part of the usurer's claim, in paying the taxes; but as the debt could not be entirely paid off, and the tax-gatherer soon returned, the difficulties began afresh. The kurbash was again called in, and applied vigorously till the soles of the eldest brother's feet were so swollen and lacerated that he could not walk, but it extracted from him merely solemn

asseverations that he had not a piastre more to give. This time a remedy was found in the sale of the buffaloes, the donkey, and part of the household goods, and a few weeks of tranquillity were thereby secured, but in the long run the remedy only aggravated the evil, for the family, having no longer the cattle required for cultivating the land, was less able than before to meet the tax-gatherer's demands. The village-sheikh, however, who was in a vague, informal way, held responsible for the deficit, suspected now that there was money concealed somewhere in or near the house, and in order to discover the hidden treasure, he used his ordinary divining-rod, the kurbash. For a long time the instrument did not prove efficacious, but when all the brothers had repeatedly undergone severe castigation, and the Sheikh hinted at the necessity of applying his divining-rod to some of the female members of the family, a small bag of gold, which had been buried many years before, came to light. As it barely sufficed to pay all the arrears of taxation, the still outstanding claim of the Greek usurer, and the exactions of the collector, and as new instalments of taxation were falling due, the divining-rod was again employed in the hope that some more hidden treasure might be discovered; but this time all efforts were fruitless, because the poor people had really not another piastre in their possession, and starvation was staring them in the face. Reduced to despair, the eldest brother, Ahmet, one evening announced to the family circle that he was determined to leave the village and seek

his fortune in some other part of the country. As a better alternative Hassan naïvely suggested that the acres which they had inherited from their father should be sold. "And who, you fool," asked the head of the family, "would consent to buy them, or even take them as a gift? They cannot yield now the amount required for the taxes. Why should one labour only for the tax-gatherer, and himself die of starvation?" The question was unanswerable, and all manner of supplications failed to move Ahmet in his decision. Early one morning he left the village with his wife and family, and went no one knew whither, and not long afterwards the second brother followed his example. If it was difficult for four brothers, working together, to keep their heads above water, it was of course much more difficult for two, who had no longer any live stock or capital. What made their position worse was that they were still officially considered to be four, and consequently they had much more than their fair share of unpaid labour on the public works. Finding that they were sinking deeper and deeper into difficulties, they abandoned the family property and the old house to the creditors; and Hassan, separating himself from his brother, built for himself the little hut in which we have just seen him. He says that the taxation is now lightened, and that if he had land and cattle of his own he could support himself and pay his taxes regularly; but he has no money wherewith to buy land or cattle, and he has not even credit enough to rent land directly from the adminstration of the State Domains,

which has a large estate in the neighbourhood. When he ventured once to apply to one of the officers of the Domains administration, he was asked what security he could give for the payment of the rent, and as he had none to offer, his application was refused. His only means of gaining a livelihood, therefore, is to associate himself with one of his richer neighbours, who rents a large parcel of Domain lands and sub-lets to him as many acres as he can cultivate, furnishing him with the necessary cattle, implements, and seed. In return the neighbour takes three-fourths of the harvest, and Hassan gets for himself the remaining fourth, from which is deducted, of course, any grain which he may have received in advance for his immediate wants before harvest time.

Let us pass now from the poor fellah, who occupies the lowest step in the social scale of Egyptian village life, to the rich Omdeh or notable, who sits comfortably at the top of the ladder. As we approach his house, situated near the centre of the village, we see before us a high, wide doorway, through which a loaded camel might pass without difficulty. The archway, like the doors of the better houses in the village, has some architectural pretensions, being surmounted by a simple decoration in sun-dried clay such as may sometimes be seen carved in stone over the entrance to a mosque. As centrepiece to the decoration is a circular piece of bright-coloured faïence, resembling a large soup-plate. Fixed to the wall in a niche under the gateway stands a broad

wooden bench, covered with an Oriental carpet, and seated cross-legged on it are three important-looking personages, engaged apparently in weighty consultation. All three are dressed very much alike—white turbans, long black robes of a substance which looks like thin, unglazed silk, and a coil of fine, undyed woollen material called a *kheram,* wound in picturesque fashion round the head, neck, and shoulders. Squatting close to them in a respectful attitude is a fourth figure, also in a white turban and long black robe, but without a *kheram,* and before them stands a group of ordinary fellahs, like our friend Hassan, in a costume consisting simply of a long, light blue shirt and a felt skull-cap. An experienced eye can at once interpret the scene. These venerable personages are, to use a Biblical phrase, " giving judgment in the gate." The old man, with the short, grey beard, is the Omdeh, and his two younger companions are village-sheikhs, while the fourth figure in the respectful attitude, is the Coptic *Sarraf,* who is village-treasurer and tax-collector. The fellahs standing before them are probably defaulters in the payment of the taxes or perhaps men who have been selected for the *corvée ;* and the village authorities are remonstrating with them about the payment of arrears, or instructing them where they are to go to execute the forced labour on the canals. The presence of the Sarraf, with a bundle of papers in his hand, favours rather the former supposition. Whatever the business on hand may be, it is interrupted by our arrival. The Omdeh rises and advances to meet us, holding out the

palm of his right hand, and saying in a cordial tone, "May your morning be happy!" We place the palm of our right hand on his, and then raise it to our lips and forehead, replying at the same time, "May your morning be happy and blessed!" This customary salutation having been exchanged likewise with the three other dignitaries, we are led through the archway into a court about twenty-five yards square, surrounded by a range of two-storied buildings. The ground floor of these buildings is used as storehouses, kitchens, and servants' rooms, and the upper story, with its unglazed, trellised windows, contains the apartments of the proprietor and his four married sons, comprising altogether a numerous patriarchal family. Three sides of the court are devoted to *hareems* and other apartments to which a stranger is not admitted; the fourth is the *madara* or *selamlyk* (as the Turks say), for the reception of visitors. To this latter we mount by an external, brick staircase in a corner of the court, and find a long, rectangular, half-carpeted apartment, with no furniture except a divan running along the whole length of the inner wall, and capable of seating comfortably at least twenty persons. The internal arrangements have evidently been made on the unjustifiable assumption that it is always oppressively hot out of doors, for when sitting on the divan we have the aforesaid unglazed windows at our back, and, high up in the wall before us, a series of loopholes for ventilation, so that it is impossible to avoid sitting in a draught, which is not always agreeable, even in sunny Egypt, during the

winter months. Fortunately, Egyptian village etiquette does not forbid the use of warm overcoats, and even railway wrappers, in a reception-room ; and the interest of the conversation soon makes us forget any little physical discomforts. The Omdeh is a clear-headed, practical man, who can give intelligible and definite answers to all reasonable questions about the affairs of the village and its immediate neighbourhood, and he has little or none of that suspicious timidity which so often makes men of his class display to inquisitive foreigners either obstinate reticence or indiscriminate mendacity. We must carefully avoid, of course, any question or remark that could awaken in his mind a suspicion that our object in collecting information is to elaborate some scheme for increasing the taxes, for if he once conceives such a suspicion any information which he afterwards gives us will be absolutely worthless, and all the cunning of which his fellah nature is capable will be exerted to lead us astray. As yet he does not suspect any nefarious fiscal designs on our part, for his answers are frank and loyal. If they are made in a dry, laconic way, which does not encourage discursive talk, we have a compensation in the strong natural loquacity of one of the Sheikhs and of the Sarraf, as soon as they are relieved from the keen eye and oppressive presence of the stern head of the house. When, at a later period of the day, we get the Sarraf alone, and he has acquired a certain confidence in our discretion, he becomes still moie communicative, and gives us, regarding the Omdeh and his household,

some interesting details, which could not well be related in the presence of any member of the family.

The Omdeh comes, it seems, of an old family. His father, grandfather, and I know not how many more of his ancestors, held the position before him, and were always the largest landowners of the village. At present he has about a thousand acres of his own, and rents about twice as much from the State Domains, of which he sub-lets a part, and cultivates the remainder himself by the members of his household and by hired labour. His household comprises three wives—varying in age from mature fifty to tender eighteen—and his four sons with their wives and children; the whole, including servants, making up a total of fifty-five souls. The paternal inheritance is kept undivided, and all the movable property, with the exception of wearing apparel, and similar articles, are possessed in common. Each mother, with her younger children, has a separate apartment, but the food is prepared at once for the whole household, and distributed among the various apartments in proportion to the respective number of inmates. There is a common purse, and, when any one wishes to make a purchase, application must be made to the head of the family, who is purse-keeper, and with whom rests the uncontrolled power to grant or refuse. He finds it no easy task to maintain order and tolerable harmony in his domestic kingdom—especially among the women, who are prone to quarrel with each other from jealousy or similar motives—and the fact that

he succeeds so well is to be attributed to his exceptional intelligence, decision, and firmness. In his experienced hands the *patria potestas* is at once just and severe, and when any little disturbance arises it is instantaneously quelled by his simple presence. All the efforts of his ambitious, insubordinate daughters-in-law to make their husbands throw off the paternal authority, and create independent households of their own, have hitherto proved fruitless, and they have no chance of future success so long as he remains alive; but, in all probability, at his death the family will break up into four independent units, and the property will be divided among them equally, for the eldest son has not the moral influence and governing talent sufficient to play the part of *paterfamilias* with regard to his brothers, and to keep the numerous family united.

Between the rich, influential Omdeh, with his thousand ancestral acres, and the poor, landless fellah Hassan, there are of course in the village many intermediate degrees of wealth and poverty. Some families, like the Omdeh's, have land of their own, and rent a portion of the State Domains, which they either cultivate themselves or sub-let to poor neighbours. Others with less capital restrict themselves to the cultivation of their own land; while a third and much larger category are compelled, like Hassan, to borrow land, cattle, implements, and seed, and to work on the *métayer* system with one of the richer members of the community. Would the reader like to pay a hurried visit to some

representative of the fellah middle class? If so, let us step in here for a moment and take a look at the house of Suleiman. It will serve the purpose as well as any other.

The entrance to Suleiman's house is not as imposing as the archway through which we passed in visiting the Omdeh, nor is the court by any means so spacious, but both are large enough for the pair of buffaloes and the two donkeys which Suleiman is fortunate enough to possess. Unlike the Omdeh, he has no long, rectangular, carpeted *mandara* for the reception of visitors; guests are received by him in the rather dark, uncarpeted recess to the left of the doorway, and if he could prevail upon us to remain with him till the evening, he would provide for us there a very copious, savoury repast, composed of at least half a dozen courses. We must, however, decline his hospitality, for the Omdeh expects to have the honour of our company to dinner, and he would be very much offended if we gave the preference to one of his inferiors. Let us therefore simply cast a glance round the establishment and retire. The inner court, about fifteen feet square, is surrounded partly by the dwelling apartments, into which we cannot enter, partly by the stables, and partly by an open shed, in which are collected the farm implements and various articles of domestic use. In this shed we notice a most picturesque group—an old crone sitting on a primitive wooden instrument used for threshing, churning buffaloes' milk in a kid-skin suspended by a bit of palm-tree rope from a long

peg in the wall, and close to her, with his hand upon her shoulder, a young child whose perfect nudity is only partly concealed by the multitude of flies which cluster on his dark-brown skin. So far as haggard leanness and malicious hardness of expression are concerned, the old lady might fitly play the part of the First Witch in Macbeth ; and these unsympathetic characteristics are brought out into sharp relief by contrast with the plump form and happy expression of the dusky little fellah cherub, who divides his attention between the churning operation, the unexpected strangers, and the bit of sugar-cane which he is gnawing with intense satisfaction. A number of timid yet inquisitive young goats, gamboling about the group, help to complete the picture. To the merry little fellow, if he thinks at all, life doubtless seems all sugar-cane and sunshine, while the lean, haggard old woman, as we afterwards learn from our garrulous cicerone, knows *le revers de la médaille.* She is not a grandmother, as we assumed, for to be a grandmother one must begin by being a mother, and she has never taken even that first step towards the dignity of grandmaternity. Therein lies one of the secret causes of that hard lot which has made her so haggard and unsympathetic. Her barrenness was the reason, or was at least made the pretext, for her husband marrying another wife in whom all his affection was centred, and she had to live for long years in the cold shade of indifference and neglect. She had an additional misfortune in the fact that her husband, an elder

brother of Suleiman, did not live to become head of the family, so that she never had any claim to the dignity and general respect which her position as first wife of the *paterfamilias* would have entitled her to receive. Besides this, the family had been at one time very poor, and other misfortunes which it would be tedious to describe had so weighed upon her as to squeeze out of her nature any of the milk of human kindness which it may have originally possessed. She has seen the dark side of fellah life, and drunk its miseries to the dregs. Strange to say, and to the surprise of the whole family, she shows a kind of gruff, surly affection for this little child, who was an orphan almost as soon as it was born. Our garrulous cicerone cannot tell us why, but we may imagine an explanation. A candle that has been long burning low in the socket sometimes sends forth a convulsive flash of light and warmth immediately before going out for ever. Perhaps in that old, hardened heart the little orphan's winning playfulness has awakened some sleeping memory of a happy childhood in the far distant past, and though the hard features are too petrified to unbend into a smile, the "pawky" little urchin, with the wondrous penetration of infantile instinct, has discovered that there is a soft, warm place underneath.

But a truce to this imaginative psychological analysis! *Facilis descensus Averni.* If the sight of an ugly old crone, churning buffaloes' milk in a greasy kid-skin, with a dirty little naked child by her side, makes us indulge in such reflections, we are in

imminent danger of gliding down the slippery descent of tender-hearted compassion to the morbid depths of maudlin sentimentalism! The far-distant infancy of the old crone, whether happy or unhappy, has nothing whatever to do with the politico-economic investigations which led us to this village, and such an unscientific method of observation may, if persevered in, lead us into all sorts of unpractical vagaries. Once imagine that the ignorant brutalised fellaheen have human feelings like other people, and your powers of vision are vitiated, you extinguish the *lumen siccum* which is indispensable for all accurate research, and you may end by recommending, in a momentary paroxysm of sentimental humanitarianism, the restriction or even the total abolition of the omnipotent kurbash! And pray, then, what is to become of budgetary equilibrium and the interests of the bondholders? Having paid our tribute to unscientific, unpractical, human weakness, let us remain for the future, if you please, on the solid ground of prosaic facts, and, in accordance with this wise resolve, let us at once begin to question our well-informed, unimaginative cicerone about Suleiman's pecuniary affairs.

Suleiman belongs, it would seem, to the small but important category of the fellaheen whose prospects in life are improving. The secret of his success lies in two facts, first, that he is as devoid of conscientious scruples as ninety-nine per cent. of the human beings with whom in the course of his life he has come in contact, and secondly, that he is vastly superior in intelligence to at least ninety per cent. of them. His

rise and prosperity date from the hard times when the family of our friend Hassan came to grief. He was then a poor man, without patronage or protection, and for a while he suffered as much as his neighbours from the traditional tyranny and fiscal oppression which were rapidly coming to a climax. During the period of exceptional prosperity, when cotton was generally at four or five times its normal price, he had spent his gains lavishly, for his knowledge of the great outside world was too limited for him to understand that the Golden Age could not last long, and when the reaction unexpectedly came he found himself on the brink of ruin. The sudden danger awakened his exceptional intelligence and energy, which had been previously lying dormant. Dimly and instinctively he perceived that in the systematic fiscal extortion, and all the other abuses to which it naturally gave rise, there were two parties, the oppressors and the oppressed, the shearers and the shorn ; and gradually he conceived the idea that he might pass from the one to the other—that from being one of the shorn he might become one of the shearers, and keep for himself a part of the wool. The only means which he had for helping him to make the transition were his exceptional intelligence and a little bag of gold which he had secreted in the prosperous times "against a rainy day." These means amply sufficed. The first step which he took was to get himself elected one of the village-sheikhs. This gave him at once a considerable number of sheep to be shorn. At first he performed the operation with care, caution, and

laudable moderation, and afterwards, when he had conciliated the Omdeh and squared the Sub-governor, he had much greater freedom of action. With the Sarraf or village-treasurer he formed a kind of partnership on limited liability principles, and he contrived by various ingenious expedients to become possessed of some exceptionally good land, the owners of which had been ruined by his machinations. The details of the procedure need not be described, for a description not accompanied by lengthy commentaries would be quite unintelligible to any one not intimately acquainted with the details of Egyptian peasant life. Having thus acquired a certain amount of landed property, he might have contented himself, like the majority of the class to which he belonged, by letting it on advantageous conditions, increasing its amount by divers forms of rascality, and practising extortion on the poorer fellahs in his power, but Suleimàn was a man of some originality, and tried to strike out a new line. A dispute which he had about the property of a plot of land had obliged him once to go to Alexandria, and during "the law's delay" he one day strolled into the Cotton Exchange. The activity and bustle of the place pleased his active mind, and he repeated his visits till he had made numerous acquaintances and formed a general idea of the customary methods of transacting business. Gradually a new world—the world of European commercial speculation—opened out to his astonished gaze, and he thought he saw in it an easy, royal road to fortune. Experience has since taught him that on this delec-

table highway there are a great many formidable barriers and dangerous pitfalls, and he has not by any means realised the brilliant visions which he conceived in the first moment of discovery, but, in spite of losses which he has occasionally sustained, he has now a very comfortable fortune, and he could live in a much less modest style than he does if he were not afraid that ostentation might rouse the cupidity of extortioners more powerful than himself. Though belonging, therefore, apparently to the fellah middle class, he has a fortune which places him much nearer to the Omdeh than to poor landless Hassan.

Besides these various categories of agricultural fellaheen there are the artisans—the mat-makers, weavers, dyers, &c.—who form a hereditary class apart. As a rule they are more intelligent than the ordinary agriculturists, but their numbers are small and they are rarely rich, even according to the fellah standard of wealth, for the more dexterous and enterprising among them always migrate to the towns. It is therefore only the poor, inferior workmen who are to be found in the villages, and consequently the village artisans as a class do not enjoy much social consideration.

In all these classes and categories one of the most characteristic traits—and one which certainly does not conduce to material or moral welfare—is a tendency to very early marriages and to polygamy. This constitutes an important difference between the Egyptian and the Turk. In Turkey the peasant does not marry so early, and, whatever his religious belief

may be on the subject of matrimony, he generally remains in practice a monogamist; even rich Beys and Pashas, who have not the same pecuniary reasons for refraining from the plurality of wives permitted by the Koran, have rarely more than one lawful wife, except in cases where the first spouse ages much more rapidly than the husband. In Egypt, on the contrary, the peasant marries when still a mere boy, and he afterwards takes as many wives as his limited means will allow him. In these hard times very few fellahs attain the Koranic maximum of four or even three, and the great majority have only one; but this moderation is simply the result of necessity, for as soon as a fellah betters his condition he usually adds to the number. If he should fall back again into poverty, he can make his wives work for him, or he may get rid of the superfluity by divorce, which is in Egypt, as in most Mussulman countries, a very simple, inexpensive operation. Why then, the reader may feel inclined to ask, does the poor man not indulge his uxorious proclivities as freely as the rich? For two reasons: first, because he may not find many women to his taste who are ready to share his poverty in common with other wives; and secondly, because no man who has any sense of social obligations, and no woman who respects herself, would contract a marriage without giving to their friends and neighbours a *fantaseeya*, which is the Egyptian substitute for a wedding breakfast or a dancing party.

The early marriages and polygamy—or at least the sensual temperament which produces them—have

perhaps something to do with a phenomenon I have noticed, in common with other observers, throughout Egypt: namely that the fellah when a boy is often quick, active, and intelligent, and that these good qualities evaporate rapidly after he has reached the age of puberty. This is, however, merely a supposition; what we may say with certainty about early marriages and polygamy is that they have a pernicious influence in breaking up large families—a result much to be regretted from the economic point of view, because a household with several adult males and a proportionate amount of cattle, can weather many a storm in which a married couple without extraneous support would inevitably founder. The great disruptive force in large households lies in the mutual jealousies and other feminine proclivities of the married women, and consequently the more married women a household contains, the more is it in danger of breaking up. A man may have little difficulty in supporting the despotic authority of his father or of his elder brother, while his wife frets under, and kicks against, the rule of her mother-in-law or sister-in-law, who is no blood relation to her, and whom she did not know in her childhood. The danger of insubordination is of course greatly increased if one or more members of the family have a plurality of wives. A household may be so disturbed by the perpetual quarrelling in the hareem of one of its members, that it allows or compels the member in question to separate and found a house of his own, where he can have the pleasures of the

domestic discord all to himself; or a man who desires to marry a second or third wife and is prevented for economic reasons by the head of the household, may demand separation in order to have his own way. Formerly the traditional patriarchal authority was sufficient to counteract these disruptive influences, but now, in Egypt as elsewhere, patriarchal customs are being undermined by new ideas of independence, and the large families seem destined to succumb to the disintegrating forces.

The collecting, verifying, and arranging disjointed fragments of information about peasant life is a much slower and more laborious process than that of reading the codified results. Long before the intellectual appetite of the investigator is satisfied his vulgar stomachic appetite becomes clamorous, and the declining light reminds him that the sun is near the horizon. Now the Omdeh, like other good Mussulmans, is accustomed to dine at sunset, so we had better repair to his house and partake of the repast which has been prepared for us.

Almost as soon as we have entered the long rectangular room already described, a troop of servants enter, bearing, amongst other things, an enormous circular brass tray which they place on the floor, and after the customary digital ablutions we all squat cross-legged in a circle round it. I am not going to trouble the reader by reproducing the *menu* or going into any culinary details, for such things may be easily found in any Egyptian book of travels, and my aim is, as I have already stated, merely to supply

some of the omissions of my predecessors. What I wish to do is to warn the reader, who has kindly accompanied me thus far, against any involuntary infraction of Egyptian etiquette. During the first course he is in no danger of wounding the susceptibilities of the natives, for he has simply to let himself be guided by the light of Nature. In the centre of the big brass tray stands a bowl of soup, and each guest, armed with a wooden spoon, takes as much, or as little, of it as he feels inclined. Those who are not accustomed to sit cross-legged may spill a good deal of the liquid in the process of carrying it from the distant bowl to the mouth, but any awkwardness of this kind is not considered to indicate a want of good manners. It is only when the solids are brought in that the danger of awakening such suspicions begins. As there are no knives and forks, and as each guest uses freely the instruments with which Nature has kindly furnished him, the inexperienced stranger may innocently assume that here again ordinary common-sense will suffice to guide him. Let him not trust to any such fallacious guidance, for it may lead him seriously astray. If he should happen, for example, to use his left hand for tearing off a savoury bit of mutton, or a delicate bit of turkey, he will give a flagrant proof of bad breeding, and shock the native guests. But how is he to avoid this breach of etiquette? If he pulls the savoury morsel without using his other hand, will he not drag the whole piece of meat towards himself? Not at all. In

pulling with the forefinger and thumb he must use the other fingers of the same hand as a counterpoise, and, if he performs the operation dexterously, the little morsel becomes detached without the whole piece being moved. That is all, I think, which I require to say. For the rest the light of Nature will suffice.

In fellah circles in Egypt, as now in more aristocratic circles in England, it is not customary to introduce persons unknown to each other, who happen casually to meet at a friend's house. This explains the fact that for nearly an hour we have been squatting at the side of, and partaking of the same dishes as, the honourable Kadi of the village, without in the least suspecting that we were in close proximity to such an important personage. Ahmet Effendi, as this judicial authority is called, is a good illustration of the popular fallacy that a man's character is always clearly imprinted on his features. To look at him you would say that he is an intelligent, respectable, and respected member of the community, and yet I know, by the information which I have collected about him in the course of the day, that it would be difficult to find a more arrant scoundrel throughout the length and breadth of Egypt Proper, from the Mediterranean to the First Cataract—as to Nubia and the Soudan, I cannot speak confidently, for I have never visited those distant provinces, and know not what rare phenomena of rascality they may contain. To be among the first rascals of Egypt Proper, is, however, to use a Miltonic phrase, a "bad eminence," quite high enough for ordinary human

ambition, and therefore Ahmet Effendi, who is not inordinately ambitious, has no reason to complain. He has been long a devoted friend and ally of our friend Suleiman, and has been of great assistance to him as a legal adviser. Indeed he is a good friend of all the "shearers," who require occasionally to give an appearance of legality to their illegal proceedings, and it is only from "the shorn," who have no motive for concealing his delinquencies, that you can get trustworthy information about his real character. Like many orthodox sinners in some other countries as well as Egypt, he does not allow the impurity and unscrupulousness of his everyday life to interfere with the purity of his religous convictions or the ardour of his religious zeal. During the last phase of the recent troubles, he did a good deal to excite Mussulman fanaticism, with a view it is said to getting possession of a bit of land belonging to a Copt; but his machinations were prematurely interrupted by the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, and he now displays his zeal and orthodoxy by other means. As soon as the big brass tray has been removed and the post-prandial ablutions performed, he deliberately and somewhat abruptly begins to attack certain astronomical heresies, with which we, as ignorant infidels, may be supposed to be tainted. What motive he has for introducing a scientific discussion I cannot say, unless it be a laudable desire to show the little crowd of listeners, whose social standing had not secured them the honour of an invitation to dinner, but who are allowed to

assemble after the repast at a respectful distance near the door, that he can more than hold his own in a learned discussion even with distinguished foreigners. The subject which he chooses for a display of his orthodoxy and his dialectic abilities, is the Copernican system of astronomy, and as no one feels inclined to argue with him, he has the important logical advantage of having all the talking to himself. He proceeds therefore with great fluency—probably repeating from memory some professorial lecture which he heard in his younger days when a student in the Azhar University. Some people, he remarks, looking blandly towards the infidel section of his audience, believe that the world is a big ball, like an enormous orange, which is constantly whirling round itself and whirling round the sun, but such an idea is plainly absurd; if it were true, some people would be standing with their heads downwards, and it would be impossible for a marksman with a rifle to hit a mark on the other side of the river. Now we know that people never stand with their heads downwards, and riflemen do hit marks at a long distance; *ergo*, the earth is not a ball and does not whirl round, *quod erat demonstrandum.* This is (so far as I could follow the speaker with the assistance of an interpreting friend well acquainted with the Egyptian dialect) a correct summary of the argument, and it evidently convinces the majority of the hearers, for a suppressed titter of admiring approval runs through the audience, and no one suggests any objection.

Having thus successfully demolished at one fell swoop the whole of the Copernican system of astronomy, the worthy magistrate naturally feels a little tired, and seeks strength for new iconoclastic achievements, *ad majorem gloriam Dei*, in a comfortable snooze. As we cannot safely, without his invaluable guidance, continue our flight into such lofty regions of scientific research, we may profitably employ our time in collecting from the less learned guests some information concerning ordinary mundane affairs. We need not direct our questions to the matters which have already occupied our attention, for we have already gained, I trust, a tolerably clear idea of the domestic life of the fellaheen, and further details might weary any one not specially interested in the subject. Our time, therefore, will be better employed in seeking to obtain a correct idea of the communal organisation. Instead of reproducing, however, a desultory conversation with a number of uneducated, muddle-headed peasants, who seem to think that mental confusion can best be dispelled by three or four of them speaking at the same time, I shall present to the reader in a concise, systematic form, merely the more important results of the conversation, supplementing them with information derived from other sources. A clear idea of the communal system may be useful to us hereafter, for, if Lord Granville's promise about "the prudent development of popular institutions" ever ripens into a National Assembly or anything of the kind, the commune must constitute the basis of the electoral system.

CHAPTER VI.

AN EGYPTIAN RURAL COMMUNE.

The Omdeh or notable in the communal organisation—A representative of the higher class of notables—Rivalry between the Omdehs and the absentee landlords—The Sheikhs-el-beled or village elders—The Sarraf or village treasurer—The Gaffirs or village watchmen—The Egyptian rural commune contrasted with the village commune in Russia—The Egyptian communal system in theory and in practice—A typical village-tyrant—The policy of the National Party when in power—Proposed remedies for existing abuses—Gradual amelioration of communal institutions under the present dynasty—Expropriation of the poorer peasants—Present aspect of the communal lands.

In the Egyptian communal organisation the Omdeh, or "notable," as the word is generally translated, is not only socially, as we have already seen, but also officially, the most important personage of the village, for he is in the last resort, and in a vague, undefined fashion, responsible to the Government for the payment of the taxes, for the military conscription and the *corvée*, and for all the other official obligations of the commune; and this vague responsibility entitles him to exercise an undefined, patriarchal authority over all the members. By traditional custom and in accordance with practical convenience the office devolves on the largest landowner, so that he is neither elected nor

nominated, but simply recognised and confirmed by the Government. In the event of flagrant abuse of authority giving rise to numerous complaints on the part of the peasantry, he may be dismissed by the provincial Governor, and even exiled with the Khedive's sanction to some other part of the country, but in these rare cases the post is generally given to the delinquent's brother or some other near relative, so that the dignity, with its responsibilities and advantages, remains in the family. The occupant, whoever he may be, receives no salary or other direct remuneration for the administrative cares and fiscal responsibilities which he assumes, but he has always the satisfaction of enjoying much local influence and consideration, and he generally contrives to extract indirectly some pecuniary advantage from the position. One day I asked an intelligent peasant why any one should consent to be Omdeh and expose himself to the exactions of the higher authorities without being paid for the trouble and risks entailed. Without a moment's hesitation the man replied—making at the same time a significant grimace which indicated that he knew a great deal more than he cared to tell—" Why, an Omdeh has the whole village in his hands, and can do as he likes ; as for the exactions he simply passes them on to us, and we may consider ourselves uncommonly lucky if he only distributes without increasing them."

When a landed proprietor happens to be the only large landowner in a district comprising several villages, he may be Omdeh of all the communes, and this is one of the traits which distinguish him

from the richer and more influential Sheikhs-el-beled,[1] with whom he is frequently confounded—the authority of a Sheikh-el-beled being always confined, so far as I am aware, to one commune. Another distinction is that a commune cannot exist without one or more Sheikhs-el-beled, whereas in some districts there are no Omdehs, or rather, to speak more accurately, the term Omdeh is not generally used. In the Berari, for example, I never heard the word Omdeh, and yet "the little kings" of that region, though called simply Sheikhs, have all the characteristics of Omdehs, as I understand the term, with this difference, that there are sometimes more than one in a single village. In making, therefore, the Omdeh an essential part of the communal system, I am perhaps systematising a little more than is justified by facts, but for all practical purposes we may overlook these local peculiarities and confine our attention to the institutions in their normal state.

Between the family of the Omdeh and the other villagers there is no broad clear line of demarcation. He is distinguished from the simple fellah by differences of degree rather than of kind. He has more land, more cattle, perhaps more wives, and a greater amount of domestic luxury than his poorer neighbour, but both Omdeh and fellah are of the same race and of the same religion (except in the case of the Christian Copts, who form a small minority),

[1] This is the Arabic term which I have generally translated "village-sheikh" or "village-elder."

both speak the same language, both may fairly be called uneducated men, and both habitually confine their thoughts and attention to the narrow sphere of their material interests, and to the more or less punctual fulfilment of their ceremonial religious duties. The notable whom we have just visited is a fair representative of the great majority of the class to which he belongs, but I ought to add, that the class contains a few richer and more influential personages, and to one of these latter I can at once introduce the reader.

Ali Bey is a man of about forty years of age, with an intelligent, sympathetic face of the fellah type. The fact that he calls himself Bey, and wears a red fez instead of a white turban, shows that he has some pretensions to belong to the official class, but his claim is founded merely on honorary rank, conferred upon him by the Khedive, and not on actual service in the administration. Indeed his numerous private affairs, to which he devotes constant attention, would prevent him from holding anything but an honorary post, for he is a large landed proprietor, he possesses an extensive cotton-ginning factory, he has a considerable number of pumping-engines by which he irrigates not only his own property but also that of poorer neighbours, and he pays frequent visits to Alexandria, where he is a man of weight among the natives who frequent the Exchange. His house is not in the village, as the houses of Omdehs commonly are, but at some little distance, and it is built in the European style, with an inclosed garden behind

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it. The furniture and decorations of the interior are also European—everything being of the most costly materials and of the most gorgeous colours; but in spite of the enormous sums expended in upholstery, the rooms have a look of bareness and discomfort, as if they had been furnished by contract and were maintained precisely in the condition in which the contractor left them—stiff, unnatural, and awkward, as a peasant who has accidentally, for the first time in his life, got into a fashionable suit of dress clothes. The proprietor himself looks rather out of place, for he is a plain, simple man, with no pretensions to European culture, and he loves wealth and real power much more than empty ostentation. He possesses, it is said, a certain amount of learning in the Mussulman sense of the term, but of foreign languages—even of Turkish—he is completely ignorant; and when a foreigner, who does not know Arabic, happens to visit him, the conversation is carried on through his secretary, a young Syrian endowed with all the combined astuteness and obsequiousness of his race. How Ali Bey acquired his big fortune, we had better perhaps not inquire too closely, for the results of a searching investigation might jar unpleasantly with the voluble panegyrics of the Syrian secretary, who represents "his Excellency" as altogether a very superior being, and as especially a most noble, disinterested friend and protector of the oppressed fellaheen. I should be sorry, too, to find any confirmation of certain sinister rumours current about him, for his unpretentiousness and frank cordiality make him very sympathetic, and

his hospitality is unstinted without being oppressive. Whatever his moral qualities may be, he certainly receives everywhere, for a radius of a good many miles from his house, marks of the profoundest respect, and even the Governor of the province would think twice before quarrelling with him. Of the deference shown to him by lower officials I had one day an amusing illustration. Towards the end of dinner I found that I was in danger of missing my train, and accordingly I requested him to excuse me if I rose at once from the table. "Don't hurry," he replied, "I have sent a servant to the station to say that you are coming, and the train will wait for you." His prediction proved true. As I drove up to the station with him in a fashionable Victoria, drawn by a very handsome pair of Arab thoroughbreds, we found the train waiting and the station-master standing in the most respectful of attitudes awaiting the great man's arrival.

The Omdehs may be roughly described as a rural aristocracy, but not in the feudal sense, for their estates are not entailed, and at the death of a proprietor the land is generally divided equally among his sons. If a definition were required, I should say that they are a class of rich peasants or farmers who generally live in the villages and who possess a portion of the adjacent land. In Egypt there is no feudal aristocracy. Mehemet Ali conceived the idea of creating such a class, and for that purpose constituted a number of estates which he intended to be indivisible and entailed, but his efforts ended in failure and

none of his successors were at all inclined to revive the project. Outside of the communal lands there are large estates called *Abadiehs,* but the proprietors are nearly all absentee landlords—officials of one kind or other who habitually reside in the towns. Between these men, commonly called *Zawat* or official personages, and the more rich and influential of the Omdehs there is a certain feeling of rivalry, or at least something which may become a feeling of rivalry in the future. The *Zawat* are mostly of Turkish or Circassian origin, have a certain amount of education, and belong to the official dominant caste ; whereas the Omdehs are mostly of fellah (and a few of Bedouin) extraction, and are inferior to their rivals in education and official influence. As one of the professed aims in creating a Chamber of Notables was to form a counterpoise to the centralised administration, the chamber was composed not of *Zawat* but of Omdehs and rich merchants.

Though the Omdeh has grave responsibilities and a proportionately great authority, he does not, in theory at least, interfere in ordinary, current affairs, but reserves his power for the great occasions in which a communal *deus ex machinâ* is required. In ordinary times the village administration is confided to the Sheikhs-el-beled, who are elected by the people and who are responsible each for his own constituents. The number of these Sheikhs differs greatly in different villages ; generally there are from three to six, but in some of the large villages of the Delta there are, I am assured, as many as

eighteen or twenty. Occasionally a single, large, patriarchal family may have a Sheikh all to itself. In every case the number of a Sheikh's constituents depends in some measure on his qualifications and personal influence. He may represent only half a dozen families or he may represent nearly the entire population of the village. If any of his constituents have reason to be dissatisfied with him, they may petition the district authorities to get him dismissed, or they may request permission to transfer their allegiance to one of his colleagues. The Sub-governor (*nazir-kism*) may, after examining the complaints on the spot, grant or refuse the request as he thinks fit. When a new Sheikh has to be appointed in consequence of dismissal, retirement, or death, the election procedure is very simple. The constituents assemble in an open space near the village, in the presence of the Sub-governor, and divide themselves into groups according to the candidate whom they wish to see appointed. The candidate who has the largest group is declared elected, unless the Sub-governor happens to object, in which case the election is repeated. Like the Omdeh the Sheikhs receive no salary; but their position gives them great influence, which they can generally convert into pecuniary advantage. Their chief duties, besides that of preserving order, consist in making their constituents pay the taxes and furnish the required number of men for the forced labour on the public works and for the military conscription. Occasionally when disputes arise they act as arbiters. On the other

hand, they ought to defend their constituents against all exaction and injustice, and act in all matters as intermediaries between them and the higher authorities.

Another important official in the communal administration is the Sarraf, who acts as tax-collector and accountant. He is named by the Government, and must not be a native of the village; and in order to prevent his becoming a quasi-native, he is not allowed to remain in the same village for more than five years. As a rule he is a Copt, for the Copts have, as I have already explained, almost a monopoly of the places in the service where a knowledge of bookkeeping is required.

At the bottom of the communal organisation stand the Gaffirs or village watchmen. They are generally numerous enough, but singularly inefficient, for they do not consider sleeping on duty as inconsistent with a proper fulfilment of their functions, and when they are accidentally roused by malefactors they are more inclined to show prudence than valour.

A convenient method of obtaining a clear conception of the Egyptian communal organisation is to compare or contrast it with similar institutions in other countries. Let us take for this purpose the rural commune in Russia. The Russian rural commune is organised on thoroughly democratic principles, and the administrative authority is entirely in the hands of the village-assembly, which is composed of all the heads of families. The assembly elects freely the village-elder and the village-

accountant, without any supervision or confirmation by Government officials, and it can dismiss and replace them at any moment by its own uncontrolled authority. These personages are in fact merely the paid servants of the commune, and have no administrative or other authority of their own. This is only just and reasonable, because in Russia it is on the commune in its corporate capacity, and not on the office-bearers, that the responsibility for payment of the taxes rests; and in cases of arrears it is the solvent members generally and not the office-bearers who have to make up the deficit. In Egypt, on the contrary, the commune is based on the oligarchical principle, and the fiscal responsibility lies with the Sheikhs and the Omdeh. As responsibility and authority naturally go hand in hand, the Sheikhs and Omdeh have the authority which is possessed in Russia by the village assembly, and they use it, I may add, in pretty much the same fashion. In both countries the favourite means employed for applying pressure to defaulters is corporal punishment. There is, however, a variation in detail. In Egypt the kurbash is applied to the soles of the feet, so that the delinquent, if severely punished, may be for some time unable to walk, whereas in Russia the *rozghi* are so applied that the severely punished victim may for some time find it very painful to sit down.

There is a further important difference between Russian and Egyptian rural organisation, and it deserves careful attention, because it has produced, and is still producing consequences affecting deeply

the welfare of the fellaheen. In Russia, when the *rozghi* fail to extract the required taxes, and the commune is obliged to make up the deficit, the money cannot be recovered from the defaulters by seizing and selling what they possess, for the law expressly forbids the communal and judicial authorities to seize, for debt or arrears, the peasant's house, land, cattle, or agricultural implements in so far as they are necessary for his subsistence. Superfluous articles may be judicially sold by auction, but in poor households superfluous articles are rarely to be found. Even if the commune had the power to sell everything belonging to a delinquent, it would not always exercise it, because by ruining one of its members, for whose taxes it is responsible, it would impose upon itself a permanent burden. It is rare, therefore, to find in Russia able-bodied peasants who have no share of the communal land. The Egyptian fellah, on the contrary, has no such protection. His land, cattle, agricultural implements, and everything else he possesses may be sold by the authorities for arrears, or by the usurer for ordinary debts.

If I were desired to express my opinion about Egyptian communal institutions, I should begin by saying that in theory they are admirable. The peasants, as we have seen, elect freely from among themselves a Sheikh or Elder, who is supposed to maintain order amongst them and to defend their interests, and all the Sheikhs of a commune are under the supervision of the Omdeh or Head-sheikh, who is the largest landowner in the village and who

therefore may be presumed to have the largest stake in the communal welfare. When a Sheikh fails to give satisfaction to his constituents, they may at any time petition the Governor of the province for his dismissal, or they may with the consent of the Sub-governor, transfer their allegiance to one of the other Sheikhs of the village ; and when the Omdeh neglects his duties or abuses his power, they may present a petition for redress to the higher authorities. If the alleged grievances prove on inquiry to be well founded, the culprit may be not only dismissed but also made further harmless by being removed to a distant part of the country. The peasantry have thus, it would seem, first in the elections and secondly in the right of petition, ample guarantees against gross maladministration or serious extortion on the part of the communal authorities.

If now we turn away from theory and observe how the system works in practice, we find less cause for satisfaction. In theorising we have made three tacit assumptions : that the richer and more influential section of the fellaheen, from which the Sheikhs and Omdehs are drawn, contains a large proportion of upright, intelligent men, animated with an enlightened desire to promote the welfare of their commune ; secondly, that the ordinary peasant acts at the elections as an intelligent, free agent, and is ever ready to complain to the higher authorities of any extortion or injustice committed against him ; and lastly, that the higher authorities are always ready to check and punish any abuses in the com-

munal organisation which happen to fall under their cognisance. Unfortunately none of these important assumptions is justified by experience. In Egypt, as in most other Oriental countries, all classes are imbued with the traditional idea that administrative authority is to be used firstly and chiefly for the pecuniary and other personal advantages of those who exercise it, and to this rule the communal office-bearers form no exception. There may perhaps be a few Sheikhs who act in a disinterested spirit, and who in some measure identify their personal interests with those of their constituents, but if such men exist I have never seen or heard of them. The best type which I know of—and it is by no means common—is the Sheikh who fulfils his duties in an orderly, energetic way, according to patriarchal conceptions, and who, while enriching himself moderately by more or less legitimate means, prevents any one else from robbing or oppressing those whom it is his duty to protect. The second of the three assumptions is equally unjustifiable. At what are theoretically called the elections the fellahs act very much like sheep, and are very little influenced in their choice by any real or supposed moral qualities of the candidates; and when the election has been confirmed, they think twice, and even three times, before lodging a formal complaint against a man who has numerous ways of indirectly taking his revenge. And it must be confessed that they do well to be cautious in this respect, for the third assumption about the readiness of the Government officials to punish Sheikhs and Omdehs who

abuse their power is as baseless as the two others. A Sub-governer who receives a complaint and takes the trouble to begin an inquiry, can generally be mollified by a little well-timed bakshish from the culprit; and if the incident happens by chance to come to the ears of the Mudir, his Excellency probably takes no official cognisance of it, even when he is not himself an accomplice.

To understand such conduct on the part of a Mudir, English readers must be informed that the chief duty of a provincial Governor in Egypt is not to prevent injustice or to increase the well-being of the inhabitants, but to collect the full amount of the taxes, and to avoid giving unnecessary trouble to his superiors. In his officially trained mind the fellaheen are not men and women with human feelings and civil rights who are to be protected and cared for, but rather biped sheep which have to be regularly shorn at appointed seasons. Their complaints, therefore, fall on his ears pretty much as the pathetic bleating of the sheep at shearing-time may be supposed to fall on the unsympathetic ears of the wool-dealer's agent who superintends the operation, and who is responsible for the delivery of the full amount of wool contracted for. If his Excellency happens to be a man of a philosophical turn of mind, who likes to bring his conduct into harmony with abstract principles—or, rather, to bring abstract principles into harmony with his conduct—he may plausibly adduce the *raison d'état* as a justification of his apathetic indifference. "The Sheikhs and Omdehs," he may say—and I have

myself often heard the argument—"are the only instruments which the Government has for making the fellah pay his taxes and fulfil his other obligations to the State. If their authority is weakened and undermined by accepting complaints against them, it will be impossible to collect the taxes, and the whole administrative machine will be brought to a standstill. No doubt the Sheikhs and Omdehs derive from the power which they wield a certain amount of personal advantage; but it must be remembered that they receive no salaries, and that they cannot reasonably be expected to work for the Government and assume heavy fiscal responsibilities without some kind of compensation." Herein the modern Egyptian Mudir agrees with the ancient Hebrew legislator in thinking it unjust and inexpedient to muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.

Like the oxen on the threshing-floor, the Sheikhs and Omdehs do not fail to take advantage of the liberty and impunity thus generously accorded to them. Their extortions may consist in extracting pecuniary bakshish from the richer peasants, or from the shopkeepers and artisans, but it more frequently takes some less simple and less direct form; for the ordinary fellah, after paying his taxes, has generally very little ready money at his disposal, whereas he can always show his gratitude and respect towards those who can injure him, by working for them gratuitously, or by consenting to a contract which gives him a very scanty remuneration for his labour. A Sheikh usually possesses or rents much more land

than he himself and his family can cultivate, and in procuring the additional manual labour which he requires his official position is of great service to him. In matters of irrigation, too, when there happens to be a sharp competition among the land-owners as to who is to get the water first, the Sheikh has naturally the preference over ordinary mortals; and when the cotton is ripe he expects his constituents to send their children to assist in the picking. Woe to the luckless wights who attempt, in their dealings with the Sheikh, to assume an attitude of independence, and to take their stand upon their rights, as if poor men had any rights in Egypt! They will soon have reason to regret their insubordination, especially when the time comes for the village to supply recruits for the conscription or labourers for the *corvée.* Such cases of insubordination, however, are rare. A man of ordinary prudence will seek to be on good terms not only with his own Sheikh, but with all the Sheikhs in the village, for they have probably all some indirect means of injuring him. To take an example out of a score that might be quoted: an artisan or shopkeeper who happens to offend any Sheikh in the locality, will be certain to find that the number of his customers diminishes, for no one under the jurisdiction of the offended dignitary will venture to patronise the offender. Only those who have lived in a village in a lawless country like Egypt can have any adequate idea of the way in which the influence of a village tyrant can permeate into the nooks and corners of daily life.

The abuses of authority on the part of the Sheikhs ought to be prevented by the Omdeh, but unfortunately the Omdeh is, in practice, simply an additional and more powerful Sheikh, who is generally of the same type and animated with the same spirit as his subordinates. If he takes the trouble to prevent their extortions, it is too often merely for the purpose of being able to extort more efficaciously himself. Recourse may be had, in theory, to the higher authorities, or to the law courts, but little is to be expected from administrative or judicial protection. The officials, as I have already explained, systematically turn a deaf ear to fellah complaints ; and the balance of the Egyptian Themis is so constructed that it infallibly turns in favour of the richer or more influential of the two parties.

As an illustration of the way in which an energetic and unscrupulous Omdeh can rob and oppress the peasantry, I may mention an incident which occurred to me during an excursion in the Fayoum. On arriving at the village of T—— I was struck by the contrast between the miserable mud-hovels of the fellaheen and several spacious, well-built, brick mansions in the middle of the village. Alighting in the court of one of these mansions, I was politely and cordially received by a middle-aged man in native costume, who led me to a large, well-carpeted guest-chamber, and showed, after the customary salutations and coffee-drinking, a perfect readiness, unusual in men of his class, to answer fully all questions about the condition of the peasants in his

neighbourhood. Sometimes he even anticipated my eager curiosity, and spontaneously described to me some phase of rural life in which I was specially interested. He depicted, for example, in graphic colours the hardships to which all classes of land-owners had been subjected during the reign of Ismail Pasha, and he gave me to understand, more by implication than by direct statements, that if the poorer inhabitants of the villages had been saved from complete ruin, it was due to the paternal solicitude and well-timed assistance of himself as Omdeh, and of the other members of his family whose spacious mansions I had noticed in the immediate vicinity. The family, he said, had been established here for three or four centuries, and they naturally took a deep interest in the welfare of the district generally and of their own village in particular. As a result of certain intrigues, into the details of which he did not enter, he had been once dismissed from his office and exiled for a time, but the peasants had petitioned the Khedive to have him recalled and reinstated, and since his return their condition had been rapidly improving. Those of them who had been able to retain their land through the whole crisis were speedily becoming rich, because the land during the last few years had trebled in price; and those of them who had lost their land, and were on the point of emigrating to some other part of the country, received a few acres from himself or his relatives, and gladly remained in their native place, to which, as is well known, the fellah has a strong attachment.

"You noticed that man who served the coffee? He was about to emigrate lately, but I gave him three acres wherewith to support himself and his family, and the poor fellow is delighted to remain where he is."

All this and much more of the same sort was related to me so circumstantially and so unostentatiously that I was at first half disposed to believe that I had accidentally fallen on one of those ideal, patriarchal Egyptian proprietors, whom I had sometimes heard about from imaginative sentimental tourists, but whom I had not yet seen in the flesh. My suspicions, however, were aroused by a curious, half-cynical smile which constantly played about the mouth of the narrator, and which did not quite harmonise with the disinterested benevolence which he tacitly assumed to be the guiding principle of his conduct in his dealings with the peasantry; and my incipient doubts of his truthfulness and sincerity were confirmed and strengthened by a parenthetical remark which casually fell from him in an unguarded moment, to the effect that fellahs could not be properly managed without a liberal use of the stick. Towards the end of the conversation, too, there were moments when I remarked, or imagined I remarked, that he was inwardly chuckling over his success in fooling an inquisitive, credulous stranger. I took the precaution, therefore, of obtaining, through a native servant, some information from the peasants themselves, and in this way I learned a very different tale, which I was afterwards enabled to complete from other sources.

It was quite true that the family had been established in the village from time immemorial—one authority said, "from the times of ignorance," which is the Mussulman way of saying "before the conversion to Islam"—but instead of patriarchal benevolence, the quality for which all modern scions of the ancient line had been distinguished was unscrupulous rapacity. By various kinds of pressure, applied both to the minds and to the bodies of their dependants, they had obtained possession of nearly the whole of the communal land, and had reduced the ex-proprietors almost to the condition of serfs. In the work of spoliation and in the maintenance of discipline by merciless corporal punishment my interlocutor had so distinguished himself above all the other members of his respectable family, that at last the fame of his exploits reached the ears of the authorities in Cairo. Riaz Pasha, who was then Minister of the Interior, though always reluctant to weaken his administrative authority by accepting complaints against Mudirs or Sub-governors, was no friend of Sheikhs and Omdehs, and was ever ready to punish a village tyrant who went beyond the reasonable limits of moderate extortion. He accordingly gave orders that a trusted inspector should be sent to the spot to make a searching investigation. The investigation showed that the current rumours were not at all exaggerated, and the *soi-disant* paternal benefactor of the fellaheen was promptly exiled to another province. The miserable peasants devoutly thanked Allah for having freed them from their relentless taskmaster, and they

had reason to hope that they would never again have to bear his oppression, for the Government had declared that he should never again be allowed to act in any official capacity either in his own village or elsewhere; but before two years had passed he was reinstated, in consequence, strange to say, of a humble petition from those very peasants who had petitioned for his dismissal. This fact is worthy of note as illustrating how deficient the fellaheen are in the capacity for self-help, and how little they can co-operate in any measures taken for their benefit. No sooner had the unscrupulous, tyrannical Omdeh been removed, than his brothers, uncles, and cousins began to put pressure on the peasants to petition for his recall, and the peasants were at last weak enough to yield to the pressure. How the Government was induced to undo the good work it had done I was not able to discover, but I presume that bakshish was employed among some of the higher officials after Riaz's fall, or that the National Party, who aimed at securing the support of the village notables much more than insuring the welfare of the peasantry, thought fit to reverse the decision of a Turco-Circassian ministry without taking the trouble to examine whether it was well founded. The latter explanation, though I cannot say that it is correct, seems to me very probable, because it is quite in accordance with the tactics of the National Party when in power. During the Arabi dictatorship the agricultural labourers on the estates of Turkish proprietors could show a spirit of insubordination and refuse to accept corporal punishment with the child-

like docility which they had always previously displayed, but in the ordinary villages the fellah had to submit as before to the habitual oppression and exactions of the native communal authorities. The explanation of this is that the leaders of the insurrection, while fomenting popular discontent against the Turkish element, required the assistance of the Sheikhs and Omdehs for the collection of the forced contributions which were officially known under the name of "patriotic gifts."

All those who have directed serious attention —they are, unfortunately, not numerous—to the working of the Egyptian communal system, have recognised the above-mentioned abuses, but there is some diversity of opinion as to the best means of improving the existing state of things. Administrative theorists of the French school seek a remedy in increased bureaucratic centralisation, and propose that the Sheikhs and Omdehs should be replaced by regular Government officials, but it seems to me that this remedy would be worse than the existing evil. It is always hazardous to destroy old traditional institutions, which are closely interwoven with the material interests and everyday life of the great mass of the population, and to replace them by foreign inventions. Such radical procedure should be adopted only when the existing institutions are found to be incapable of gradual amelioration, and when the new system offers very solid guarantees of success. Now, in the present case, I venture to say that neither of these two conditions are fulfilled.

The Egyptian communal system has been ameliorated during the present century, and might be further improved; whereas, the new system which is proposed would almost certainly end in failure. In support of the first of these two assertions I may indicate, briefly, some of the changes which the Egyptian rural commune has undergone under the present Khedivial dynasty.

When Mehemet Ali destroyed the power of the Mamelukes in the early years of the present century, he found the fellaheen in what may be roughly described as a state of serfage. Each family enjoyed the usufruct of a portion of the communal land, but there was no security of tenure, for all the land was considered the property of the Government, and the portion ceded temporarily to a peasant family might be arbitrarily decreased or exchanged as the tax-farmer or his representative, the Sheikh, might think fit. This precarious state of things, in which the peasants were completely at the mercy of the communal authorities, was profoundly modified by the Cadastre and land-registration, which was begun in 1813. Each family thereby received a definite portion of land, to be held independently of the Sheikh or Omdeh, and by various subsequent decrees—especially Said Pasha's law of 1858, which forms the basis of the actual system of land-tenure—the peasant has become practically proprietor of the land which he had previously held in usufruct by a very precarious title. The Sheikhs and Omdehs have thus been deprived of a great portion of the arbitrary

authority which they formerly possessed, and the opportunities for extortion and embezzlement on their part were still further diminished by the reforms in the financial administration effected during the time of the Dual Control, to which I have already alluded. The great instrument of oppression which still remains in their hands is the designating of the men required for the conscription and for the forced labour on public works, and it could easily be taken from them by simply introducing into the administrative machinery for the conscription and the *corvée* certain reforms similar to those which have been effected in the collection of the taxes. For the remaining abuses, the new native tribunals which are about to be organised should act as a powerful corrective, and their action might be for some time supplemented by travelling inspectors. It is vain, however, to hope that the communal administration will become tolerably pure and efficient so long as the higher administration remains such as I have described it.

These few remarks suffice, I think, to show that the communal institutions should not be condemned as utterly incapable of improvement. The proposal to replace them by regular Government officials hardly deserves serious consideration, for it would cause an enormous increase in the budgetary expenditure, which the framers of the project have probably not taken the trouble to estimate; and even if such an increase of expenditure were practicable, where, may I ask, is the requisite number of honest, trustworthy officials to be found? Certainly not in Egypt.

The changes introduced into the system of land-tenure have had, as I have said, a beneficial influence in limiting the arbitrary powers of the Sheikhs and Omdehs, but they have had at the same time the evil effect of facilitating the expropriation of the poorer peasants. In the time of Mehemet Ali, every peasant family, as we have seen, had a share of the communal land; at present there are many thousands of families who, having no land of their own, are compelled to work as day labourers or to associate themselves with richer neighbours on more or less onerous conditions. What the proportion of these landless peasants is to the rural population generally, I cannot say, but I know not a few villages in which they form the great majority of the inhabitants. The land, which was formerly pretty equally distributed among all, is thus passing rapidly into the hands of a few, and in this way a great economic and social revolution is taking place almost unnoticed. I shall have occasion to speak of it more fully in a future chapter.

Though the gross number of fellah landowners has been greatly diminished, the communal land is still broken up into very small parcels. The land of a village is generally composed of several large *khods*, which may be roughly described as basins of irrigation, and these *khods* are divided into long, narrow strips—sometimes not more than a couple of yards in breadth—belonging to different proprietors, but not separated from each other by any visible permanent landmark. A peasant proprietor has generally several —occasionally as many as twenty or thirty—of these

strips, situated in various parts of the communal property. In one village, for example, the new Cadastral Survey of which I happen to have analysed, I find that in the six *khods* into which the 380 acres of communal land is divided, there are 170 lots, varying in size from fifty square yards to twenty-seven acres, distributed among sixty-four proprietors. The smallest proprietor has only a few roods, and the largest has thirty acres in eight separate lots. One proprietor has no less than eighteen sporadic lots, of which the total area is only five acres!

The mention of the communal land naturally suggests many questions as to what is raised in it, but as these questions do not belong strictly to the subject of communal institutions, and as they will lead us probably into some curious, and perhaps lengthy, considerations about the nature and causes of that extraordinary economic progress which Egypt has made during the lifetime of the present and the preceding generation, I consider it at once logical and convenient to begin a new chapter, which may, with the kind reader's gracious permission, be entitled "The Fellah at Work."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FELLAH AT WORK.

The Egyptian climate—The annual inundation—The Pharaonic system of agriculture still practised in Upper Egypt—Defects of the Pharaonic inundation system—The more productive system of perennial irrigation now adopted in Middle and Lower Egypt—Three-field system and triennial rotation of crops—The various functions of irrigation—Failure of the Public Works Department to work the more productive system—Forced labour—Is the condition of the fellaheen improving or becoming worse?

It is well known that agriculturists are by nature and profession grumblers, and that their favourite subject of complaint is the weather; but in this matter, as in so many others, Egypt forms an exception to the general rule. If you avoid the strip of country lying near the coast of the Mediterranean, you may travel in Egypt for days and weeks and months without ever once hearing the weather referred to in disrespectful terms! The reason of this strange phenomenon is that there is nothing which can properly be called weather in the land of the Pharaohs, and consequently the unfortunate fellah (let us not judge him harshly if he is sometimes a little taciturn!) is deprived of the most convenient —and in northern climes the most frequent—of all

the numerous subjects of human conversation. In the Nile Valley, and in the northern portion of the Delta, the sky is, practically speaking, always cloudless, and the barometer always at "set fair." If the cutting of the Suez Canal, the planting of trees in the European quarter of Cairo, and other impious innovations of the unbeliever, have really, as is sometimes asserted, affected of late the once unchangeable serenity of the Egyptian climate, the change is confined to three or four showers in the course of the winter; and in the coming or not coming of these showers the agriculturist is not more interested than other people, for it is not to the capricious clouds that come and go according to their own sweet will, but to the ever-present, generous Nile, that he looks for his water-supply. Truly a wonderful country this ancient, mysterious land of the Pharaohs!—a land where farmers cannot grumble about the climate, and even common mortals cannot talk about the weather!

But let it not be hastily assumed that this ancient, mysterious land is altogether a husbandman's paradise without the serpent. Providence, it must be admitted, has been kind to the fellah. He has not to fear the prolonged rains, the cold winds, the drifting snow, the fierce hailstorms, the scorching drought, and the other capricious irregularities of climate which make farming in northern latitudes an always hazardous and never very remunerative speculation; the sky is perpetually serene; the night dews come regularly at the appointed seasons; no violent,

disturbing influences, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, or volcanic eruptions, ever disturb the fatalistic confidence in the divine goodness ; the mean temperature of any month in the year may be predicted with sufficient accuracy for all practical purposes ; and the beneficent Nile, which supplies the place of rain in the agricultural economy of the country, annually rises and falls with a regularity and punctuality which the grateful inhabitants would do well to imitate in their daily walk and conversation. Yet, in spite of all these numerous blessings, the life of the fellah is not without its cares and troubles, over and above those which are so plentifully supplied by tyrannical Sheikhs and avaricious Omdehs. Every year he spends days and weeks in a state of constant anxiety, sometimes he loses all his worldly goods in a single night, and from time to time the whole country is visited with grievous famines.

The cause of these annual anxieties and occasional disasters lies in the fact that the Nile, though very regular and punctual in the matter of rising and falling, is somewhat capricious with regard to the amount of water which he brings down from Central Africa, and human intelligence has not yet discovered —or at least not yet utilised—a means of fully counteracting the effects of his caprice. About the 26th of June, the great river, which has been gradually decreasing for nearly nine months, begins to rise, and the fellaheen daily watch, with deepest anxiety, the slow and steady increase. They know nothing about the accurate data supplied by the Nilo-

meter near Cairo, but they have their traditional, primitive marks and methods for measuring the rise, and they form probable estimates of the height which the inundation will eventually attain. Gradually the erewhile tranquil stream becomes more and more turbid and red, and steadily increases in volume till it assumes the appearance of a gigantic torrent. By the month of September it has climbed up to the top of the natural banks, and ripples along the base of the artificial dykes, with which the natural banks are crowned. This is the critical, the all-important moment. Never did lover watch more attentively every gesture and passing expression of his beloved in the hope of discovering what he calls his "fate," than the Egyptian peasant watches at that moment the great, surging, pent-up river, to discover whether he is to have a plentiful harvest or a famine. If the water rises no higher, few or none of the lands will be sufficiently watered, and those of them which happen to be a little above the normal level will have to be left wholly uncultivated. Thus, even the most fortunately-situated proprietors will have short crops, and the less fortunately situated have the prospect of ruin and starvation. If, on the contrary, the water continues to rise, the anxiety gives place to rejoicing; but the rejoicing may soon be turned to lamentation and panic if the inundation begins to surpass its normal height. The normal inundation, popularly termed a *Nil Sultani*, or Royal Nile, is when the water rises twenty-one pics; if it exceeds twenty-two pics there is a danger of the dykes giving way, in

which case the river will rush madly over the flat expanse of cultivated land, spreading death and destruction in its furious course. In view of this possibility, the whole population, men, women, and children, turn out to make preparations, as the crew and passengers of a ship that has sprung a leak turn out to work at the pumps. Day and night the able-bodied males, armed with pick-axes, baskets, and lanterns, remain on the dykes under the orders of the Sheikhs, who are in their turn under the orders of the engineers and the provincial authorities. As soon as a dyke shows signs of being overflowed or of giving way, several hundred men—or perhaps several thousands—are hastily collected at the spot and immediately begin to heighten or fortify the threatened part by great heaps of earth, bundles of maize-stalks or sugar canes, and branches or trunks of palm trees, while the women and children of the threatened villages are busily engaged in removing the cattle and household goods to a place of safety. The danger and anxiety may last for two or three weeks. As a rule the victory is on the side of the defenders, but sometimes the defenders are vanquished, and then the low-lying, insufficiently-protected villages, being built merely of unburnt bricks, melt away like lumps of sugar in a tea-cup. In such cases the loss of life and property is generally not great, for the inhabitants, being forewarned, have time to escape with their goods and chattels, and the mud hovels can be easily rebuilt at a very small outlay; but there are numerous instances on record of the

flood coming as a thief in the night, and in these cases great numbers perish. I know of one case, for example, where the inhabitants of a village imagined themselves quite safe because their houses, though built in a low-lying, dangerous position, were surrounded by a high, strong dyke, but unfortunately this dyke had been, unknown to them, undermined at one point by foxes, and the water there forced an entrance. The flood rushed in at night and nearly every soul in the place perished.

Thus, we see, the Nile can be a very dangerous enemy as well as a very valuable friend. The practical problem which has annually to be solved is: How to make him moderate his fury, and do the fertilising work that is required of him? In explaining how this is effected, I shall speak first of Upper Egypt, where the simple old Pharaonic system of inundation is still preserved, and afterwards of Lower Egypt, where the more complicated modern system of irrigation is employed.

The old system, though complicated enough in some of its details, into which we need not enter, is very simple in its main features. The first condition is that the river should be embanked, so that the amount of water to be employed for moistening and fertilizing the land may be regulated according to the requirements. But it is not enough that the amount of water admitted behind the embankment should be as much as, and no more than, is required; it must be distributed equally over the surface, and made to remain stagnant until it has precipitated a portion of

the fertilizing mud which it holds in suspension. Now, as the surface of the Nile Valley slopes gradually downwards, the inundation water, if simply admitted behind the embankments and left to itself, would rush over the country like a great river, and would have a destructive, much more than a beneficent influence. To prevent this, transverse earthen dykes of the same height as the embankment have to be constructed.

These great, long dykes, stretching across the valley from the embankment to the slope of the hills, create a series of enormous basins or reservoirs, the largest of which cover an area of about 80,000 acres. When the Nile rises in July, the basins are gradually filled through canals and sluices, and after about seventy days, when the river has begun to fall, they are emptied by opening the sluices, if there happen to be any, or by simply cutting the transverse dykes at the lowest points.

As soon as the great basins are emptied, about the end of October, the peasants, who have had very little to do during the preceding two months, begin to "cast their bread upon the waters," or, more strictly speaking, to sow beans, lupines, clover or *gilban*, millet, wheat, and barley, in the semi-liquid mud formed by the inundation. No ploughing or harrowing is required. The seed is simply thrown broad-cast over the mud and buried by means of toothless rakes or palm-branches, dexterously wielded by men or boys in a state of almost complete nudity. When the sowing is finished, a great part of the

population is taken away to labour on the public works, but they all return in March for the harvest. The reaping, threshing, and winnowing of the grain occupy them for nearly three months, and are performed in a way quite familiar to archæologists who have studied the manners and customs of the ancient Egyptians as depicted on the monuments of the early dynasties. The fellah of to-day in Upper Egypt, like his distant ancestors five thousand years ago—long before Moses led the Chosen People out of the House of Bondage—spreads his grain on a rude threshing-floor made of sun-baked mud, threshes it by means of flails, or by a peculiar sledge-like instrument drawn by oxen, and throws it up into the air with a broad shovel, to be winnowed by the wind. When these operations are completed, it is time to prepare for the coming inundation by cleaning the canals which lead the water into the great basins, repairing the dykes, and strengthening the embankments. Much more labour is required for these purposes than is generally supposed. The filling up, for example, of a cutting made in a transverse dyke to let the water pass from a higher to a lower basin, may employ a thousand men for a month or six weeks; and as the authorities, for reasons which I shall explain elsewhere, find it profitable (for themselves) to transport the corvée-gangs far from their native villages, a great amount of time and labour is needlessly squandered, in addition to what is productively employed. Such is, very briefly described, the agricultural year of the fellaheen throughout the

whole of Upper Egypt, from the First Cataract down to Assiout.

By this primitive method of farming, the production is very great in proportion to the amount of labour and capital expended, but it is very small in proportion to the latent resources of the soil and climate. The soil is condemned to sterility and the population to inactivity during nearly half of the year; for in summer the baked earth is hard as rock and utterly impervious to the plough or hoe, and in autumn it is entirely submerged to a depth, it may be, of a good many feet. It is impossible, too, with the inundation system, to cultivate the more remunerative products, such as maize, cotton, and sugar-cane, for they require to be plentifully watered during the spring when the Nile is low, and they would be utterly destroyed if they were flooded during high Nile in autumn. In order, therefore, to obtain from the land, in a country such as Egypt, anything like the maximum of production, it is necessary to replace the *annual inundation* system by a system of *perennial irrigation*, by which the fields, without ever being submerged, may be plentifully watered all the year round. This fact has been from very ancient times well known to the Egyptian cultivators, and those of them fortunate enough to possess land contiguous to the river or to a canal, have long been in the habit of practising the more productive system—protecting their fields from inundation during high Nile by means of an embankment, and raising the water during low Nile by such simple

mechanical contrivances as *shadoufs* and *sakkiehs*, with which all Nile tourists are familiar. It was not, however, till the time of Mehemet Ali, in the first half of the present century, that the more productive system was introduced on a large scale, and it is still confined to the Delta and Middle Egypt. Even in Middle Egypt it is not yet universally used, for there is a long strip of territory adjoining the Lybian desert, and stretching down as far north as Cairo, in which the old system and the large basins of inundation are still employed. This is the reason why, on both sides of the road leading from Cairo to the pyramids, the fields in autumn are completely under water; whereas those seen from the railway, on the journey southwards from Cairo to Assiout, along the bank of the Ibrahimieh Canal, are either quite dry or moderately irrigated. In the lower portions of the Delta, too, where rice is cultivated, the flooding system has to be used.

Wherever the more productive system of irrigation is in use, the agricultural occupations of the fellaheen are more continuous and more varied. During the whole year, except the short period of high Nile, they have to raise the water to irrigate their fields; and they have to sow their crops, not in the simple mud-lark fashion above described, but according to a more advanced method, which includes such laborious operations as ploughing and harrowing. In order to raise the more remunerative crops—maize, cotton, and sugar-cane—they have to divide their land into three separate fields, and to observe

in each a triennial rotation. When cotton is grown, the rotation commonly observed is as follows: in August—which is regarded as the commencement of the agricultural year—part of the field which has been ploughed and harrowed during June and July is sown with maize, and a few weeks later the remainder is sown with clover. The maize is reaped and the clover-land cleared in November, and then the whole field is prepared for the cotton, which is planted in February. In September the cotton is picked, and immediately afterwards the land is prepared for barley and wheat, which are sown in October or November and reaped in April or May. The field is then allowed to lie fallow till the autumn, when part of it is sown with clover and part with beans. The beans are plucked in April, and the clover removed by cutting or grazing before the middle of June, when the three-years' rotation begins anew with the preparation of the land for maize. If sugar is to be cultivated, it takes the place of cotton without otherwise modifying materially the triennial rotation described.

This system, being more productive, is at the same time more exhaustive for the soil, and it is generally found that the Nile mud does not suffice for maintaining the fertility—especially when the water is taken, not directly from the river, but from a stagnant canal in which the mud is naturally precipitated. In such cases it is advisable to use some additional manure. The kind most largely employed is the fine, dry earth of the *koms*—great mounds repre-

senting the sites of ancient towns and villages—which contains a certain amount of phosphates and ammonia which the land requires, but, unfortunately, a much greater proportion of nitrates and salts of soda, of which the soil has quite enough already. Occasionally, when a stronger chemical agent is required, the cultivators use the native pigeon-guano, which is brought down annually in boats from the villages of Upper Egypt; but this kind of manure is too expensive to be very largely employed. Even the dry earth of the *koms* is not by any means universally used; for, though it may be obtained gratis on the spot, it becomes very expensive if it has to be carried a long way in small baskets on the backs of donkeys or camels.

Whether the peasant employs these manures or not, his time is very fully occupied. As soon as the inundation falls below the level of his land he has to raise the water for his cotton or sugar plantation and to sow in the second field. Then the cotton has to be picked and sent to the ginning factory, or the sugar-cane has to be cut and sent to the sugar mills. No sooner is the cotton or cane got rid of, than the work of preparing the land for the new crop of cotton, cane, or millet begins, and continues till April, which is the harvest-time for the beans, barley and wheat. June and July must be devoted to the threshing, winnowing, and transporting to market of the cereals, and for preparing the land for maize. Then the inundation rapidly approaches its climax, and the cautious husbandman has to see that the

dykes and embankments are in good repair, for if the water should break in, it would not only destroy his house and endanger the lives of his family and cattle, but would also certainly destroy his standing crops—a danger to which his cousins of Upper Egypt are not exposed, for the simple reason that they have no standing crops at the time of high Nile. Thus, for the fellah of Lower and Middle Egypt, the year is filled with a continual round of occupations, irrespective of the 120 days which he is supposed to give annually for the *corvée.*

The introduction of the perennial irrigation system has unquestionably, as was to be expected, increased immensely the productivity of Egypt. During the last sixty years the exports have risen from a few hundred thousand pounds to nearly fifteen millions sterling, and it is to the introduction of the higher system of agriculture that the increase is chiefly to be ascribed. The change has, however, at the same time imposed on the Department of Public Works very onerous duties and very heavy responsibilities, and I am sorry to say that the duties have not been very conscientiously fulfilled. To explain this I must mention briefly the chief functions of irrigation in Egyptian agriculture.

Every one knows that the first function of irrigation in the Egyptian, as in any other, system of agriculture, is to give to the soil and to the crops the necessary amount of moisture. What is not quite so generally known is that the Nile water, by the alluvial matter which it contains, manures as well as moistens the

soil, and that the cultivator has good reason to complain if the water which he receives, however abundant, has been deprived of the fertilizing alluvium, either by having been allowed to remain long stagnant, or by having been already used for irrigation purposes. A third, and still less known, fact is, that the Nile water is required, not only for moisture and manure, but also for washing the soil and preventing the nitrous and other pernicious salts from coming to the surface. The upward tendency of these salts, which are most formidable enemies of fertility, is constant and difficult to counteract. As the subsoil is very porous, the lower portion of it is constantly saturated by infiltration with water from the Nile or the canals, and the level of this water rises gradually with the inundation—bringing with it a considerable quantity of the pernicious salts in solution. There is thus annually an undesirable saline irrigation from below, and the only practical way of counteracting its pernicious effects is to saturate the upper stratum thoroughly with water from above, and thereby to prevent the saline moisture from reaching the surface or to wash it out, if it has already risen. In either case care must be taken that the water can drain off freely; for if it is allowed to evaporate, the salts which it contains will of course remain in the soil, and if the process is repeated frequently, the land will become covered with a thin layer of white crystals, which have the picturesque effect of glistening and sparkling in the sun, and the practical inconvenience of preventing every kind of vegetation.

In the old traditional system of annual inundation, as distinguished from the modern, scientific system of perennial irrigation, there is little need for the authorities of the Public Works Department to bear in mind all these complicated considerations. What they have to do is simply to keep the embankments, transverse dykes, and intakes in good repair, and to make the water pass into the succeeding basins, or into the drainage canal at the proper moment. The rest is done spontaneously by the inundation, which gives every cultivator his fair share of water and fertilizing alluvium, and prevents the saline matter coming up from the subsoil. Under the new system, on the contrary, the authorities have not merely to keep the embankments and intakes in good repair, but they have also to solve practically the following difficult problems: to supply every individual cultivator with the requisite amount of water all the year round, however far distant his property may be from the river; to insure that the water shall not have lost its alluvium from stagnation or other cause; to keep the water in the canals at the highest possible level so as to diminish the labour and cost of raising it on to the fields, and to do all this without salting the adjoining lands; lastly, to give every individual cultivator the possibility of running off the surplus water from his fields without running it on to those of his neighbours. To illustrate the difficulty of solving simultaneously all these problems, let me say a few words about the third,—that of keeping water in

the canals at a conveniently high possible level. This object may be attained in various ways: by damming up the canal when the Nile is still high, and thus transforming it into a reservoir; by making the intake at a considerable distance up-stream, and giving the canal a more gentle gradient than the river; by closing the canal at the intake, and pouring water into it constantly by force-pumps; by raising the water in the river through means of a *barrage*, or weir. All these expedients have been tried, and they have all proved unsatisfactory—partly from inherent vices in the various systems, but chiefly from the imperfect way in which the works were originally constructed, and from the neglect or inability to keep them in proper repair. When a canal has been dammed up at high Nile and used simply as a reservoir, the water has rarely, if ever, sufficed in quantity, and has necessarily deteriorated in quality, in consequence of precipitating its fertilising alluvium. These defects may be obviated by the second expedient, that of supplying the small canals, not directly from the Nile, but from a great arterial canal running parallel to the river with a more gentle gradient, and consequently at a higher level; but, unfortunately, all experiments of this kind have hitherto failed through negligence and carelessness. The arterial canals have generally been allowed to silt up, and the cultivators have had reason to regret that the experiment was made, for the supply of water is not only as defective as before, but is also inferior in quality to the water which they formerly received direct from the Nile. Equally

unsuccessful have been the efforts to attain the object in view by powerful steam pumps erected at the intakes of the canals. In most cases the expenses have been out of all proportion to the results, and the supply of water has generally been insufficient. Least successful of all has been the attempt to raise the level of the water in the river by means of a *barrage* or weir. When a gigantic work, with not only engineering but also architectural pretensions, had been constructed some thirty years ago, by eminent French engineers, at the point where the Nile bifurcates to form the Delta, it was discovered that the foundations had not been laid deep enough to resist the force of the current, and, consequently, the authorities have never ventured to close the sluices. In the few cases where the problem of raising the level of the water in the canals has been practically solved, the result has sometimes been attended with unforeseen bad consequences. Thus, for example, near Tel-el-Kebir, there was formerly a large cultivated tract of 22,000 acres, and this has been decreased to 2,000 acres, in consequence of Lesseps's fresh water canal, which passes through the district at a high level. In like manner, the Ibrahimieh Canal, which irrigates the great sugar-plantations of the Daira Sanieh between Bibeh and Assiout, has already destroyed, by saline percolations, many thousand acres of fertile land. I do not at all mean to assert that the salting of the adjacent lands is a necessary, inevitable consequence of keeping the water at a high level in the canals; all I mean to

say is, that there is a great danger of this evil consequence resulting, if the proper precautions are not taken to prevent it. If it be true, as some respectable authorities assert, that the proper precautions are extremely simple, and consist merely in digging a trench alongside the canal and attending to the drainage generally, then I think that the authorities are doubly to blame in permitting, by their ignorance and negligence, what could have been so easily prevented.

In the best portions of the Delta, no such flagrant mistakes as those above cited have been committed, but the whole system of irrigation has been gradually deteriorating. Irrigation-canals have been allowed to silt up, and drainage-canals have been dammed up, sometimes thoughtlessly, as in the construction of railway embankments without culverts, and sometimes intentionally by the peasants for the purpose of obtaining water for irrigation. In some places, indeed, the essential distinction between irrigation-canals and canals for drainage has been entirely obliterated, and the drainage water is regularly used for irrigating the fields. This water contains of course little or no fertilising alluvium, and is more or less impregnated with saline matter injurious to the fertility of the soil; but the peasants who use it declare that they have no choice, because they cannot obtain any water of better quality. Better, they say, use bad water, which ensures at least some kind of crops, than allow the fields to remain dry and parched and obtain no crop at all.

Though the canal system, on which the prosperity of the country depends, has thus been allowed to fall into a lamentable state of inefficiency, it must not be supposed that the peasantry have escaped the forced labour necessary to keep the system in good working order. The *corvée* has been regularly called out twice a year for at least sixty days at a time—and very often for a much longer period—and the amount of labour and suffering which have been thereby imposed on the rural population ought to have sufficed for the work to be done. Unfortunately, an enormous amount of labour and suffering is annually squandered without producing any useful result, partly through the ignorance and negligence of the higher authorities, and partly through the abuses practised by all grades of officials, from the overseers of the gangs up to the Ministers of Public Works. With very rare exceptions all the officials, who have anything to do, directly or indirectly, with the *corvée*, think much more of enriching themselves than of increasing the material prosperity of the country. To describe briefly even the principal abuses would require much more space than I have at my disposal, and would try severely the reader's patience. Let the following serve as an illustration :—Once a year the chief engineers and other officials interested in the irrigation meet at central points to determine what works are to be undertaken and how the *corvée* is to be distributed among the population during the ensuing year. Instead of distributing the labour with a view to

making each peasant work as near as possible to his own village, they habitually arrange matters in such a way that the villagers have to go long distances and labour on works in which they have no personal interest. When the time for starting comes, many of the unfortunates prefer paying a pound or two for exemption, and a very large portion of this exemption-money is pocketed by the engineers and their accomplices, while those who are not rich enough to pay for exemption waste a great deal of their time and strength in going to, and returning from, the distant scene of their labours. Similar abuses are practised in the distribution of the water. To the engineers is confided the important duty of distributing the water among the numerous claimants, and this enables them to levy black-mail on those who are anxious to obtain a sufficient quantity of water at the proper time, and who are rich enough to pay for it. Occasionally, too—though this is much more rare,—an engineer may be actuated in his malpractices by other motives as indefensible as pecuniary rapacity. I know of one case, for example, in which an engineer kept a whole province without water for a considerable time at the most critical season of the year, because he happened to have a quarrel with the Mudir, and wished to do him an injury. Mehemet Ali is reported to have said that he had succeeded in bringing to reason the brigands of all kinds except the engineers and irrigation inspectors, and that these gentlemen had proved too much for him. The reputation which they then

acquired has been well maintained down to the present day.

The reader has now, I presume, learned quite enough about the prosaic working-life of the fellaheen, but he may perhaps wish to know whether these poor oppressed mortals are on the whole better or worse off than they used to be—whether in modern times, let us say during the present century, their condition has improved or become less tolerable. I shall answer, as far as lies in my power, this interesting question, and I shall do so all the more willingly because some of the facts which I have to adduce will help us to understand more clearly the present critical position of the Egyptian rural population, and perhaps suggest to benevolent, inventive minds some means by which that position may be ameliorated. The best way, as it seems to me, to enter upon this inquiry, is to collect and arrange some significant, well-authenticated facts, and I know of no more competent person to assist us in the work than old Abdu, the blind beggar of Kafr-Suleiman. Though of humble parentage, and blessed with few worldly goods, he deserves a chapter all to himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

AN OLD FELLAH'S EXPERIENCES.

An old blind beggar—Abdu's reminiscences and how they may be utilised—A visit from Mehemet Ali—The Omdeh of Kafr-Suleiman replaced by a Turkish colonel—The reigns of Ibrahim and Abbas—A merry monarch—The conscription and the Suez Canal *corvée*—A period of abnormal prosperity—Osman and his white elephant—Return of hard times—Confiscation of communal land—Extreme fiscal oppression—The philosophy of the bastinado—A Greek usurer—A change for the better—Political agitators—The promised Messiah appears—Disenchantment—What next ?

EVERY man, woman, and child in Kafr-Suleiman and the immediate neighbourhood knows old blind Abdu, so that on arriving in or near the village we can have no difficulty in discovering his whereabouts; but the accomplished reader, who has been carefully trained in the most approved scholastic methods of scientific research, may perhaps feel some scruples about accompanying me on an excursion which he may be excused for regarding as an undignified, wild-goose chase. To begin a serious investigation into the past and present condition of the fellaheen—that is to say, mark you, the economic history of the rural population of Egypt during the present century—by consulting an old blind beggar, must seem to a normally

constituted, well-trained mind, a proceeding wofully inconsistent with the importance and dignity of the subject. Are there no interesting official records to examine? Are there no learned books—the works of careful, competent, observers—to be consulted? Are there no enlightened officials—Ministers, Governors, Sub-governors, Bash-katibs, and Scribes—all ready to place their rich stores of information at the disposal of the diligent, well-recommended investigator? Yes, O most learned, most carefully-trained reader, all these things and personages do exist, as you suppose, but partly from certain defects in them, and partly from certain deficiencies in myself, I am unable to utilize them. In the public offices of every degree there are endless piles of official documents of every conceivable description—except, perhaps, the kind you happen for the moment to want—but my knowledge of Arabic grammar and caligraphy is much too limited to enable me to run through them rapidly and profitably, and even if I had all the philological acquirements of a Mezzofanti, I have only one brief, human life, and that would not suffice for arranging a thousandth part of those bulky, chaotic materials. As to the books about Egypt, I wish to speak of my predecessors with becoming respect, as I hope to be spoken of by those who come after me; but I cannot say that for this particular subject I have derived much information from them.[1] Many of them move

[1] In what concerns the life and economic condition of the fellaheen I have to confess my very great obligations to Daninos Bey, who was for some time my travelling companion, and who kindly put at my service

entirely in old aristocratic circles, among Pharaohs, Ptolemies, Arab conquerors, Orthodox Patriarchs, and similar exalted personages; and those who have condescended to look at the poor humble fellah have never really associated with him or tried to discover his miseries and his wants, but have treated him as a lay-figure for picturesque costume, or as a convenient accessory for the foreground of a landscape. The enlightened officials, from the ministerial Pasha to the village scribe, I have often consulted, and I am obliged to confess that I have sometimes obtained from them most valuable information, but as a general rule the teaching of these worthies is something worse than the blind leading the blind—it is rather the knave leading the blind man with the deliberate intention of making him fall into the ditch.

A very different guide is old Abdu, and though I cannot pretend that he is entirely without guile, for he is only a fellah after all, my feelings of gratitude towards him, as well as a sentiment of justice, compel me to say a few words in his defence. In the first place, I may be allowed to remark that, throughout the East, there is no necessary stigma attached to the mendicant state, and there are no poor-rates to whet the virtuous indignation of the well-to-do classes against the vice of pauperism. On the contrary, pauperism, even when it is voluntary, is

his thorough command of the Egyptian vernacular as well as his extensive and profound knowledge of agricultural affairs. It is to be hoped that, in the interests of Egypt, his remarkable intelligence and equally remarkable moral qualities will be more utilised than they have hitherto been in the work of reorganisation.

rather a virtue than a vice, and the beggar is an essential and very necessary member of Mussulman society. If there were no paupers in Islam, how could the pious Mussulman exercise that highest, noblest of Koranic virtues, the duty of alms-giving, which secures for him, more surely than even fasting and prayer, the prospect of a happy hereafter—the cool shades, the rippling brooks, and the delicious companionship of the blessed houris in paradise? Besides this, Abdu is not a common member of the mendicant fraternity. In his native village and throughout the surrounding country he enjoys as much popular respect as fellaheen can feel for a poor member of their own class who cannot injure them; and his misfortunes, though perhaps accelerated and increased by certain peculiarities of his own, were produced partly by his blindness, and partly, as I shall hereafter explain, by great economic influences over which such a humble individual could not possibly have any control, and of which he can be, at most, the unconscious chronicler. Formerly a well-to-do peasant with a fair amount of land, he has still a little mud-hut of his own in the outskirts of the village, and he has none of the irritating, shameless importunity of the degenerate Eastern beggar who has been demoralised by contact with European tourists. In every mud-hut of the place he is a welcome guest, and is always invited to partake of any humble fare that happens to be served at the time of his visit. In return he dispenses generously his stores of traditional information and personal experience; and his

wise remarks and vivid reminiscences are always listened to with respect and attention, even when the audience has heard them often and often before. With the children he is a great favourite, for he can tell them curious tales of old times; and even the grey-beards occasionally consult him when they differ about some fact or incident which occurred more than half a century ago. Abdu is thus, you see, not a beggar in the ordinary sense of the term, but rather—if we require to find a grand name for him—a kind of peripatetic Historical Institute supported by voluntary contributions.

We must not, however, expect too much from him, or demand from him what he has not to give. I have said that he is an unconscious chronicler of great economic influences, and it is only as such that we must use him. He chronicles these influences very much as a self-registering thermometer chronicles the changes of temperature—that is to say, he gives crude material out of which may be drawn scientific conclusions which he could not possibly understand. Though he possesses, in combination with the proverbial garrulity of old age, a retentive microscopic memory, and a certain rude power of graphic description, he has no idea of the relative importance of the facts and details which he describes, and never dreams of putting them into chronological or dogmatic order. He has nothing, in fact, but raw, undigested material to offer, so that when listening to him I have often thought of those great collections of historical documents which some European governments publish

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under the title of "Monumenta," and remembering my happy old German-University days, when we used to indulge occasionally in a little canine Latinity, I once dubbed him—laughing heartily the while at my own meagre, sorry joke — the unpublished *Tomus Primus* of a future *Monumenta Fellahica.*

Putting Abdu's reminiscences into chronological order, I find that his earliest recollections date from the time of the great Mehemet Ali, of whom he always speaks with the most profound reverence. More than once he had an opportunity of seeing in his native village the indefatigable, ubiquitous creator of the Egyptian Khediviate, and neither he nor his fellow-villagers seem to have derived much enjoyment from the repeated visits of the great man. The first time was an event never to be forgotten. Early in the morning a fellah ran breathless into the village and announced that the terrible Pasha was coming! The inhabitants were panic-stricken by the intelligence, which spread like wildfire in all directions, and the women immediately hid themselves with their children in the furthest recesses of their mud-cabins, as if suddenly threatened with an incursion of blood-thirsty savages. All knew that the Pasha had been for some time in the neighbourhood, but it was thought that he would as usual keep to the main road, which passed at several miles distance. The news that he was now coming proved, however, only too true, for in a few minutes a band of armed Albanians, headed by a venerable figure on a white ass, was seen approaching at an ambling pace. There

was still a hope that the unwelcome visitors might pass on without stopping, but this hope was soon destroyed, for the horsemen all dismounted in the cool shade of a wide-spreading sycamore-tree, which still flourishes at the side of a small mosque in front of the Omdeh's house. In the absence of the Omdeh, who happened to be away from home, the Pasha was received by the six Village-Sheikhs, who offered most respectfully the customary salutations and then stood trembling before the venerable figure with the white beard, patiently awaiting his orders. Abdu's father was among the six, and he himself was watching the proceedings at what he considered a tolerably safe distance. "Bring me here," said the Pasha, "the two robbers, Ali and Osman, who are in hiding amongst you." The Sheikhs, knowing well to whom he alluded, but fearing vengeance from the accomplices of the two persons named, declared with one accord that there were no evil-doers among them, and that they were all without exception the faithful, well-behaved, loyal servants of his Highness. "Bring them here at once!" said the Pasha, taking no notice of the reply, and slightly raising his voice. The Sheikhs began to repeat their declaration in nearly identical terms, but before they had got beyond the first few words the Pasha made a slight gesture with his hand—here Abdu acts the part of the Pasha with considerable dignity—and in the twinkling of an eye all six Sheikhs were lying on the ground, face downwards, receiving the bastinado from a dozen of his Highness's stalwart attendants. When they had each

received, notwithstanding loud protestations of ignorance about malefactors, a score or two of blows, one of them shouted in a whining tone that he was ready to bring the two men wanted. Immediately, on a sign from the Pasha, the beating ceased, and the "approver," being allowed to rise to his feet, went off limping, with some of the Albanians, to fulfil his promise. The two culprits were speedily brought, and as soon as the Pasha had convinced himself that they were the personages he was in search of, he ordered them to be hanged immediately on the highest point of a mound overlooking the village, as a warning to evil-doers. While his orders were being executed by the Albanians, he proceeded to inquire why the village seemed so poor in comparison with certain others in the neighbourhood. The Sheikhs replied that Allah did not always vouchsafe good harvests, and much more of the same sort, but the Pasha was not to be satisfied with such vague, meaningless replies. By diligently questioning and cross-questioning, he eventually brought out the truth, that the absent Omdeh made the villagers work for him so much, that they had very little time or strength to devote to their own fields; and when they contrived to obtain a little more produce than was absolutely necessary to keep soul and body together, it was always taken from them under one pretext or another. When a fellah gets once fairly launched on the chapter of his grievances, and believes that the hearer may do something to alleviate them, he always becomes

extremely communicative. The Pasha very soon discovered, therefore, all that the village had to complain of. At the end of the investigation, he dictated in a low tone of voice a few lines to his secretary—a young man who had been standing during the investigation in a respectful attitude close beside him—and he then proceeded to make a careful inspection of the village lands. What all this meant, the villagers could not imagine, but they afterwards understood it, for the absent Omdeh never returned, and his place was taken by a Turkish colonel called Abdullah Bey, who began to cultivate cotton and indigo in addition to the crops which the peasants were in the habit of raising. The colonel was an energetic, severe man, who made the peasants work quite as hard, and who used the kurbash quite as frequently, as the deposed Omdeh had done; but, under his rule, the villagers had, at least, plenty to eat—except one year when there was a famine—and there were no cases of a family being in extreme poverty. Each family had land enough to cultivate *dura* (native maize, or, more properly, a coarse kind of millet), beans, and other products for food, and a few date-palms to supply other wants. When the head of a family died, the land which he possessed was distributed by the Bey with a regard to the welfare of the community rather than to any supposed rights of inheritance; and when any of the heirs happened to complain, the Bey told them that the soil of Egypt belonged to the Pasha, and that they should be thankful for what they received. The forced labour was greater in amount than before, for the

Bey's cotton required constant attention, big reservoirs had to be constructed for the preparation of the indigo, and new canals were constantly being dug in the vicinity. But the *corvée* was now more regularly distributed, so that all took part without any one being ruined. For some years, neither the cotton nor the indigo succeeded, and the peasants, disliking the new kind of labour, did all in their power to make the Bey abandon his experiments. Some of the younger men would go out secretly at night to the cotton fields in the planting season, and would take out the seeds which had been planted during the day, in the hope of convincing the Bey that the soil was not suitable for cotton-growing ; but the trick was at last discovered, and effectually prevented for the future by severe punishments and watchful sentinels. The indigo culture was attended with still greater difficulties. An Indian, with very dark skin and very big turban, was sent down by the Pasha to teach how the precious dye should be prepared ; but it was long before the peasants could be induced to do what was required of them, and when they were forced to obey, they secretly murmured at being compelled to do work which their fathers and grandfathers had never known. The greatest hardship of all, however, was the conscription ; for the fellah, then as now, hated soldiering in all its forms, and preferred any amount of hard work and privations in his native village to a comparatively easy, luxurious life in barracks or in camp. Some mothers, Abdu hints darkly, intentionally mutilated their children to save them from this mis-

fortune, but the expedient was unsuccessful, for, after a short time, those who were mutilated were taken like the others. Much more successful were the Bey's efforts to save his peasants from military service. He required all the able-bodied men for his cotton and indigo plantations, and when the Pasha paid him his annual visit to see how the plantations were prospering, he always petitioned his Highness—and the request was generally granted—that the village should be for the ensuing year exempted from the conscription.

The old Pasha and the Bey, who had served him so well, died about the same time (1849), and the two events had important consequences for the village. The inhabitants were no longer exempted from military service, but as a compensation they were no longer obliged to work on the cotton and indigo plantations, and they returned with delight to their old practice of cultivating only *dura*, beans, and other articles of food. The crops sufficed not only for their daily wants, but also gave a considerable surplus, so that the taxes, which were then taken in kind, could be collected without the application of corporal punishment. The Bey was succeeded by his son, who built a house on the land which his father had reclaimed and cultivated, and Abdu says that this land is less heavily taxed than the ordinary land of the village, for one of his own relatives, who afterwards bought a portion of it, pays per acre only about half as much as his neighbours.

Of Ibrahim Pasha, Mehemet Ali's favourite son, who acted as Regent during the last days of his

father's reign, and survived him only a few months, Abdu knows but little from personal experience, for he only saw him once for a few minutes, and was so much afraid of him that he hardly ventured to look at him. He has heard a great deal about him from fellahs in the village who served under the victorious general during the campaign in Syria, and he can relate some interesting anecdotes about that campaign, but as they have nothing to do with fellah life in Egypt, they need not be here reproduced.

Of Abbas, who succeeded Ibrahim, old Abdu knows still less. He never once saw him, and he believes that no one else ever saw him except his personal attendants. This is of course an exaggeration, but it is true that Abbas used to shut himself up in his palace and to see as few people as possible, and he never travelled about the country like Mehemet Ali to redress grievances and execute justice. Yet, according to old Abdu, the reign of Abbas (1849-54) was a happy time for the fellaheen—happy, as compared with the times which preceded and the times which followed it. There was no longer the hard, disagreeable work on the plantations of the Pasha or of the Beys, and few new canals were dug, so that the *corvée* was confined to keeping the existing canals clean. The conscription, too, was very much lighter, for there were no foreign wars like the campaigns of the Hedjas, the Morea, and Syria, and only a small number of men were called out for ordinary home service. As for taxes, they were not very heavy, and could generally be paid without much effort. Altogether, according

to fellah conceptions, Abbas was a much better ruler than he has generally been represented by Europeans, to whom he usually displayed a cold, haughty demeanour, and whom he was at no pains to conciliate.

His successor, Said—the Said Pasha whose name has of late been so often mentioned in connection with that of M. de Lesseps—is spoken of by Abdu almost as if he had been a personal acquaintance, but not in very sympathetic terms. A little fat man, who could be boisterously merry and violently angry and boisterously merry again—all in the space of a few minutes; and in every respect very unlike his father—such was, in a few words, the peasant's portrait of the Pasha. His Highness had often passed through Kafr-Suleiman, generally attended by a little army of several thousand troops, who followed him about the country for no reason which fellah intelligence could grasp. Once Abdu had a personal interview with him, and if this was, as I suspect, the only time he had an opportunity of conversing with his Highness, then the acquaintance was very much like that of the Irishman with the "Gineral," founded exclusively on the fact that his honour had, with a big military oath, told Pat to get out of the way. Abdu, on the memorable occasion in question, was one of the Village-Sheikhs, and had not succeeded in furnishing, with the desired alacrity, certain supplies which were needed for the troops. Summoned suddenly to account for this delinquency, he found the Pasha in a state of furious excitement, and had to

listen to a great deal of violent abuses in good Arabic, intermingled with certain forcible Turkish expressions, with which his previous experience of Turkish and Circassian officers in the viceregal service had rendered him thoroughly familiar. In the midst of the tirade, and when there seemed to be an imminent danger of the words being translated into blows, his Highness' attention was suddenly attracted elsewhere—to a ludicrous little accident which happened to one of his aides-de-camp—and his fury immediately evaporated in a hearty laugh, under cover of which the delinquent dexterously contrived to make his escape.

It was not, however, for a few words spoken in anger, or a few forcible platonic threats, that Abdu harboured a half-concealed grudge against the most good-natured and most capricious of Viceroys. He had much deeper and more lasting grievances. Of his three sons, one was taken as a soldier and died in the pestilential marshes of the Soudan, and another was taken as a labourer to work on the great canal in the desert and never returned. On this latter topic the bereaved father can speak with a quiet, resigned, fatalistic pathos which is very touching. The son in question was evidently the Benjamin of the family—the one in which the parental affection was centred. He left the village one morning at sunrise, with a number of other peasants taken for the canal *corvée*, saying, in a merry tone of voice—he was always light-hearted—that he would be back in two or three months; but two months, three months, passed, and

no tidings of him came. At last, some of his companions who had started with him returned, and explained how he was not with them. He had been, like the rest of them, working for some days up to his waist in water, and sleeping at night in the open air, exposed to the cold night-winds which often sweep over that portion of the desert ; so he sickened and died like many others, and his body was laid in the sand at a short distance from the encampment. Old Abdu is not at all a sentimental individual, but his harsh voice softens a little, and a curious change comes over his expressionless eyes when he reaches this part of his story.

Towards the end of Said's reign, the peasants began to cultivate cotton. We have seen how they detested this foreign plant and tried to prevent its cultivation when they had to labour in the Bey's cotton fields without receiving for themselves any share of the profits, but when they found that they could cultivate it in their own fields and sell it for their own benefit at a high price, their strong, deep-rooted prejudices soon withered and died. At the instigation of some friends who lived in Alexandria, a peasant of Kafr-Suleiman, less obstinately conservative and more enterprising than his fellows, was induced to plant a little cotton, and the high price which he received for it led his neighbours to follow his daring example. The experiment was successful beyond expectation, for the prices were still higher than they had been in the previous year, and now every peasant in the village aspired to become a cotton-planter. Most of

them had no difficulty in realising their aspirations, for several Greeks came and offered to provide the seed and advance any money that might be required. Abdu did like the others, and he soon became what he considered a rich man, that is to say, he had more than a hundred gold pounds tied up in an old rag and carefully buried in a corner of his winter sleeping apartment. That was not bad for a humble fellah, who had never before in his life seen twenty gold pieces collected together; but he was by no means the richest. There was, for example, his neighbour Osman, who must have been more than ten times as rich, for besides a good deal of land of his own, he had at one time 200 acres of land rented from the deceased Bey's son, who now generally lived in Cairo and let his land to the fellaheen. Osman had always been an ambitious man, and, as is often the case with the fellah, his ambition had taken a sensual direction. He aspired to have, like rich Beys and Pashas, a lovely Circassian slave, or at the very least a pretty young Abyssinian girl, in his hareem. The ever-increasing extraordinary rise in the price of cotton enabled him to realise the early dreams of his boyhood. Late one evening, after an absence of about a fortnight in Cairo, he returned home, and next morning the whole village knew that there was a fair Circassian in Osman's house. Great was the excitement caused by this important news, and great the anxiety to see the important addition to the population, but the aristocratic lady, who had cost a perfectly fabulous sum, was not at all disposed to display her charms to the

vulgar gaze. Like Achilles, she sulked in her tent, or rather in her mud-hovel, for the light-headed, thoughtless Osman had bought his white elephant without first providing suitable accommodation. The female neighbours, and any one else who had imagination enough to invent a decent pretext for passing that way, glanced furtively in at the half-open door in the hope of seeing the illustrious stranger ; but all such clandestine efforts of unbecoming curiosity failed, until one day, when a number of women had collected in front of the hovel and were carrying on a very noisy conversation in the hope of " drawing the fox," suddenly Fatma (for she had the honour to bear the name of the Prophet's illustrious daughter) appeared at the door, and glared at the disturbers of her serene tranquillity with an expression which struck terror into their inmost hearts. As a compensation for the scathing effect of that haughty, terrible glance, the victims became, for a few days at least, quite important personages in the highest circles of the village, for they had seen with their own eyes the mysterious guest. They had not, however, much positive information to give in reply to the innumerable inquiries. Their answers, when stripped of hypothetical comment and fantastic invention, amounted simply to this : that Fatma was very big, very fat, and looked very fierce. Any bodily charms which she might possess—the existence of which, by the way, was more than called in question by every woman in the village—were carefully concealed at the moment of apparition by

voluminous folds of white drapery, and by a thick, well-arranged, Turkish yashmak, which is a very different thing from the loose, blue veil with which ordinary fellah women make a pretence of concealing their features. When Fatma returned to her carpet and her cushions—so, at least, a little female attendant afterwards related—she laughed merrily at the trick she had played; but when Osman came home, she had resumed her sullen, sulky demeanour, and when he attempted to coax her she flew into a passion, and poured out on his unfortunate shaven head all the vials of her indignant wrath. The neighbours could hear her loudly-uttered reproaches, expressed in broken Arabic, and of course this added to the already large amount of scandal which Osman's inconsiderate conduct had created. Was it for this that she, the daughter of a Bey in her own country, had been brought to this miserable house? Let her be taken back at once to the comfortable quarters in Cairo, where she had lived and associated with people of her own condition! Such was the return which poor Osman received for all the efforts which he made to conciliate and please the haughty despot of his humble hareem. And these efforts were not stinted, for they comprised everything that fellah imagination could devise. He turned Osman junior, his obedient, hard-working son, out of the house and made him sleep in the stable. He had bought earrings with enormous stones, bracelets of gilded silver, which the dealer had declared to be of solid gold, and a big necklace, strong and heavy enough to restrain a mastiff. Costly silks, too, he

had bought for divans and cushions, and perfumes to dispel the unpoetic perfumes of a fellah's humble abode. Having noticed that the nostrils of his fastidious companion curled with mingled disgust and contempt as he approached her, he had poured over his unsavoury person a whole bottle of the most costly perfume which he could procure. And all in vain! The domestic delights which he had long dreamed of, and which he fancied he had at last obtained, slipped ever from his grasp. The luscious cup, at the very moment when he raised it to his lips, was ever dashed ruthlessly to the ground. And it was not merely in the recesses of his hareem that he had to bear obloquy and disfavour. His friends and acquaintances now looked askance at him, for he had unwittingly disturbed their domestic tranquillity as well as his own. In every hovel of the village unheard of female pretensions had appeared, and day by day the flood of feminine discontent and insubordination rose, till it threatened to sweep away the time-honoured embankments of marital authority. In vain the terrified husbands sought to resist or appease the raging torrent by vigorous admonitions or generous gifts, proportioned in value to their pecuniary resources. The admonitions received less and less attention, and the gifts only whetted the appetite of unreasonable spouses. Why should they be satisfied with a new costume of coarse, homely stuff or a few ordinary trinkets when "the Circassian" had rich silks and costly jewels, and lived in an atmosphere of perfume that could be smelt at ten yards from her accursed

door? Was she better than they were, or was her husband anything more than a simple fellah like their own? These unreasonable complaints and reproaches naturally irritated the husbands, and a considerable share of the irritation fell on the unlucky Osman's head.

Poor Osman! He had become the maltreated slave of the white elephant which he had purchased with his own hard-earned money, and he received from his friends and acquaintances, instead of sympathy and compassion, merely angry looks and bitter reproaches. His sin, if sin it was—for, though ambitious, he had transgressed no precept of the Koran—had surely found him out; and what made his hard lot all the harder to bear was this, that the sin, as avenger, came not in the common form of satiety, but before fruition, so that he had not even the memory of past delights, which sometimes blunts a little in ill-regulated, unprincipled minds the keen edge of merciless retribution.

Then why did he not, like a reasonable man, take his tyrant back to her comfortable quarters in Cairo and re-sell her at a reduction to the slave-dealer from whom he had purchased her? This idea probably crossed his mind often enough, but he had in his composition a large share of fellah obstinacy, and there was in the petulant, capricious, savage creature a mysterious something which charmed him. He determined to conquer her, and, strange to say, he ultimately succeeded—in so far at least as to insure a moderate amount of domestic comfort. In spite of

his domestic troubles, his worldly affairs prospered, and he built for himself and his Circassian a large, comfortable house. As soon as Fatma was installed in the new abode her character seemed to change. She became contented, agreeable—sometimes almost affectionate. The truth is, she was not a bad woman of her kind. A woman who knows she has charms sufficient to insure the drawing of a prize in the matrimonial lottery, and who has long looked forward to leading a life of ease and luxury in the hareem of a wealthy Pasha, may be excused for showing a little bad temper and other unamiable qualities when she suddenly finds herself condemned to live in a fellah's mud hovel; and her ideas about the equitable interpretation of the contract of sale, passed in due legal form with the slave-dealer, must naturally be somewhat different from those of her purchaser and husband. Fatma was, however, not unreasonable in her exigences. When she had obtained a comfortable house to live in, and had taught her husband to respect in his dress and habits certain elementary requirements of civilised life, she threw off her habitually sullen demeanour, refrained from the occasional violent outbursts of temper in which she had previously indulged, and displayed—what is not rare in women of her race—a decided talent for managing domestic and even commercial affairs. If Osman retained and increased the fortune which he had made so suddenly, it was partly due to her advice and assistance, and now that Osman has been gathered to his fathers, she still administers the fortune with

prudence and ability. Osman junior, who was ignominiously exiled to the stable during the first weeks of her sojourn in Kafr-Suleiman, now lives in the paternal mansion with her on very amicable terms, and always speaks of his step-mother with the greatest respect. She had no children of her own, but she shows much maternal affection for the son of Osman junior, and calls him her grandchild. He will probably be some day Omdeh of the village, or perhaps something higher, for his grandmother insists on his having a good education and entering the public service.

But how about the storm of female insubordination which Fatma at first excited in the village? That tempest was of very short duration, and was stilled by a tempest greater than itself. Old Abdu can tell much about this greater tempest, for it was in it that he and his family came to grief.

When the cotton cultivation had been going on successfully and profitably for three or four years, Abdu thought he might safely employ the capital which he had at his disposal by renting some land in the vicinity and raising cotton on it. The rent was high, but with a fair average crop the profits would be considerable. All went well as far as the cultivation was concerned, but the prices began to fall rapidly, and when the time for selling came, Abdu, like his neighbours, could not obtain the half of what was expected. For him, as for them, the blow was terribly severe, and he never recovered from it. Next year he tried again, in the hope that prices would rise, but he was disappointed, and he found himself, not

only without capital, but positively in debt. From that time the story of his ruin resembles so closely the story told us formerly by Hassan, that the details need not be reproduced. Under the ever-increasing load of taxation, he sank deeper and deeper into debt, until at last he was compelled to sell his land, and the purchase-money did not suffice to cover his liabilities. At this time he became blind, his only-surviving son died, and he was reduced to a state of beggary.

Of the peasants who, like Abdu, made a small fortune during the few years when cotton was at abnormally high prices, very few retained even ordinary prosperity during the succeeding period of reaction. It was at this time that the Greek usurers established themselves in the village, and helped some of the peasants to put off the evil day, only to ruin them more completely afterwards. A great misfortune, too, overtook the commune as a whole: three-fourths of its land was confiscated by the Government! The confiscation took place in this wise: the prices of cotton being low, and the taxes higher than they had ever been before, the commune fell grievously into arrears; and one day an official came down from Cairo to consult with the Omdeh and the Sheikhs as to what should be done. He inquired whether all the arrears could be paid at once, and, on being assured that such a thing was quite impossible, he declared that the Khedive—Ismail Pasha had now replaced Said—would take over the debt with a portion of the land. Abdu had never been able to

understand this operation, which the official described as an act of Khedivial favour and generosity ; but the result was that three-fourths of the land belonging to members of the commune were detached from the remaining fourth and incorporated into a large Khedivial estate which was then being created in the vicinity. This estate was used as a sugar-plantation, and on it was built a large sugar-factory, which can be plainly seen from the mound adjoining the village. As the peasants had no longer sufficient land of their own, they willingly worked on the estate and in the factory, but the pay which they received was very small and paid very irregularly. The taxes, however, were still as high as ever, and no amount of energy and severity on the part of the officials could prevent the accumulation of arrears. At the same time a great deal of gratis forced work had to be done, for a long canal was being dug, and a railway was being built between Bibeh and Assiout. A network of agricultural railways, too, was being constructed on all the Khedivial sugar-plantations, which were springing up like mushrooms.

This period, extending from about the year 1866 till some three or four years ago, is perhaps the darkest time in the history of the fellaheen during the present century, and as we listen to Abdu's reminiscences of the oppression, extortion, and suffering which the poor wretches had to endure, we cannot but wonder how even fellahs could live and multiply in such conditions. That they not only survived, but also increased in numbers—or at least, did not

seriously decrease—is a remarkable proof of their extraordinary vitality. The tales which Abdu relates in his plain, matter-of-fact, unimpassioned style, *sine ira et studio*, would make first-rate material for a criminal investigation, but they are too monotonous in their general outlines, and too repulsive in their details to be used for literary purposes, except perhaps by writers of the Zola school. As the general reader cannot reasonably be expected to possess the patience and other qualities required by an official of the criminal investigation department, I shall confine myself to indicating briefly the general character of the scenes and of the actors which our old blind friend describes with tiresome realistic accuracy.

In these scenes the stage is pretty well filled with poor, overworked, underfed peasants of so humble, docile a character, that their wrongs and sufferings never awaken in them any ideas of open resistance, or any wish for savage revenge. The piece, therefore, is monotonously pathetic, and has none of the tragic or even the melodramatic element. The ever-recurring click, click, click, click of the kurbash, varied a little by the moaning, groaning accompaniment of the sufferers, is never interrupted by an uncontrollable outburst of popular indignation, or by the gleaming dagger of an assassin less apathetic and more daring than his fellows. Psychologists tell us that the most casual fleeting impression, though it may not have time to ripen into consciousness, remains indelibly registered in some stray corner of the brain, and may be long afterwards reproduced by abnormal cerebral

excitement. In like manner, perhaps—supposing that fellahs have sufficient human nature in them to bring them within the sphere of ordinary psychological law—these incidents which seem to make no impression on the dull apathetic minds of the spectators, may at a future point of the drama reappear in the popular consciousness, and bring down savage reprisals on the heartless oppressors, or more probably—for such is often the way in this curiously constructed world of ours—on the heads of innocent victims. But for the moment there is no premonitory symptom of a coming Nemesis, for the Khedive Ismail, from whom the punishment is supposed to come, is still the earthly representative of inscrutable, irresistible Destiny, and in Egypt, as elsewhere, it is rare to find a Prometheus courageous enough to defy the immortal gods.

Among the *dramatis personæ*, properly so-called—for the fellaheen are merely the anonymous crowd which fills the stage and serves as *corpus vile* for the intelligent activity of the real actors—the most important personage is the Mudir or Governor of the province. He has not, it must be confessed, the brutal features or the demoniacal expression which we should naturally expect in a man who causes relentlessly so much suffering. I can speak from personal observation, for I have since seen him off the stage. His features are, it is true, a little amorphous and heavy, and there is about the mouth an expression which is not sympathetic, but there is nothing in the face which indicates abnormal villainy or cruelty. In

private intercourse he is a very agreeable companion, and in his domestic life he shows himself to his little daughter a most tender, affectionate father. He is, in fact, not an unusually vicious or cruel man, and he is not the author, but merely one of the intermediate instruments, of the suffering which his official activity helps to produce. In a better system of government he might be a very respectable official, for he obeys strictly the orders of his superiors, and is not more corrupt than the great majority of his colleagues. His orders are to raise, under pain of instant dismissal, a certain amount of money from the rural population of his province, and he merely fulfils, by the ordinary means at his disposal, what he considers his duty. If he refused, or neglected to use the requisite means, he would be at once deprived of the salary which is absolutely necessary for him to bring up his family in a manner becoming his social position, and if he made a personal sacrifice in the supposed interests of justice and humanity, the fellaheen would derive no advantage from it, for a less scrupulous and equally energetic Governor would be put in his place. Such are doubtless—if he is ever troubled with the gnawings of conscience—the arguments which he employs to justify or extenuate his conduct, but I strongly suspect that he is thoroughly well saturated with the conceptions of those around him, and that he is never pricked by conscience even in the still watches of the night when it is supposed to trouble the slumbers of the most hardened sinners. Certainly

in public he never shows the least symptoms of humanitarian weakness, for he always causes the thong or the stick to be mercilessly applied so long as there is the slightest chance of extracting coin from the victim; and it must be admitted that the desired result is sometimes attained long after the ordinary observer has decided in his own mind that the continuance of the punishment—or rather of the torture, for the word punishment is a misnomer—is utterly useless. This leads me to say a few words about the customary behaviour of the fellaheen under torture, in the hope of correcting a very prevalent misapprehension.

Europeans long resident in Egypt will tell you gravely, and with all the appearance of sincere conviction, that any compassion which you may show for a bastinadoed fellah is a very unmerited expenditure of the finer feelings of humanity. The fellah, they say, is almost insensible to pain in the soles of his feet, and he seems positively to like the kurbash when applied in moderation; for he generally refuses to pay his taxes until the authorities have given him —by way of reward, I presume—a certain number of blows. Now about the soles of fellah feet, and about the precise extent of their cutaneous insensibility I do not pretend to have any accurate information, and I am quite ready to admit that the habit of walking barefoot may have, in the course of many generations, considerably thickened and hardened the cuticle; but the fact of the bastinado being the most approved instrument of fiscal pressure proves to my

mind that, in spite of the thickening and hardening, the cuticle still retains something of its primitive sensitiveness. Why then does the fellah who has a sum of money concealed sometimes submit to receive a considerable number of blows before producing it? The answer is very simple. The insolvent fellah knows that, as he has not money enough to satisfy the tax-gatherer, he is sure in any case to be beaten, and he cannot understand why he should needlessly sacrifice the little sum of money which he happens to possess. If he at once produces the hidden, insufficient sum, the kurbash will be employed in the hope of extracting more; whereas if he persistently declares under torture that he is penniless, he may perhaps, by his stoicism, convince the sceptical extortioners that he has nothing to give. Beaten he will be under all circumstances, and the only practical point to be settled is whether, after the operation, he still has or has not his little treasure to console him. Now it seems to me that in a dilemma of this kind the only difference between the gentle reader with tender feet and the fellah with hardened soles would be that the former, being more liable to have his judgment vitiated by physical pain, would be less likely to act according to the dictates of plain, practical common-sense. Fellah human nature is really not so very different from ordinary human nature after all.

To return to the Mudir; he knows by long experience how much physical pain is required to vitiate a fellah's sober judgment, and he acts accordingly.

When he has convinced himself that the protestations are sincere, and that there is really no treasure concealed, he adopts another method of obtaining the money he requires. "Since you have no money," he says to the beaten fellah, "you must borrow some." "But who is to lend me any?" asks the fellah hopelessly. "That can be arranged," replies his Excellency mysteriously, and thereupon, after a little delay, appears a Greek usurer called Dhimitri who has been patiently waiting in the background. Dhimitri has taken the precaution to discover beforehand what lands are mortgaged, so he does not require to question the peasants on the subject, and at once states the conditions on which he is prepared to advance the money required for the taxes. The peasant has of course no choice. He accepts, therefore, the conditions, affixes his seal to the bond, and is allowed to retire. What share of the profits Dhimitri gives to the governor I cannot say; that is a matter of private arrangement between themselves.

As I have already frequently alluded to the Greek and Levantine usurers, and shall have again occasion to mention them in future chapters I had better give the reader some account of this typical representative of the money-lending fraternity. Dhimitri or Dhimitraki,[1] as he is familiarly called by his comrades, is a native of one of the Greek islands and a

[1] I use the letters *dh* to represent the modern pronunciation of the Greek letter δ. It corresponds to the *th* sound in the word *thine* as distinguished from the *th* in *thin*. The form Dhimitráki is a diminutive.

member of the Orthodox Greek Church. To all his friends and acquaintances he is known as a patriot—not merely in the popular Greek acceptation of the term[1] but also in the sense in which Occidentals use the word ; and very possibly future generations of school children, either in his native place or perhaps in Athens, may be educated in a Dhimitrakion, erected and endowed at his expense. For the moment, however, his fortune is far too modest to allow of any such patriotic extravagance in the cause of popular education. Born of poor parents, and educated merely in a primary school, he went first to Constantinople, where he gained a living for some years as a domestic servant, and then followed his master—a merchant of his own nationality—to Alexandria. There he accidentally made the acquaintance of some fellow-countrymen, who were endeavouring to make their way in life by retail trade, and feeling the commercial instincts of his race strong within him, he determined to follow their example. Alexandria, however, he soon found to be rather overcrowded by men of his own stamp, so he bethought himself of trying his fortune in the villages. Having invested the few pounds, which he had saved by strict economy, in miscellaneous articles, which he thought likely to tempt fellah purchasers, he started one morning with a pack on his back, and spent a week or two in wandering from one village to another. By that time he had

[1] The Greeks of the Levant, when hailing an unknown person, usually use the word *πατριώτης*, without meaning to attribute to the person addressed any patriotic sentiment.

disposed of his wares—not very profitably, it is true, because his *à priori* conceptions of fellah taste turned out to be very different from reality, but being a sharp, intelligent youth he profited by the experience he had gained, and his next venture was much more successful. It was just at this time that the fellaheen began to be rich in consequence of the extraordinary rise in the price of cotton, and Dhimitri noticed that they were very ready to buy trinkets and silk handkerchiefs. It was in such articles therefore that he chiefly invested for his second venture, and he contrived to sell them at unexpectedly high prices. This result was to be attributed in great part to his cleverness as a salesman. When he displayed his wares to an admiring crowd he was at pains to explain to the audience that his wares were not prepared from the common gold of which ordinary guineas are made—so far he was absolutely veracious—but that they were specially prepared for him of a gold such as the Egyptian Government could not possibly procure! He did not really wish to sell them now, for of course as soon as he arrived in Cairo he could at once get for them ten times as much as the price at which he now offered them, but he wished to confer a favour on those who had bought from him at his previous visit. All this and much more of the same kind the wily Dhimitri communicated, partly by fragments of broken Arabic, and partly by a running commentary of cosmopolitan gestures, which always greatly amused the bystanders. If they could only have understood his dear mother-tongue they would have been swept

away by the torrent of his voluble eloquence. As it was, they were all amused and half-convinced, and some pushed their confidence so far as to make purchases—occasionally at what seemed to the seller really fabulous prices—but he was wise enough never to show externally the least symptoms of his inward delight. On the contrary, he always assumed the air of a man who has made a great sacrifice for some noble motive, and looked at the purchasers as if he deeply envied their good fortune. Rumour says that he once induced an enriched peasant, who wished to out-shine his neighbours, to buy as solid gold a burnished brass ewer for washing the fingers before and after meat, and that the fraud was not detected for several weeks, but I hesitate to accept the story even on the good authority of such a generally veracious witness as Abdu. His commercial reputation in Kafr-Suleiman was certainly far from spotless, but I can hardly conceive his indulging in fraud so easily detected.

Dhimitri's prosperity as a pedlar did not last long. After three or four years the number and resources of his customers rapidly declined, until the profits no longer repaid the trouble. Cotton had fallen in price, and the peasants were not only devoid of loose cash to spend but were on the look out for money to borrow. Dhimitri perceived the change, and adroitly adapted himself to circumstances. So long as his fellah friends had money he took as much of it from them as he could get; now that they required money he would supply them with it, and would make, perhaps, still larger profits by the new kind of transaction.

It was necessary, however, to limit the sphere of his operations, to give up a nomadic life and settle in one place. The place he chose was a large commercial village near Kafr-Suleiman. There he founded a mixed establishment, including an inn for travellers and a grocery store for travellers and natives. The greater part of his capital, however, was employed in loans for short terms at high interest. As a rule he contrived to be repaid, not in money, the exact amount of which it is easy to calculate, but in farm produce, especially cotton, and soon he became a local agent for one of the great cotton exporters of Alexandria. This was an immense step in advance, for it enabled him to obtain at from ten to fifteen per cent. per annum large sums which he could invest at the rate of three or four per cent. *per month.* At first he accepted as security for his loans simple *seneds* or promises to pay, but when the fellaheen sank deeper and deeper into debt, and incurred liabilities far beyond their assets, he found it necessary to constitute regular mortgages, so that when the crash came he would have a first claim upon their lands.

For some years nothing has been heard of Dhimitraki in Kafr-Suleiman, but I am fortunately in a position to bring his biography up to date. When he left the neighbouring village he settled as a merchant and financier in Alexandria, gained a good deal of money by making small advances to the Khedive, Ismail Pasha, when his Highness was in desperate financial straits, picked up somewhere in the course of his wanderings a family name, and is now

M. Dhimitrius Something-ópoulos, a very important man upon 'Change. Let the Rallis and the Sinadinos look to their financial laurels, for they have in the *ci-devant* Dhimitraki a by no means despicable rival.

Of course the Governor, attended by the big Greek usurer, and numerous *kawasses*, comes to the village only from time to time when a little extra pressure is required, but the Sheikhs and Omdeh, the village Sarraf, and little resident usurers, the peasants have always with them; and the pressure of these lesser satraps is constant and severe. A Government which plays the part of grand extortioner cannot be very severe on the little extortioners who help it in its work, and who act on the principle that the labourer is worthy of his hire. These minor extortioners use the same means as their superiors, including the instrument of torture to which I have so often alluded, and of which the very name must have already become odious to the reader. Pardon me, O indulgent reader, for having used it so often. I know that so frequent repetition of such an odious word is contrary to all accepted canons of good taste, and to all sound principles of literary criticism. But what am I to do? To describe the past and present condition of the fellaheen without making frequent mention of so important a factor in their daily life would be like acting *Hamlet* without the Prince of Denmark.

Some three or four years ago, says Abdu, a change for the better began to take place. About the same

time Ismail Pasha left Egypt and was succeeded by his son, Tewfik, and perhaps this change of Khedive had something to do with the lightening of the burdens. The Mudir and his attendants did not come so frequently as before, and each peasant received a paper stating how much he had to pay, and at what seasons he had to pay it. So long as a peasant paid regularly all the sums set down in this paper he had nothing to fear from the Governor, but he might still have a good deal to bear from the Sheikhs, the Sarraf, and the local usurers. On the whole the peasants did not seem conscious of much improvement in their condition, and some of them began to complain more loudly than they had ever done during the time of the greatest oppression. The discontent was, if not created, at least fomented by some students of the Azhar who used to visit the village occasionally. One of these youths said openly to the peasants that they had been long oppressed by the foreigners, but that a deliverer was at hand and would shortly appear. When Abdu heard of this he predicted—so at least he says now—that no good would come of it; but it is possible that, like many amateur prophets whose words are not written down at the moment of utterance, he modifies his prediction by the light of subsequent events. However this may be, it is certain that the majority of the peasants had no such dark forebodings. On the contrary, they believed that some great event was about to happen for their benefit, and with the help of more students from the Azhar they recognised

their deliverer in Arabi Pasha. The assembling of the notables in Cairo and the events which immediately followed reached Kafr-Suleiman in a more or less distorted shape, and when it began to be whispered that Arabi was going to extinguish the debts to the usurers, and that the Khedive was trying to prevent him, there was decided sympathy with the dictator and a decided feeling of hostility against Tewfik. When it further became known that Arabi was going to fight the foreign unbelievers, whereas the Khedive had allied himself with them, the two feelings above-mentioned were considerably intensified. If Arabi could have fought the foreigner in single combat he would have awakened unmixed enthusiasm and unstinted applause. Unfortunately, the question had to be decided not by single combat but by large armies, for the creation and maintenance of which a large number of reserve men and young recruits had to be called out, and forced contributions had to be made all over the country. These two facts cooled to a great extent the popular enthusiasm, but a very natural and a very general feeling of satisfaction was experienced when the usurers took to flight without demanding the settlement of their claims, and the emissaries of the National Party declared that the debts were for ever cancelled.

Very cruel was the moment of disenchantment. The peasants were relating to each other one morning the news which had been received the previous evening about a great victory by which the land forces of the invading foreigner had received a blow

as crushing as that which had previously almost annihilated their fleet, when suddenly a peasant, who had been drawn for the conscription, rode into the village on a cavalry horse, without his coat, belt, or arms, and announced that the English were coming! He had ridden all night and all the previous day as fast as his lean nag could carry him, and now he was so tired that when he dismounted he could hardly stand. When he had recovered a little, he related how he had been in the camp of Tel-el-Kebir, how he and his comrades had been suddenly aroused before daybreak by a dreadful fire of musketry and artillery, and how before they had time to prepare themselves for defence the nimble foreigners came scampering over the entrenchments and right into the very heart of the camp. Satan must have aided them, for there was no possibility of resistance, and even Arabi fled! He had seen Arabi, he said, with two other generals, galloping off towards the station, and then, he thought, it was time for him to do likewise. Luckily he found his horse, and speedily followed his commander, but at the station there was such a crowd that he could not get near the train, which was preparing to start, and he saw coming over the brow of the slope in the direction of the camp a squadron of English cavalry, which might reach in a few minutes the point where he was standing! He determined, therefore, to lose no more time, and started at once homewards on horseback. More than once he thought he heard the English cavalry behind him, but Allah had been merciful, and had preserved

him from danger. By this time the English must, he thought, be already in Cairo, for they were nimble, cunning dogs, sons of dogs, and nobody could resist them. This last remark was made in an undertone, as if he were afraid that some of the dogs, sons of dogs, might possibly overhear him.

In the course of the next few days several villagers who had served as foot soldiers returned home, and confirmed the story of their mounted comrade. On arriving they had neither coats, arms, nor boots, and the first thing they did was to replace their regulation under-garments and their military cap by the long blue shirt and felt skull-cap ordinarily worn by the fellaheen. Five minutes after their arrival they were ready to swear by the beard of the Prophet that they had never heard of Tel-el-Kebir or Kafr-Dawar, and that for months past they had never quitted their native village for a single day!

"And what do the peasants think about the present state of affairs?"

"Peasants think little and speak less about such things. All is pretty much as it was. The English are in Cairo, and the usurers are again in the villages. God is great!"

"Where is Arabi now, and do you think he will ever come back?"

"How should a poor old blind fellah know anything about such matters? God is great, and very merciful!"

CHAPTER IX.

A COMMENTARY TO THE FOREGOING REMINISCENCES.

Effects of Mehemet Ali's policy on the condition of the fellaheen—Prosperity and contentment under Abbas—The reign of Said Pasha—His love of soldiering and his good-natured weakness towards foreigners—Forced labour for the digging of the Suez Canal—Reform in the incidence of the land revenue—The Crimean war produces a demand for cereals, and the American war fosters the cultivation of cotton—Accession of Ismail Pasha—New era in fellaheen history—The cotton game and the sugar trick—The day of reckoning—Tricky attempts to cheat Mephistopheles of his bond—Constitutional government—Deposition of Ismail—Ismail's reign in its relations to the fellaheen—Condition of the Egyptian peasantry in the present reign.

I DO not know what others may think—and we happily live in a privileged land where every one who has arrived at the age of discretion may think as he or she pleases—but it seems to me that old Abdu's reminiscences have a certain historical value, and that is the reason why I have reproduced them at such length. It is quite possible, however, that with the natural vanity of explorers I have sadly over-estimated the value of my discovery, and therefore before going further, I wish to give effect to the promptings of conscience and place the entire responsibility where it ought to rest; and I do this

all the more willingly because my respected companion who played such an important part in the last chapter is no longer in a position to undertake his own defence. The mail brings me the sad intelligence that he is no more, and that his mortal remains now lie in a modest grave under the solitary palm-tree a little way beyond his now silent and deserted hovel. He himself, let us hope, has gone to a better world, where avaricious Sheikhs and cruel Mudirs cease from troubling, and where the weary, over-worked, bastinadoed fellahs are at rest. His earthly reputation, however, remains, and with that I am personally concerned. When relating to me his reminiscences he had no idea of the use I intended to make of them. In the simple innocence of his rustic heart he had no ambitious scheme of aspiring to enlighten the already highly enlightened British public, or of influencing the collective wisdom of British legislators at Westminster. Let the sin therefore, if sin there is, be upon *my* head, and may the earth lie lightly on *him* in his humble lonely grave! I do not suppose that he departed this life with any malicious design—there was no room for malice in a mind so filled with genuine Mussulman resignation to the Divine will—of escaping from the importunities of insatiably inquisitive European explorers, but I cannot refrain from offering to my successors my sincere condolence that they have lost a source of information which they might have used with so much better results than I have been able to obtain.

It has been said by one who has now, like good old Abdu, passed into the world of shades, but who when on earth was an attentive and acute observer of the ways of men, that a mistake, if obstinately persevered in, often becomes a success. This hint I intend to utilise. If I have made a mistake in writing the foregoing chapter I mean to persevere in it, and I hereby give the reader fair warning of my intentions. I shall endeavour, however, in some respects to mend my ways. Abdu will not be again introduced, except perhaps accidentally, but his reminiscences will be used as a peg on which to hang a commentary; and in the hope of conciliating the severe critic of vinegar aspect who has been mourning or fuming over my literary levity, I shall try to give to my periods something of a Johnsonian gravity befitting the importance and dignity of the subject, as well as something of the laudable brevity which is the best means of counteracting natural tendencies to somnolence in the study of abstract topics.

To begin with the trivial anecdote about the unexpected and unwelcome visit of Mehemet Ali to the village of Kafr-Suleiman, I may be permitted to remark that, trivial as it undoubtedly is, and scarcely deserving of a conspicuous place in a work which professes to deal with subjects of grave political import, it may nevertheless be used by one who is accustomed to distinguish the typical from the purely accidental, as a convenient illustration of the essential characteristics of that extraordinary *régime*

by which the founder of the modern Khediviate replaced the preceding fabric of Mameluke misrule. Stern moralists may perhaps condemn the sanguinary means employed by the unscrupulous Albanian for idding himself of his opponents, and adherents of he theory that all real political progress must be in he form of gradual normal development may quesion the wisdom of violently overthrowing existing nstitutions; but if, as many competent authorities ffirm, the true test of political genius is success, hen it must be admitted by all impartial unbiased ninds that the illustrious hero of the anecdote in uestion possessed political genius of no ordinary ind. Beginning life as the second in command of small body of Turkish irregular troops, without he support of powerful patrons or influential friends, e gradually forced his way over mountains of diffiulties and through labyrinths of intrigue until he eached a point sufficiently elevated to gratify all rdinary human ambition.

Now in writing these sonorous, well-rounded eriods I think I have done penance enough for my terary sins, real or imaginary, and though very nxious not to relapse completely into errors once bandoned, I must, with a view to securing the omised brevity, request permission to use a less umbrous form of human speech. A compromise is iggested to me by a poem which middle-aged men ay perhaps remember having read in one of their rly school-books, now happily antiquated and scarded. A penitent, so runs the story, was

condemned for his sins to walk to Rome with peas in his shoes, but finding the peas at once painful and inconvenient he had them boiled. In like manner I shall endeavour to combine respect for discipline with practical convenience, and "take the liberty to boil my peas."

In plain language, then, what Mehemet Ali did was simply this:—In the time of the Mamelukes, a host of petty tyrants, professing nominal allegiance to the Sultan, but in reality obeying no superior except the man among themselves who happened to be for the moment the most powerful, had divided the country among them, and were constantly fighting with each other for the purpose of avenging injuries or acquiring mastery over rivals. Mehemet Ali replaced this state of chronic disorder by a strong, enlightened, personal despotism, and having once firmly established his authority, he did all in his power to develop to the utmost the natural resources of the country, and to introduce European civilisation in so far as it could serve that purpose. His first work was the systematic canalisation of the Delta, which necessarily imposed an enormous amount of forced labour upon the peasantry, but at the same time increased to an enormous extent the productivity of the country. The radical vice of his policy was that the ultimate aim which he had in view was not to secure the material and moral welfare of the population, but to obtain for himself the resources necessary for enabling him to cope successfully with his sovereign, the Sultan. He took good care, therefore,

that by far the greater part of the increase in the national revenue should flow into the Viceregal Exchequer, and one of the most effectual means which he employed for this purpose was the preservation and extension of Government monopolies. The Government had the exclusive right of buying agricultural products for exportation, and it fixed the prices to be paid to the producers at the rate which it considered most profitable for itself. The Sultan attempted to weaken his ambitious vassal by extending to Egypt the commercial treaties with European powers, which gave foreigners the right to trade freely with natives, but Mehemet Ali contrived to evade this blow aimed at his monopolies, and remained practically the intermediary between the native producers and the foreign merchants, by insisting that the taxes should be paid in kind, and making them so heavy that there was only a small surplus to be otherwise disposed of. As a direct consequence of this, the population derived very little benefit from the great public works, for the execution of which they had furnished at once the capital and the labour required.

Another essential part of Mehemet Ali's political programme, which imposed on the people a new burden even more distasteful to it than the increased amount of forced labour, was the creation of a native army. Under the preceding *régime* Egypt had never undertaken foreign campaigns, and at home the fighting was done by the Mamelukes and their dependants, or by Turkish troops. All this was sud-

denly changed. Having exterminated the Mamelukes by a general massacre, and considering it necessary to get rid of the unruly Albanians, with whose assistance the Mamelukes had been exterminated, Mehemet Ali was compelled to create a new army out of native elements, or, in other words, to impose the conscription on the fellaheen. Though he always had in his foreign campaigns, for reasons which I shall hereafter explain, a considerable contingent of Turkish Bashi-bozouks, the great mass of his troops was composed of Egyptian peasants. Now the Egyptian peasants cordially detest soldiering in any form, and especially in the form of active service, so that the conscription was for them a very grievous burden.

Taking all these things into consideration, we may pretty safely assume that the intelligent, energetic rule of Mehemet Ali did not seem to the fellaheen a very great improvement on the order of things—or rather the chaotic disorder of things—which preceded it. They enjoyed, perhaps, a little more security of life and property, for they were no longer in danger of seeing their village sacked by a Mameluke who happened to be at feud with the Mameluke under whose misrule they lived; and by the new system of land-registration, to which I have alluded in a previous chapter, they had acquired a right to a definite portion of the communal land. But, on the other hand, their life and comfort were endangered by the conscription from which they had been previously exempted; they were prevented from working on their own land by the forced labour on the

public works and on the properties of Pashas and Beys; and any benefit which they may have derived from improved irrigation was taken from them by increased taxation, the proceeds of which were employed for purposes with which they could not possibly have any sympathy. Certainly the adminstrative machine, though rude and primitive enough, was much more regular in its construction and action than the one which it replaced; but a simple-minded, ignorant peasant, who knows nothing about French and German theories of administrative organisation, cannot easily, I suspect, appreciate at their proper value the scientific beauty and practical merits of a complicated machine invented for the express purpose of squeezing out of him as much agricultural produce and labour-power as possible.

Of the short rule of Ibrahim, the devastator of the Morea and conqueror of Syria before his accession, I need say nothing, because it differed in no important respect from that of his father; [1] but with

[1] I am quite aware that doubts have been raised as to whether Ibrahim was really a son of Mehemet Ali, and in the above sentence I have no intention of deciding the question. The question may perhaps be dark, but it has no practical importance, for Ibrahim was certainly born of Mehemet Ali's lawful wife—though possibly the son of a previous husband—and was fully recognised by his putative father. He was, therefore, according to Oriental conceptions, legitimate. In the East practically, as in France legally, *la recherche de la paternité est interdite.* This principle has indeed, throughout at least those portions of the East with which I am acquainted, a much wider application than would readily be admitted in Western Europe. A child born in the hareem, whether of a lawful spouse or of a female slave, is regarded as legitimate if it is recognised as such by the head of the family. I never remember to have met in Mussulman countries any one suffering from the stigma of illegitimacy.

the accession of Abbas, in 1849, a marked change for the better took place in the condition of the fellaheen. Abbas enjoys among Europeans a very bad reputation, partly on account of certain private vices regarding which Europeans are much more severe than Orientals, and partly on account of his reserved, haughty demeanour towards the few foreigners whom he admitted to his presence ; but he was, perhaps without intending it, a much better master to the peasantry than his predecessors or his two immediate successors. He had none of Mehemet Ali's ambitious schemes of foreign conquest or of making himself the most powerful personage in the Turkish Empire, and consequently he had no need for a large military force.[1] Any political ambition which Abbas possessed was directed rather to destroying the power of the Pashas and Beys who had risen to wealth, rank, and influence under his predecessors, and whom he suspected of harbouring designs for limiting his arbitrary power. His fiscal rapacity, too, was much more moderate than that of Mehemet Ali ; for the ordinary resources of the country more than sufficed for the expenses of the administration,

[1] I have been assured by a very competent authority, who knew Mehemet Ali personally and to some extent enjoyed his confidence, that the ambitious viceroy had no desire to throw off the Sultan's sovereignty and dismember the Ottoman Empire, as is generally supposed, but that his aim was to annex Syria permanently to Egypt under his own administration, and to be the real ruler of Turkey, while leaving to the Sultan the nominal power and prestige of the dynasty of Osman. Whether the cunning schemer had ever heard of the Mayors of the Palace under the Merovingians, and whether he always acted consistently with this supposed plan, I must leave to more competent historical investigators to decide.

as well as for the satisfaction of his luxurious, depraved tastes. All these facts tended to lighten the burdens of the fellaheen. Having no designs of conquest, and no love of military display, he caused only a small number of men to be drawn for the conscription; having the intention of weakening the rich Pashas and Beys, he abolished the so-called öghdés—an institution of Mehemet Ali's, by which an influential favourite received one or more villages with power to treat the inhabitants almost as serfs, on condition of his paying the current taxes and the arrears; and considering it inconsistent with the dignity of a *grand seigneur* to act the part of a wholesale corn merchant, he abolished what remained of the Government monopolies, which secured for the Viceregal Exchequer the lion's share of the profits derived from the exportation of agricultural produce. Even the burden of the *corvée* was considerably diminished in his time, for he did not consider it necessary to continue on a grand scale the canalisation scheme which Mehemet Ali had begun. If we bear all these things in mind we shall have no difficulty in believing what old Abdu told us, that in the reign of Abbas the kurbash was very little used in the collection of the taxes; yet, in spite of this, at the time of his death, a large sum of ready money was found in the Treasury.

A change began with the accession of Said in 1854. That excitable, merry monarch who once, as the reader may remember, threatened to beat old Abdu with his own viceregal fists, had many amiable

qualities; but though generally brimming over with kindly good humour, and ever generously open-handed to importunate suitors, he seemed to the peasantry a more severe taskmaster than the gloomy, savage Abbas, who was strangled in the recesses of his hareem by the habitual victims of his tyrannical cruelty. Not that Said intended to be a severe taskmaster—nothing could be more foreign to his character; but, unfortunately, like many kind-hearted, light-headed people, he did not think much about the indirect consequences of his actions; and he happened to have two weaknesses which had indirect, disagreeable consequences for the rural population. The first of these was a love of soldiering. He made the army a kind of plaything—rather an expensive toy!—and consequently the conscription was in his time a much heavier burden than in the preceding reign. His second weakness was a good-natured incapacity to oppose a prolonged, decided resistance to the interested suggestions and requests of greedy, unscrupulous foreigners. In manner, conversation, and tastes, he had more of the lively, witty Frenchman, than of the grave, reserved Oriental, and one of the main objects of his ambition was to play successfully the part of a liberal, enlightened prince, amid all the appliances and luxuries of European civilisation. Surrounding himself with a motley crowd of needy European adventurers—some of whom, by the way, were duly accredited consular representatives of foreign Powers—he created in Alexandria and Cairo the nucleus of that swarm of *chevaliers d'industrie*

and shady financiers who were soon to help on the Viceregal Government in its downward course through pressing financial embarrassments to national bankruptcy. He was more than half conscious that he was being shamelessly robbed by these insatiable parasites, but he did not like to break with them, because some of them were pleasant boon-companions, and others were supposed to possess strong political influence. Occasionally, indeed, he would lose his temper and threaten to do very terrible things, but soon his anger would spontaneously evaporate, or would be dispelled by some well-timed joke on the part of the scoundrel who had excited it; and then new schemes of spoliation could be carefully planned and successfully executed. I could repeat many amusing anecdotes of how magnificent French furniture and gigantic mirrors were ordered at ten times their real value, simply because a clever contractor had made himself agreeable at the Viceroy's dinner-table; of how a war-ship was ordered, because the (let us say) Patagonian Consul was obstinately importunate, and how a second war-ship of the same dimensions had to be ordered because the rival consul of (let us say) Tierra del Fuego declared that the preference shown to Patagonian industry was an insult to the more highly-developed industry of the great nation which he had the honour to represent; of how his Highness, on receiving one day in the open air the representative of an insignificant but very troublesome Power, malignly besought him, with well-feigned trepidation, to put on his hat

immediately, and afterwards explained to his intimate friends that he had been terrified by the thought of the consul catching cold, in which case he, the Khedive, would have had to pay a heavy indemnity; of how——but I must refrain from descending to such trivialities, and avoid falling again into my previous aberrations.

In this crowd of vulgar parasites appeared occasionally a man who was evidently of a different stamp. I have never seen him, so I shall not endeavour to paint his portrait, but I am told that he was a man of handsome, regular features, of agreeable, gentlemanly manners, and that he had a certain *air distingué* and an expression of unusual intelligence which at once distinguished him from the crowd. What distinguished him much more than his appearance was his conversation. He could indulge, when occasion required, in the trivial small-talk of a viceregal salon, and could turn a meaningless compliment with the easy dexterity of an accomplished courtier; but when the requisite tribute had been paid to etiquette, and the time had come for talking business with the Viceroy, his talk was not of spotless mirrors or of gilded chairs to be manufactured by the most fashionable Parisian *fabricants*, and not even of warships to be constructed in foreign dockyards, but of something grander and more enduring—of something that would make his illustrious friend a benefactor of humanity, and secure for him in the memory of all future generations a place more lasting and more honourable than that of the immortal builders of the

Pyramids. The scheme which was thus to secure an honourable immortality to Said Pasha was the cutting of a canal through the Isthmus of Suez, and the name of the eloquent projector was M. Ferdinand de Lesseps.

Said Pasha was a man who had too little imagination to be inordinately ambitious, and too fond of ease and sensual enjoyment to make any vigorous, prolonged effort even to gain immortality; but he had a certain amount of vanity, and it was agreeably titillated by the idea of obtaining so easily the title of a benefactor of the human race. The title might not be worth much, but it could not be considered dearly bought if obtained, as M. de Lesseps suggested, by simply signing a paper authorising the formation of a company which would do all the work at its own expense. The projector *se faisait fort* to do the rest —to find the engineers, the workmen, the capital, and everything else that might be required. Only let the Viceroy show a little energy in resisting the short-sighted, selfish enemies of the great scheme, and soon unheard-of wonders would be seen: the Mediterranean would flow into the Red Sea, stately ships of all nations would sail through his Highness's dominions, the desert would blossom as the rose, and grateful humanity would unanimously extol the preternatural wisdom of his Highness!

These were pleasant prospects, and the Viceroy at once signed the concession, but he occasionally remembered the incident of the Patagonian and Tierra-del-Fuegian Consuls, and thought it prudent to

talk the matter over with his good friend the consular representative of England. The consular representative of England does not approve the scheme, and warns his Highness against the insidious counsels of the plausible Frenchman. The cutting of a canal may be advantageous for humanity, or rather for that portion of humanity which happens to have a commercial fleet and seaports on the northern shores of the Mediterranean, but it would be ruinous for Egypt, because it would entirely destroy the lucrative transit trade, which might, on the contrary, be increased by continuing to Suez the Alexandria-Cairo railway. Then his Highness must remember that Lord Palmerston—terrible name in those days! —is opposed to the scheme, not from selfish motives, but because he fears that it is merely a first step to a French occupation, by which, of course, his Highness would be the principal loser. Lastly, there is the little matter of physical impossibility. The most competent English engineers—and his Highness is too well-informed a man not to know that English engineers are much more practical and trustworthy than French ones—have declared with one accord that the proposed canal, if ever made, will remain merely a dry ditch.

M. de Lesseps is recalled and again consulted. He gives to the Patagonia-Tierra-del-Fuegian incident an entirely new application. It is not a question of provoking English demands by granting a concession to France, but of giving France some compensation for a concession granted to England, namely, the

Alexandria-Cairo railway. By the granting of the canal concession the account is simply balanced. Egypt will profit by the canal in a hundred indirect ways. For example, the machinery which will be invented and imported expressly for the purpose will teach Egyptian engineers to dig and keep clean any amount of irrigation canals without the necessity of employing the detestable *corvée.* Then there will be direct advantages, for the Egyptian Government will be entitled to a considerable percentage of the transit dues. No doubt Lord Palmerston is a highly respected statesmen, but there are highly respected statesmen in Paris as well as in London, and their susceptibilities must also be taken into consideration. As for the impossibility of making the canal, his Highness need have no apprehensions, especially as the loss in such a case would fall entirely on the *Compagnie Universelle.*

Imagine the position of a poor good-natured Khedive who wants to please everybody, and to be left alone so that he may play at soldiering—a man who has great difficulty in fixing his attention for five consecutive minutes on any given subject—having to weigh all the reasons, *pro* and *con,* in such a complicated problem. One day he is all for being a benefactor of humanity, but then he thinks about Lord Palmerston, and perceives that prudence is better than ambition. Then the old hankerings return, and he regrets that, in this badly-organised world of ours, omelettes cannot be made without breaking eggs. Finally he determines to dismiss the

subject from his embarrassed mind, but he cannot so easily dismiss the tenacious M. de Lesseps, so in a moment of desperation, like a bather who takes a header with closed eyes after long shivering on the bank, he signs a second act of concession without examining closely what it contains.

Ere long the fellaheen felt the terrible consequences of that signature. M. de Lesseps, being an honourable man, no doubt really intended, as he said, to teach, not by precept but by example, the native Egyptian engineers how to dig and clean canals by machinery without the use of forced labour; but somehow, when the work began, for reasons technical or pecuniary, which I do not pretend to explain, he thought it better to teach his French engineers, not by precept but by example, how to dig and clean canals by forced labour without machinery. To disinterested readers at a distance from the spot the difference between the original intention and the method actually adopted may seem unimportant, but it was for the Egyptian peasants a matter of vital interest, for it caused something like 40,000 of them to be withdrawn from their usual avocations and subjected to a terrible amount of labour and suffering. There were always, if I may trust the testimony of competent authorities, 20,000 of them at work, 10,000 in the course of being transported to the scene of operations, and 10,000—or as many of these as had survived the labour and privations—being transported back to their homes. What the percentage of those who never returned really was, I cannot say,

for I have never been able to obtain trustworthy statistics on the subject; but I know that the privations were unnecessarily severe, no proper accommodation having been provided to protect the labourers from the cold night-winds of the desert; and if the harrowing tales of those who returned are to be credited, we must conclude that the forced-labour clause of the convention produced a ruthless sacrifice of human life which entitles the canal to rank with some of the great works of the Pharaohs. Whatever may have been Lord Palmerston's private motives for opposing that clause, there is no doubt that in getting it annulled he conferred an enormous benefit on the fellaheen.[1]

Thus, we see, Said Pasha reaugmented two of the peasants' burdens which Abbas had diminished—the conscription and the *corvée*—and he increased, in some measure, the regular expenditure by foolish extravagance. The new fiscal burdens did not, however, fall exclusively on the peasantry, for the land tax was extended to certain properties which had previously been exempted from it. This requires a few words of explanation.

In a previous chapter I have spoken of the *Zawat*, or official personages who are landed proprietors without being Omdehs in the usual acceptation of the term. The estates of these Zawat were originally

[1] I am quite aware that the motives were not entirely of a disinterested, humanitarian kind. No opposition was made by the English Government to the use of forced labour in the construction of the Alexandria-Cairo Railway, which was considered advantageous for English interests.

uncultivated lands, granted to them gratuitously by Mehemet Ali, partly as a reward for services, and partly with the object of bringing more land under cultivation. They did not appear in the ordinary land registers, and they were exempted from the land tax as a compensation for the capital and labour which had to be expended in improving them. Said Pasha considered that this exemption had existed long enough, and though he did not venture to impose the ordinary land-tax upon them, he insisted that they should contribute something to the annual outlay for irrigation and other public works. The sum which he demanded was a tenth part of the produce, and hence the tax was called *üshr*, or tithe, and the lands have gradually come to be called *ushuri*, in opposition to the land which is inscribed in the ordinary registers, and which is called *kharadji*, that is, land subject to tribute.

I fear that questions of land-tenure, though in reality extremely interesting and important, are apt to repel and frighten the general reader, but I must here request permission to say a few words on the subject, because any one who desires to study Egypt seriously must know what the oft-recurring words *ushuri* and *kharadji* really mean, and because I wish to warn my successors against an error into which one or two of the most learned among my predecessors have inadvertently fallen. I say intentionally, the most learned among my predecessors, because it is precisely their learning which has led them astray.

According to the fundamental principles of Mussul-

man jurisprudence, the soil of a country at the moment of its annexation to Islam, that is to say, at the moment of the conquest, is divided into two categories. The land which belongs to the conquered, especially if they do not spontaneously adopt the dominant faith, is subjected to a tribute called *kharadj*, which may be anything up to a half of the produce, according to the will of the conqueror, whereas the land of the Mussulmans pays only the *üshr* or tenth part of the produce, as prescribed by the Koran. Land once declared *kharadji* cannot become *ushuri* even when it passes into the possession of a true believer (because the land revenue might be thereby diminished), and, consequently, in any Mussulman country where the above principles have been strictly observed, we may determine how much land was originally seized by the conquerors, by simply ascertaining how much *ushuri* land there is in the land-registers at the present day. A calculation of this kind was made for Egypt—I regret to say by the author of this volume—and it turned out to be utterly baseless, because in Egypt, as probably in all other Mussulman countries, the fundamental principles of Mussulman jurisprudence have not been strictly observed. The early Mussulman conquerors seem to have decided the cases of *kharadj* versus *üshr* very much according to the dictates of their caprice or the exigences of their treasury, so that in some countries, for example in Arabia, all the land is *ushuri*, whereas in others all is *kharadji*. Some jurists have endeavoured to explain the anomalies by

inventing ingenious *post-facto* theories, but the results merely display useless dogmatic ingenuity at the expense of historical truth. In Egypt, according to an arbitrary fiat of the conqueror in the seventh century, which remained in force down to the publication of Said Pasha's edict, all the land was considered *kharadji*, and continued to pay to the Government a land-revenue, calculated roughly at one-fifth of the produce. We have here a wonderful example of the conservative tendencies of the Egyptians, for this tax of one-fifth of the produce is precisely what was imposed on the peasantry and landed proprietors by the Patriarch Joseph when he was Pharaoh's Prime Minister![1] The Arab conquerors left, in short, the ancient Egyptian land-tenure and land-tax precisely as they found it, and made no exemptions or exceptions in favour of those who already professed or who then adopted their religion. So it has remained with slight modifications down to the present day. The estates of the *Zawat* were expressly called *abadiehs*, that is to say, property *outside* of the land regularly registered, and, consequently, not affecting the general system of land-tenure. It was these outside lands that Said Pasha imposed, but he did not venture to call the new tax an *üshr*, or tithe, because the tithe has in Mussulman conceptions a religious significance, and among strict Mussulmans it would be deemed highly unbecoming, not to say sacrilegious, that unbelievers should pay it. As Egyptians, however, are, for the most part, not at all rigorists, the word has gradually

[1] See Genesis xlvii. 23-26.

crept into common use, and is now regularly used in official documents, but it is technically incorrect, and has nothing whatever to do with the *ushuri* or tithe land spoken of in learned treatises on Mussulman Law.[1]

After this somewhat abstruse digression let us take up again the thread of fellaheen history at the point where we dropped it. The increase of taxation, necessitated partly by Said's extravagance, and partly by his having to pay to the *Compagnie Universelle du Canal de Suez,* which was to have borne all the expense, a very considerable sum of money—this increase of taxation, I say, was in some measure counteracted, so far as the peasantry was concerned, by extending the land tax to the estates of the Zawat, which had previously enjoyed exemption. Another and more powerful influence which likewise tended to lighten the burden was the rise in the price of grain caused by the Crimean war, and the increased facilities for exportation. The railway from Alexandria to Cairo was completed, steamers had begun to appear on the Nile, and the agents of the great commercial houses of Alexandria now penetrated into the villages and raised by competition the price of all agricultural products. After the Crimean war the demand for grain slackened, but soon afterwards the American war broke out and produced an unprecedented

[1] Much new light will be thrown on the curious subject of land tenure in Egypt by a memoir which is being prepared by my learned friend, Yakoub Artin Bey, and which will shortly be published. I have to express to him my gratitude for having kindly allowed me to consult the MS.

demand for cotton. The cultivation of cotton had begun, as we have seen, in the time of Mehemet Ali, and in spite of the opposition of the peasantry it had been steadily increasing, but it was not till the peasants found that they could cultivate it themselves and sell it at enormously high prices that they took to planting it in large quantities. At the time of Said's death, in 1863, the American war had begun and the fellaheen had the prospect of making annually by cotton planting such sums of money as they had never before dreamed of.

On the whole therefore, the reign of Said Pasha (1854-63) was a period of prosperity for the fellaheen; and the financial condition of the country, with which that prosperity must be always intimately connected, was fairly satisfactory. Said had spent, it is true, the surplus left him by Abbas, and having been obliged to contract a debt of between three and four millions sterling, he was occasionally in the last days of his life tormented by the thought that he had financially ruined his country; but if he could have foreseen, in these moments of despondency, how his successor Ismail would rapidly increase the debt till it reached the enormous amount of nearly a hundred millions sterling, his feelings of remorse would have been soothed by a comparison of his own imprudence and prodigality with those of his successor.

With the accession of Ismail begins a new era in the history of the Egyptian peasantry. For some years, as we have seen, European enterprise and European capital had been gradually percolating into

Egypt; Ismail threw wide open the flood-gates, and produced a terrific inundation. From nature he had received all the intellectual and moral—or perhaps we ought to say immoral—requisites of a reckless financial speculator, and before his accession, while managing his private estates, he had formed grandiose schemes for developing the immense agricultural resources of the country. Fortune willed it that he should come to the viceregal throne at a moment peculiarly favourable for the realisation of such schemes. The American war had produced a cotton famine in the European markets, so that the precious staple had risen to three or four times its normal price, and experience had proved that the soil and climate of the Delta were admirably suited for its production. It required, therefore no very great amount of imagination to conceive the idea that Egypt, so far as cotton supply was concerned, might help to make Europe independent of America. But how was the necessary capital to be procured? Here, too, fortune favoured the ambitious projector. At that moment the well-to-do public of Western Europe were eager to invest their savings in foreign securities and insecurities at a high rate of interest, and Egypt was for many reasons rather a favourite on the Stock Exchange. What more could a Viceroy like Ismail desire? A country admirably adapted for cotton growing, the American war driving up the price of the article to an unheard-of figure, the spinners of Lancashire frantically looking for more of it than they could possibly obtain, and an unlimited amount

of other people's money clamorously demanding to be invested! The imposing figure of M. de Lesseps, in the halo of his *Compagnie Universelle*, which had rather dwarfed by comparison that of poor good-natured, vacillating Said, now seemed almost insignificant when compared with the new, ambitious scion of the house of Mehemet Ali, who combined in his portly person the qualities of a vigorous Oriental despot with those of a daring Occidental stockbroker, and who aspired by using the magic spells of European capital and enterprise to transform the ancient sleepy land of the Pharaohs into "the Belgium of the East."

For a time the transformation went on merrily. Mammon really did all that could be expected of him. First-rate cotton-seed was procured, the most recently invented agricultural machines were imported, large tracts of fertile land were planted, and the crops surpassed all reasonable expectations. At the same time projects were prepared for extending and improving the railways, telegraphs, canals, and harbours; and a little later, in the towns and large villages, ginning factories, for extracting the cotton-seeds and making up the bales, were rapidly built. Encouraged by the Viceroy's success the Pashas and great landowners hastened to follow his example, and at last the obstinately conservative fellaheen voluntarily abandoned in wholesale fashion their beloved traditional routine, and took eagerly to the new species of cultivation. This is the first recorded instance of a modification having been introduced into fellah life without the instrumentality of the kurbash, and it

was fully justified by results, for it produced a short period of rural prosperity such as Egypt had never known before. Gold flowed into the country in millions from the great centres of European industry —not to speak of what was flowing in from the Stock Exchanges—and yet the demand for cotton far surpassed the supply. Old peasants who had spent their life in a desperate struggle "to make the two ends meet" now found suddenly that they had money to spare, and that they could allow themselves luxuries which they had been accustomed to regard as belonging to the exclusive privileges of wealthy Beys and powerful Pashas. The legends current about this Golden Age of fellah history are similar to those which describe the wild extravagances of the English miners in times of exceptionally high wages, or the absurd prodigality of successful diggers in the early days of the Californian and Australian gold-fields. The fellah cotton-grower, being a good Mussulman, did not generally indulge in the use of intoxicating liquors; but his religion allowed him, as compensation, other indulgences which were more to his taste. Local rumours, some of which, like the story of our friend Osman with his white elephant, are well authenticated, tell of fellahs who bought Circassian and Abyssinian female slaves, and tried to reconcile them with life in a mud hovel by providing them with silks, mirrors, necklaces, jewels, and perfumes. In many of these amusing stories there is, doubtless, a good deal of exaggeration, but there is also a very solid foundation of fact. The fellah certainly made at that time more money than

he had ever before hoped to possess, and he spent his earnings freely with the imprudent thoughtlessness which is often found among people suddenly and unexpectedly raised from poverty to affluence. If few really bought white female slaves, many increased or changed the inmates of their hareems in a less expensive way, and bought for their new wives the most costly articles which the village or the neighbouring town could supply. Some faint idea of the change may be gleaned from the uninviting pages of the official statistics. In the short space of three years the amount of cotton annually exported rose from 723,000 to about 2,000,000 of kantars, and the total annual value of exports rose from four and a half millions to over thirteen millions sterling.

The Golden Age, like pleasant things generally, was too good to last long, and it was followed, as good things often are, by a period of exceptional hardship—I mean for the peasantry, because the wily Viceroy, as we shall see presently, had some spare arrows in his quiver. As soon as the American war came to an end the cotton of the Southern States began to flow once more into the European markets, and prices fell rapidly. At the same time the peasants' land, which had given miraculous crops for two or three years, could no longer bear unscathed the careless primitive method of cultivation in use, and began to show unmistakable signs of exhaustion. Generally speaking, in agricultural life the losses of a bad harvest are, to some extent, counterbalanced by high prices; but here the great diminution in

production, the decided deterioration in quality, and the unprecedented fall in price, all came simultaneously. If the Khedive and the large proprietors, with their reserve capital, their command of the water-supply, and their powerful agricultural implements, could now hardly hold their place in the competition with the American producers, the poor peasant, without capital, with only primitive implements, and unable to influence the inspectors and directors of irrigation, was thrown entirely out of the running. He could not even return to the *status quo ante*, because meanwhile the soil had been exhausted, the land-tax increased, and he himself had probably contracted certain onerous debts. In these circumstances a prudent Government would at once have diminished the burden of taxation, which could be borne only in a period of exceptional prosperity, and would have proportionately diminished the budgetary expenditure; but Ismail Pasha had organised his whole system of government on the assumption that the accidental inflation of the revenue was to be permanent, and he had no intention of returning to the comparatively modest budgets of his predecessors. Even if he had wished to retrench expenditure—which he did not—he would have found the task very difficult, for he had imposed on his Exchequer, by contracting debts at home and raising loans abroad, a burden which could not easily be shaken off. The high rate of taxation, therefore, was maintained, and strong pressure of the kind described in a previous chapter was applied to prevent arrears of

payment. By this system the poorer peasants were forced to borrow at usurious rates of interest and then to sell their land at a very low price. The small lots thereby passed into the hands of larger holders, and many of these richer land-holders, after mortgaging their land to the usurers, ultimately shared the lot of their poorer neighbours. In consequence of the simultaneous increase of taxation and decrease of productivity, a considerable portion of the soil did not produce enough to pay the land-revenue, and many of the proprietors, as we have seen when studying the details of village life, found the possession of landed property to be a burden rather than a source of profit. Those who had still a little capital naturally held on in hope of better times, but the better times came not, and not a few peasants were compelled to abandon their land without compensation, for the simple reason that no one would take it at any price, or at least at a price sufficient to pay off the arrears.

Knowing all this full well, Ismail sits in his palace of Abdin before his big writing-table, filled with papers of every sort and description. Secretaries come and go incessantly with letters and telegrams; Ministers and provincial officials come to make their reports and receive instructions; foreign contractors come to make suggestions and receive orders; distinguished tourists come to present their respects; and *flaneurs* drop in simply to have a little pleasant chat with the amiable Viceroy. To each category of visitors Ismail adapts himself with admirable tact, and

shows to each of them a remarkably intimate knowledge of the subject discussed. With the secretary he is precise and laconic; with the Minister he is comprehensive and decided; with the local official he is inquisitive and dictatorial; with the foreign contractor he is acute and exacting; with the distinguished tourist he is polite and affable; and with his good friends the *flaneurs* he is cordial and amusing. When they have all retired, and he is under the eye only of confidential attendants, he becomes thoughtful and gloomy, and shows occasional signs of impatience and irritation. And certainly he has reason to be both gloomy and irritated, for things are not going as smoothly and successfully as he anticipated. He is, however, not at all in a despairing mood, only a little undecided as to which of the many devices suggested by his fertile brain he ought to choose. The cotton game is evidently pretty well played out. But what of sugar? Sugar has been successfully grown by Mustafa (Prince Mustafa Fazyl). But that is in Upper Egypt and on a small scale. Upper Egypt has still the old annual inundation system, which does not admit of sugar cultivation. But why should Upper Egypt not be properly canalised? Forced labour costs nothing. Let a canal be dug from Assiout to Bibeh! And you may as well build a railway alongside the canal when you are about it, and bring the railway all the way down to Cairo! So the great Ibrahimieh canal, 180 miles in length, is dug by the *corvée*, and the Upper Egypt railway, from Cairo to Assiout, is constructed by the same means. At the same time, the land

adjoining the canal passes into the possession of his Highness, and is converted into great sugar plantations, on each of which is built a large sugar factory. Thus the energetic Ismail, who has an unbounded faith in his own inventive genius and administrative capacities, imagines he has found a way out of his difficulties without the necessity of curbing his prodigality.

The rapid fall in the price of land, and the enormous load of debt which was rapidly accumulating on the weak shoulders of the unfortunate fellaheen, would certainly have alarmed any ordinary political economist in a position of official responsibility, but the ingenious Ismail saw in these alarming facts a means for facilitating the execution of what may be called the esoteric portion of his grand scheme. If the whole truth must be told, he thought less of increasing the national prosperity than of enriching himself and his family, and consequently one of the aims which he constantly kept in view was the acquisition of as much landed property as possible. So constantly did he keep this aim in view, and so energetically did he work to obtain it, that he ultimately became proprietor of about one-fifth of the whole arable soil of Egypt ; and if he had only succeeded in keeping out of financial difficulties, I see no reason why he should not have eventually gained possession of the remaining four-fifths. Certainly he would not have been deterred by any conscientious scruples. Now, if the reader will bear this fact in mind, he may easily understand why the

fall in the price of land and the increase of the village debts had no terrors for Ismail, and were rather a source of satisfaction for him. These facts, which would have alarmed political economists, helped him to pander to his insatiable land-hunger. Land, which was almost worthless in the market, could be easily bought; and land on which arrears had accumulated could be unceremoniously appropriated. The land which was confiscated for arrears of taxation ought, of course, according to Western notions, to have passed into the possession, not of the Khedive, but of the State; but Ismail had his own peculiar views about the relations between the national exchequer and the privy purse. The only cases in which, so far as I am aware, he carefully distinguished between the two, were those in which a demand was made by foreigners for payment of a debt. In such cases he would explain with great logical acumen that, according to all sound principles of public law, he and his family could not be held legally or morally responsible for debts contracted by the Government.

People who know Ismail well, and who had frequent opportunities of observing him closely when he was in power, assure me that his motive in systematically appropriating all the land which came within his reach, was simply the motive which induced Ahab to appropriate Naboth's vineyard, but I wish to be charitable to fallen greatness, and therefore I shall suggest another explanation, which the reader may adopt if he chooses. Ismail may possibly have reasoned in this way—and let us hope for the

honour of Khedivial human nature that he did so: The fellah, as a small landowner, can evidently no longer compete with foreign producers, and he is incapable of introducing into his system of agriculture those ameliorations which would make competition possible; but if the small holdings were transformed into large, well-organised estates, provided with all the latest mechanical inventions, Egypt might still hold her own in the great markets of the world. This explanation, I must confess, has been evolved out of my own internal consciousness, and is scouted by those who know Ismail much better than I do, but I willingly cede my *droit d'auteur* to his ex-Highness if he desires to obtain it.

In the long run the sugar trick proved no more successful than the cotton game. Though an expert juggler and a daring gambler, endowed with a miraculous memory for detail and an inexhaustible talent for devising expedients, Ismail had no real genius for grand industrial and commercial undertakings—except perhaps for the branch of modern industry which is known as "promoting." In his agricultural schemes he had the ordinary lot of ambitious, incapable, amateur farmers who put their whole fortune into a single experiment—with this important difference, that whereas the private amateur farmer merely ruins himself and those closely connected with him, Ismail ruined a country with six millions of inhabitants. Partly from risks and difficulties inherent in the enterprise, and partly from mistakes and bad management, he utterly failed

in his grandiose plan. When the price of cotton suddenly fell he acted like a sea-captain who suddenly perceives sunken rocks a short way ahead, and who, instead of reversing his engines so as to diminish the force of the expected shock, puts on extra speed in the hope of bringing round the ship's head in time to avoid stranding. If the manœuvre succeeds, the captain is praised for his presence of mind, his courage, and his dexterity; but if he fails, he is condemned both for his bad seamanship and for his rashness. Judged in this way, Ismail Pasha deserves severe condemnation, for he ran his country high and dry on the rocks of bankruptcy, and inflicted on her injuries which it will require many years to repair. What became of those vast Khedivial estates with their canals, railways, cotton plantations, sugar factories, steam-ploughs, and other appurtenances I shall hereafter relate. For the present I may say briefly that they constitute what are commonly called the Daira Sanieh and the Domains, two terms very familiar to the ears of European stock-brokers.

So long as Egypt remained a purely Oriental country, untainted with European influence, the Khedives could do with impunity anything which their arbitrary will or momentary caprice might suggest. They had no superior to whom they might be called upon to answer for their misdeeds, and no equals whose interests they were bound to respect. The Sultan was, indeed, the nominal Suzerain, but he lived in distant Stamboul, and his Sublime Porte could always be checkmated by foreign Powers or

conciliated by liberal bakshish. As for the people of Egypt, they hardly deserved a moment's consideration. Folly or something worse on the part of their master might entail upon them a famine or some similar misfortune, but if a few thousand fellaheen died in consequence, who ever dreamed of calling the august culprit to account? Gradually however a mysterious influence, which had its home not in Stamboul but in Western Europe, was creeping insidiously into the country and threatening to undermine the Khedivial autocracy. The keen eye of old Mehemet Ali perceived the danger, and he determined that in his time at least no foreign influence should interfere with the established order of things. All foreigners, therefore, who entered his service had to remain his most humble obedient servants, and all other foreigners who entered the country were compelled to respect the authorities and regulations by law established. In this matter Ibrahim and Abbas followed in the old man's footsteps, but in the reign of the good-natured, easy-going Said much less watchfulness and firmness was displayed, and the ever-rising tide of European influence began to percolate through the embankment which had been raised to keep it out. By Ismail, as I have said, the flood-gates were thrown wide open, and when he began to perceive that the flood was rising so high as to endanger his personal security, he cut a very sorry figure. Again and again he tried to fence himself in with flimsy bits of Oriental trickery, but each time he had to abandon

his position and retreat to some new coign of vantage, which had likewise in its turn to be abandoned. When at last he determined to make a stand, and shouted, like Canute, to the angry ocean, "Thus far shalt thou come and no further!" he simply accelerated his own ruin, for the angry waves came on all the more violently and swept him from his viceregal throne.

In the time of Said, at least until the Suez Canal concession was granted, foreign interference was almost entirely the work of the consuls, who wished to assert their dignity or who had a pecuniary interest in the claims of men belonging to the nationality which they represented, and they could generally be bought off by some inconsiderable sacrifice of dignity or money. In Ismail's time it was a much more serious affair. Ismail was constantly in need of enormous sums of money for carrying out his great agricultural schemes, for gratifying his prodigal tastes, for warding off Turkish and foreign intervention, for obtaining new privileges from the Porte, for paying or renewing the ever-recurring claims of the usurers, and for putting off as long as possible the inevitable day of reckoning. For these and similar purposes he had to borrow largely in the foreign markets, and when his insolvency became more and more apparent, the financiers and capitalists, great and small, of Western Europe began to clamour for payment, and urged their respective governments to act the part of bailiffs.

The struggle between this advancing army of unpaid creditors and the clever, cunning Ismail, who had the dexterity of the fencing-master rather than the genius of the strategist, is one of the most amusing episodes of modern history. Ismail makes a last desperate effort to throw dust in the eyes of his creditors at the ceremonial opening of the Suez Canal, and in spite of many difficulties he has a momentary success. The magnificent festivities which he organises, the sound political and economic views which he expresses, and the more than Oriental prodigality which he displays, convince many simple-minded people that he is the richest and most enlightened prince of Islam, and that he may even vie with any of the princes of enlightened, money-making Christendom. This helps to restore for a little his tottering credit, but the painting, decorating, and gilding of apartments cannot prevent the ruin of an edifice whose foundations are giving way. The inevitable, approaching crisis advances steadily. The Egyptian viceregal magician has made a solemn contract, and has often renewed it, with the demon of European finance, and the financial Mephistopheles has served him faithfully according to the terms agreed upon. He has created for him railways and canals, opera-houses and ballet-girls, cotton-plantations and sugar-factories, palaces and public gardens, harbours and iron-clads—in a word, everything that a fertile Oriental imagination could devise—and now, as the *mauvais quart d'heure* approaches, when the last clause of the contract has

to be executed, the ungrateful, tricky mortal, incapable of Faust's heroic resignation, tries to wriggle out of the iron grasp of his superhuman antagonist. He has so often succeeded, by his tricky magic and dexterous sleight-of-hand, in mystifying and deceiving animals of his own species, that he fondly hopes he may even evade the laws of nature and cheat the powers of darkness! Feeling himself at last seriously menaced he applies for aid to the British, the Italian, and the French governments, and receives, first Mr. Cave, then M. Scialloja, and then Messrs. Goschen and Joubert. But all these gentlemen are miserable comforters, mere ordinary financiers who naively imagine that two and two must necessarily make four, mere commonplace commercial men who hold the antiquated view that the best way for a debtor to get rid of creditors is to pay them, mere ignorant mortals who know nothing of those mysterious principles of the sublime black art by which Mephisto may be cheated out of his bond! He has to fall back, therefore, on his own resources—on some more potent spells which he may perchance discover—and a happy thought occurs to him. His gracious master, the Sultan, has got rid of his financial liabilities by bankruptcy; why should not he, the vassal, employ the same means with impunity? The idea is good, but he has not the courage to execute it, for one or two consuls tell him in a most decided tone that the coupon *must* be paid, and perhaps in that ugly word *must*, lie the germs of a future armed intervention. Something better and safer must be found.

Again he cogitates, and lo! a brilliant idea! Liberal Europe might be conciliated by a sham constitution with parliamentary government, ministerial responsibility, and all the rest of it; and perhaps the odious, obstinate Mephisto, who is well acquainted with constitutional theories and consequently must know that the Head of the State can do no wrong, might be induced, out of respect for liberal Europe, so far to modify his bond as to accept a vicarious sacrifice—instead of the poor worried soul of a Khedive, the clean respectable souls of responsible Cabinet Ministers.

To play this trick successfully a man has to be found who enjoys the confidence of liberal Europe. There can be no doubt or hesitation about the choice. "Quick! Telegraph to Paris for Nubar and tell him I wish to create a constitutional government with a chamber of deputies and ministerial responsibility. You may tell him too that I mean to introduce judicial reforms, for judicial reform has always been Nubar's hobby." Nubar arrives. He is ready to second the liberal intentions of the Viceroy, but alas! he wants not a paper constitution but genuine reforms, which, though modest in appearance, will put a real check on the Viceroy's arbitrary power! Worse than this, he insists on the full restitution of the confiscated and otherwise appropriated land which is now possessed as private property by the Viceroy and the members of his family, comprising nearly a million of acres! This is at first too much for Ismail. He is to be controlled in the exercise of his

absolute power and deprived of his beloved estates, while his children are to be robbed of their paternal inheritance! Never! Rather than consent to the spoliation of his poor, innocent children, he will sacrifice his own life! If any one ever threatens this heartless spoliation he will send the title-deeds to Stamboul and place them under the sacred guardianship of the Sheikh-ul-Islam. On hearing this, Nubar covers his ears, as if horrified by the idea, and unwilling to hear more. His horror is easily explained. Ismail, in the hope of creating legal protection for the fruits of his spoliation, had issued an edict by which the validity of title-deeds, once duly registered, could not be questioned, and this edict would be declared by the Sheikh-ul-Islam contrary to the Sacred Law. "Do you mean to suggest," asks the half-enraged, half-terrified Viceroy, "that the Sultan may, with the advice of the Sheikh-ul-Islam, declare me *fermanly* (outlaw)?" "Your Highness has said it!" Then Nubar steps aside, and the now completely terrified Viceroy perceives the figure of Mephisto in the distance. Instantly he consents to give up those beloved estates which he values more highly than anything in this world—or possibly in the next—and even the heartless spoliation of the dear innocent children is agreed upon. The only question that remains is how much these innocent children and himself are to receive as compensation. After a great deal of haggling the civil list is fixed at 360,000*l.*, and for some weeks Egypt is governed by Nubar Pasha, Mr. Rivers Wilson, and M. de Blignières—the

Khedive trying awkwardly to play the unaccustomed part of a constitutional sovereign.

Ismail finds it at first very pleasant to be rid of the dread presence of Mephistopheles, but he soon forgets the existence of that personage, and finds it very unpleasant to be incommoded by three ministers who prevent him from making free use of his autocratic limbs, so he gets rid of the burden by a military demonstration. As the English and French cabinets do not at once resent the dismissal of Mr. Rivers Wilson and M. de Blignières, it seems as if the rising flood of foreign interference has really been checked, and Ismail prepares to drive it back—so at least he pretends—by paying off some of the foreign debt. For this purpose he publicly announces a new scheme of financial settlement, and requests all the members of the Khedivial family to aid him in his patriotic design, by sacrificing their jewels on the altar of national independence. Unfortunately, at the very moment of his triumph, he insures his speedy defeat. At an unguarded moment he lets fall incidentally an insulting calumnious remark about the German consul-general, which ultimately reaches the Imperial Chancellerie in Berlin. The Imperial Chancellerie does not wish to take official notice of an incident which was communicated to it unofficially, but it thinks that the Khedive should be punished indirectly, so it informs him publicly that the Imperial Government does not recognise his decree for the new financial settlement.[1]

[1] Such is, I am assured by competent authorities, the true explanation of the mysterious German interference.

This act of German interference rouses the English and French Governments, and the Sultan is allowed to enjoy the satisfaction of deposing his ambitious vassal. Exit Ismail with an air of injured innocence, and with a carpet-bag containing valuable family jewels, generally believed to be the same as those which had been laid on the altar of national independence. Enter Tewfik, accompanied by Riaz and the Anglo-French Control.

Let us now glance for a moment at the reign of Ismail as a whole, in its relation to the past history and present condition of the fellaheen.

If we confine our attention to the official statistics of production, which are supposed by many people to furnish all the materials necessary for gauging accurately the material prosperity of a country, we shall be inclined to take a very favourable view of Ismail's reign. The figures which appear in these statistics are certainly very eloquent, for they show a large and steady increase of production. The exports which in 1862—the last year of Said's reign—had been valued at rather less than four and a half millions reached, in 1874, the sum of £14,800,000. After that year there was a slight falling off and the present tendency is decidedly downwards, but there is nothing in the figures to justify serious alarm. If the custom-house statistics could be taken to represent all the factors in the problem, we should be constrained to admit that the grandiose economic schemes of Ismail had proved a brilliant success.

Unfortunately there were some very important

factors, of which these statistics took no account. First, there was the enormous national debt, contracted during those years of feverish prosperity. It necessitated, of course, a large addition to the taxation, and this heavy burden was very greatly and very unnecessarily increased by the irregular, arbitrary way in which the taxes were levied. Secondly, a considerable portion of the peasantry had been expropriated to enable the Viceroy to form his cotton and sugar plantations, and were ruined by the unprecedented amount of forced labour imposed upon them. Thirdly, Ismail had considered his personal interests and those of his family, much more than the interests of the population generally, so that the canals, railways, and other public works had been executed with a view to improving the estates of the Khedivial family and with a sublime indifference to the necessities and conveniences of other landholders—a foolish policy of which the practical results will be described in next chapter. Fourthly, the increase of production was chiefly obtained, not by the legitimate method of extending the area of cultivation and improving the system of agriculture, but rather by the illegitimate method which is graphically termed in some parts of Germany *Raubwirthschaft*, and which is known in England under various names—I mean the system of robbing the land of its fertility for the sake of a few heavy crops. In Egypt the most profitable crop, but at the same time one of the most exhaustive, is cotton; and the fellaheen being hard pressed for money, took to raising as much of it as

possible, regardless of the fact that the over-cropping must in a few years impoverish and deteriorate the soil. Fifthly, as the overcropping did not suffice to provide all the money which the peasants required for the payment of their taxes and other purposes, and as the influx of Europeans and European institutions furnished new means of easily borrowing money on land and other securities, the peasants gradually sank into a state of indebtedness from which a very large section of them can never hope to extricate themselves. Sixthly, Ismail's systematic and irregular exactions produced a great amount of physical suffering—chiefly in the soles of the feet—which cannot easily be computed in figures ; but as this factor may seem, to rigid political economists, to belong to the region of sentimentalism, I shall not insist upon it.

Thus we see, the brilliant experiments of Ismail, which look so well when viewed exclusively from the point of view of the annual exports, had very injurious consequences for the welfare of the rural population and for the future prosperity of Egypt. Examining the situation at the moment of Ismail's departure we find in an essentially agricultural country, which has contracted heavy responsibilities towards foreign creditors—so heavy that it has been since found necessary to reduce them—a large portion of the peasantry expropriated and ruined, and the majority of the remainder rapidly sinking deeper and deeper into debt, whilst the soil has begun to show unmistakable signs of exhaustion. Verily not a comforting

prospect for those who have the good of Egypt at heart!

About the state of the peasantry during the reign of the present ruler, I have already spoken so fully that I do not require to add much here. Immediately after Tewfik's accession, the Liquidation Commission was appointed and thoroughly overhauled the finances. Treating them after the ordinary manner of dealing with a bankrupt's estate, it effected what it considered an equitable settlement, and reduced the rate of interest on the national debt. As the Government was thereby extricated from its pressing financial difficulties, and as the reckless prodigal, Ismail Pasha, had been meanwhile replaced by an economical ruler under salutary financial control, the previous system of pressing the last piastre out of the fellah became a thing of the past. The exact amount of direct taxation which each individual had to pay was carefully fixed according to the quantity of land, date-trees and sheep which he possessed, the amount of tobacco which he raised, or the trade which he practised, and the simple agricultural labourer who had no land of his own was entirely exempted from direct taxation.

Thanks to the improved method of collection, the fellah now knows precisely how much, and at what dates, he has to pay; and the terms of payment are so distributed over the various months of the year, that they fall due at the seasons when the peasant ought to have on hand some ready money from the sale of his crops. A consequence and a

proof of the good results obtained in this way is to be found in the fact that we no longer hear of peasants abandoning their land without compensation, and the better kinds of land have greatly risen in value. In some villages which I visited, and which I had no reason to regard as exceptional, I was told that much of the land had trebled or even quadrupled in price.

Thus the condition of the peasantry as a whole has greatly improved, in so far as they are no longer exposed to frequent arbitrary exactions on the part of the Central Government and of the tax-gatherers, and they are no longer compelled to work without remuneration in constructing dams, canals, and railways on the Viceroy's estates. I do not mean to say that the ancient abuses are entirely removed —indeed, I know that they are not—but they are enormously diminished in amount, so that they may now be regarded as the exception rather than the rule. The peasantry have still, however, many real grievances, to some of which I have already referred in speaking of the communal administration and the *corvée;* and no attempt has been made to redress the wrongs or improve the condition of the many thousands who were expropriated by inordinate taxation, or by the arbitrary will of Ismail Pasha.

These unfortunates now constitute a formidable agricultural proletariate, at the mercy of the proprietors and middlemen, and their numbers are being constantly increased by the accession of those who merely postponed expropriation by borrowing

money from the village usurers. Of those who have still retained possession of their land, a very large proportion are deeply in debt, and many of them, I fear, are even hopelessly insolvent. The usurer has now, in fact, taken to some extent the place of the extortionate tax-gatherer of the preceding reign.

But what has become of the great Khedivial estates, the revenue and administration of which had to be ceded to the foreign creditors? Did that fifth portion of the soil of Egypt to which the interests of the other four-fifths were sacrificed really prosper so much as to justify the sacrifices made for it? I have promised in the foregoing pages to give some information on this subject, and I now proceed to fulfil my promise.

CHAPTER X.

FARMING ON A GIGANTIC SCALE; THE DAIRA AND THE DOMAINS.

Reasons for inserting this chapter—Extent of the estates—How they became State property, mortgaged to foreign creditors—Nature of the European control in the administration—Practical lessons to be drawn—Inordinate expectations of the creditors—Why these expectations have not been realised—Defects and abuses in the administration—How these defects might be partly remedied and abuses diminished—Liability of the Government for all deficits—Proposed liquidation and probable consequences.

Any work on the rural economy of Egypt would be of course very incomplete without some account of those vast estates which comprehend, as I have said, about a fifth of the arable soil, and that fact alone would justify the insertion of the present chapter; but I have at the same time another and more practical reason for speaking at some length about the Daira and Domains administrations. We have undertaken the great work of Egyptian reorganisation, and we mean of course to employ as far as possible native officials—reserving for foreigners merely those posts of direction and control for which as yet no competent natives are to be found. Now it seems to me that it cannot be without profit for us to examine

attentively two great Egyptian administrations which have already been working for some years under European control. Perhaps we may be able to draw from the examination some practical hints for our future guidance.

In previous chapters I have frequently alluded to the selfish policy and peculiar circumstances by which this enormous quantity of land became the property of the ex-Khedive and of his family. Ismail Pasha, at the death of his father Ibrahim, found himself in possession of about 15,000 acres, and one of the chief objects of his ambition even at that time was to acquire as much land as possible. So long as he remained simply a prince of the Khedivial family with little prospect of ever succeeding to the viceregal throne, the process of acquisition did not proceed very rapidly, for he had little ready money to make purchases, and he did not yet possess the political influence requisite to obtain land without paying for it ; but when he unexpectedly became Khedive in 1863, he had abundant opportunities of pandering to his insatiable land-hunger. Unlike Abbas and Said, who had identified their personal interests with the interests of the State, he conceived the design of amassing by agricultural enterprises and speculation a gigantic private fortune, and he unscrupulously employed for this purpose the pecuniary resources and political power of the Government. A man who had abundant opportunities of closely studying his character assures me that the idea of being "as rich as the Rothschilds" had far more influence on his conduct than any ideas

of political ambition. Whatever may have been his motives, it is certain that at the end of fifteen years he had acquired by more or less legitimate means about 950,000 acres, nearly all first-class land. This enormous mass of landed property comprised 51 estates, varying in size from under 1,000 to over 100,000 acres, and scattered sporadically all over the country, except in the lower portion of the Nile Valley, between Bedrashein and Assiout, where they are so closely grouped as to form almost a compact whole, the area of which would make a good-sized province. A stranger who happens to be in Cairo, and who wishes to form a clearer idea than can be conveyed by mere figures, of the extent of the appropriated land and the amount of capital expended on it, cannot do better than make a ten hours' journey by the Upper Egypt railway, which passes through this compact group of Khedivial estates and was originally constructed, in fact, for their benefit. For eight weary hours—that is to say, for a distance of over 200 miles—the traveller hardly ever sees an acre of private property, but everywhere vast Khedivial sugar plantations and abundant traces of lavish princely expenditure. At each of the eleven principal stations above Beni-Suef, he finds a magnificent sugar factory, erected at a cost of from 150,000*l.* to 200,000*l.* As the plans were made without any serious preliminary calculation as to the amount of cane which the surrounding district might reasonably be expected to produce, the number of factories was greater than was required, and the machinery

has suffered much more from rust and neglect than from over-work. Near each factory is a spacious farmstead, in which may be found a large quantity of traction engines, steam-ploughs, American cultivators, and other implements, all of the newest model at the time of their importation but now rusted and broken though many of them were hardly ever used. Close by each farmstead is a terminus of the agricultural railway, which wanders serpent-like all over the estate, and has a rolling-stock, comprising half-a-dozen locomotives and from 200 to 300 trucks. The total extent of the agricultural railway in the eleven estates is somewhere about 300 miles, for which the imported material is said to have cost a million sterling. Factories, railways, and implements, taken together, must have cost considerably over £3,000,000—some authorities give nearly double that sum—and this respectable figure does not by any means represent the total expenditure, for it does not include the forced labour, which must be considered a very important factor in the calculation. As an illustration of its importance, I may mention the fact that in order to protect the cane from inundation and at the same time insure it a regular supply of water, it was necessary to construct among other things a high embankment over 150 miles long, and a broad deep canal of considerably greater length. Now all these estates taken together represent only about one-fourth of the land formerly possessed by Ismail Pasha! They represent however, it must be admitted, a good deal more than one-fourth of the

pecuniary expenditure, for they contain eleven out of eighteen sugar factories which Ismail built, and few of the other estates have private lines of railway. About a dozen of the estates in the Delta have ginning factories for cleaning and packing the cotton, but these cost much less than the sugar factories.

It is not strictly accurate to say that Ismail at any one moment possessed all this amount of land, for while continuing to purchase and appropriate, he was at the same time distributing a portion of the acquired property, especially the estates in the Delta, among the members of his family; and thus around the Daira Sanieh, as the administration of the Khedivial estates was called, sprang up a number of minor Dairas, which were at first as numerous as the Khedive's wives and children and all independent of each other, but which were afterwards united under the title of the Domains. These two groups of estates have had a somewhat different history but a similar fate. The Daira Sanieh lands, being the personal property of the Khedive, were early used by him as mortgages for raising loans, and their administration was gradually drawn into the vortex of financial embarrassments which he created for himself and his Government. At one moment the liabilities of the Daira amounting to £8,815,000 were amalgamated with the State Debt, but by the Goschen-Joubert arrangement they were constituted a separate debt with a special mortgage, and in accordance with an express stipulation, two

foreign controllers, an Englishman and a Frenchman, were appointed — their duties being to examine regularly the accounts and to insure that the revenues were regularly paid to the holders of the Daira stock.[1] The Domains, on the contrary, having been ceded in due form by his Highness to various members of his family, and having no direct connection with the State Treasury, remained long unaffected by the financial embarrassments of the Government; but during the acute financial and political crisis of 1878 the famous Commission of Inquiry recommended that all the properties of the Khedivial family should be ceded to the State. This recommendation greatly displeased Ismail Pasha. He was ready, and had indeed actually proposed, to cede to the State the mortgaged lands of the Daira Sanieh as also a portion of the Domains (288,762 acres); but he affected to consider the sweeping proposal of the Commission as a monstrous attempt to infringe on the rights of private property, and he long stubbornly refused to sign the decree. When he began, however, to fear that further obstinacy on his part might lead to his deposition he reluctantly yielded; and the whole of the Domain lands, pretty nearly equal in extent to those of the Daira, were mortgaged for a new loan and placed under the administration of a mixed commission, composed of an Egyptian, an Englishman, and a Frenchman.

[1] These foreign controllers of the Daira must not be confounded with the foreign Controllers-General of the entire financial administration, of whom I have spoken so frequently in previous chapters.

The whole of the lands which Ismail had inherited, purchased, or appropriated, had thus become legally State property, but in reality they had passed into the hands of two groups of foreign creditors, the holders of Daira, and the holders of Domain, stock. In both administrations there was an English and a French representative of the bondholders, but there was at first a certain difference in the form of the foreign control. The Daira lands continued to be administered by native officials, and the two foreign delegates acted merely as controllers and auditors of accounts, without having any executive authority; whereas, in the administration of the Domains, the two foreign delegates formed, together with an Egyptian colleague, a supreme administrative council with executive power. This difference practically disappeared at the time of the liquidation in 1880. The administration of the Daira was assimilated, in reality, if not in form, to that of the Domains, and the foreign controllers of the Daira have since acted also as administrators. These may perhaps seem tiresome and useless details, but the importance of them will appear presently.

On second thoughts, I consider it advisable to take that word *presently* in its literal sense, lest some cynical reader, experienced in the wiles and artifices of authorship, should suspect that I am endeavouring to delude him by fallacious promises, and that the large pill of useful information which I have induced him to swallow, has none of the hidden efficacy to which I have vaguely alluded. In order, therefore,

to dispel such uncharitable suspicions, and confound the sceptics, I shall explain at once wherein the efficacy lies. That bit of dry administrative history indicates an important step in the curious progress of European interference in Egyptian affairs. At the moment when European control was first established for the Daira, "the watchful eye of a controller" was assumed to be almost as efficacious an instrument for securing good administration in decrepit, corrupt, Oriental States, as "the masterful hand of a Resident," to which Lord Dufferin significantly refers in his famous despatch. Very soon, however, experience proved that the assumption was practically a dangerous fallacy. Between a controller, who represents merely an anonymous group of unknown bondholders and whose duty is simply to give good advice, and on the other hand a Political Resident, who has the whole power of a great Empire at his back and whose polite suggestions are peremptory orders in disguise, there is a mighty difference, which even a sluggish Oriental intellect has no difficulty in detecting and appreciating at its proper value. Nay, in such matters the habitually sluggish Oriental, whose chief motive of action is fear, is peculiarly quick to detect, and particularly ready to be influenced by, a difference of the kind described. We find this fully exemplified in the Daira administration. So long as it retained its original form, the European delegates merely examined the accounts and made suggestions, or, at most, gentle remonstrances; and the native officials who had the executive power, if they

ever took the trouble to read the controllers' report—which I consider doubtful—certainly did not allow the suggestions or remonstrances to have any influence on their official or private conduct. This experience was happily not thrown away. When it became necessary to subject to foreign influence another great administration in Egypt—the administration of the Domains—it was wisely determined that the European representatives should have something more than a mere consultative voice, that they should be something more than platonic critics, and that they should be armed with executive power sufficient to pierce the hides of thick-skinned officials, who were quite impervious to the attacks of unarmed scientific criticism. In the important changes which took place at the time of the liquidation, past experience was again utilised, and the application was more easily made, because the Europeans had no longer to deal with a Khedive who, in order to have his own wilful way, feigned susceptibilities which he did not feel. It was for this reason that the administration of the Daira was assimilated to that of the Domains, and the Daira controllers received executive authority. Surely in all this there are some lessons to be learned by those who are engaged in the present work of reorganisation.

But how far have the delegates with their executive authority succeeded in fulfilling their mission? Many holders of Daira and Domains stock, who knew something about the real nature of the securities, indulged at first in very sanguine expectations,

and their arguments had all the appearance of being sound. They reasoned in this wise :—Under corrupt native administration the estates had doubtless given no adequate return for the amount of capital and labour expended, but under enlightened European direction the result must be very different and the profits ought to be sufficient not only to meet the current expenses and the coupons but also to pay off, in a comparatively short space of time, the capital of the debt. This could be demonstrated by a very simple calculation :—The total extent of the lands ceded was about 950,000 acres, divided pretty equally between the Daira and the Domains, and the total interest on the two loans was £866,000, so that if the lands yielded on an average the extremely moderate net rental of 25*s.* per acre, the coupons would be regularly paid and there would remain a respectable annual sum for the two sinking funds. But an average of 25*s.* per acre is an absurdly low estimate ; for fairly good land in Egypt should give at least 30*s.*, and first-rate land nearly double that amount. Now by far the greater part of the Daira and Domain lands—whatever interested persons may say to the contrary—are decidedly above the average in quality, and some of them are among the finest estates in the country ; while the amount of taxation or land-revenue which they have to pay is very much below the average. It would have been strange indeed had it been otherwise, for Ismail Pasha, being wise in his generation and little restrained by conscientious scruples or other healthy controlling influences,

naturally took care to choose good land and to display great moderation in fixing the amount of land-revenue which he had himself to pay. He even went so far as to transform some of his acquisitions from *kharadji* into *ushuri* land,[1] and thereby greatly diminish the burden at the expense of the national Exchequer. The present administrators, it is true, sometimes declare that they are unfairly burdened, but it is very easy to show conclusively that, at least in comparison with the great majority of the Khedive's subjects, they have very little reason to complain. The whole land-revenue of Egypt is £5,236,000, and the cultivated area is 4,758,000 feddans,[2] so that the average assessment is considerably more than £1 per feddan, whereas the Daira and Domains lands, though much above the average in quality, pay for 930,000 feddans only £466,000, or about 10*s*. per feddan! It must not be forgotten that in making this rough estimate I have entirely left out of account the eighteen magnificent sugar factories, the fifteen cotton-ginning factories, the private railways, the steam-pumps, the traction-engines, the steam-ploughs, and the other appurtenances, all of which represented a capital of several millions sterling. Thus, those who expected to see the capital rapidly paid off could give a reason for the faith that was in them.

That faith, however, has been more than shaken

[1] See the explanation of these terms given in the preceding chapter, pp. 312-315.

[2] The feddan is, practically speaking, equal to an English acre, and I have generally used the two terms as interchangeable.

by experience. The semi-European administration of the Domains contrived to meet its obligations only during the first fourteen months of its existence (from 1st October, 1878, to 31st December, 1879), and since that time it has always had a serious deficit, or, to use the ingenious euphemism of the administrators, an "insufficiency of receipts."[1] The sums which it is expected to pay annually are: the land revenue (250,000*l.*), the interest on the loan (425,000*l.*), and a fixed sum for the sinking fund (42,500*l.*), making a total of 717,500*l.*; while the average net revenue for the last three years has been only about 480,000*l.*, so that the annual "insufficiency of receipts" has been on an average about 237,000*l.* The Daira administration makes a somewhat better figure. With the help of a considerable sum which it received at starting, it has hitherto been able to meet its obligations, but this year it will have a very serious deficit, and there is grave reason to fear that in future years, if no radical changes be made in the system of administration, the deficit will frequently reappear.

The truth is, that the plausible expectations of the sanguine people above referred to were founded on a flimsy tissue of transparent fallacies and unjustifiable assumptions. Let me expose gently, by way of illustration, one of the fallacies. The estates must, it was said, give a much higher revenue under

[1] This ingenious phrase was invented ironically by M. de Blignières and adopted seriously—so seriously that it appears in the official reports —by the administration!

enlightened European direction than they had previously done under a corrupt native administration. In reality, such inferences were entirely erroneous. The general lawlessness of Ismail's time, though very regrettable from the moral point of view, was pecuniarily advantageous for those estates, because it enabled Ismail to sacrifice to them the interests of the whole rural population and of the country generally. If a canal had to be dug, the *corvée* could be employed gratuitously; if there was a scarcity of water, the Khedivial estates were of course supplied first; if labourers were wanted, the Sheikhs of the neighbouring villages had to furnish immediately as many as were required; if locomotives, rails, or barges had been worn out or injured, they could be sold as new to the Government; if a native had a claim against the manager of a Khedivial estate, he might vainly waste years in trying to find a judge or other official who would listen to his complaints. So it was in the good old times of Khedivial autocracy; and how is it now in the times of enlightened European direction? If a canal has to be dug, hired labourers have to be employed; if there is a scarcity of water, the estates of the Daira and the Domains have no chance of obtaining more than their fair share, and they will probably obtain considerably less if the interests of the Minister of Public Works, or of some influential official of the department, happen to conflict with those of the estates in question; if agricultural labourers are required, they have to be hired in the open market; if locomotives, rails, or

barges have been worn out or injured, they have to be repaired or replaced at the cost of the administration; if a native has a claim against the manager of a Daira or Domains estate, he has as good a chance of obtaining redress as he would have against an ordinary proprietor. Sometimes, indeed, the directors of these great administrations are in even a worse position than ordinary landholders. They may know, for example, that a comparatively small sum judiciously expended in bakshish would ensure a sufficient water-supply, or would free them from the claims of an inconvenient, importunate creditor, and nine-tenths of the ordinary proprietors would unhesitatingly adopt this traditional method of removing difficulties; but enlightened European directors, who have to account publicly for every piastre expended, cannot condescend to devote a portion of their revenues to bribing the public officials or influencing the decisions of judges. I am quite ready to admit, that if the whole administration and the whole moral atmosphere of Egypt were cleansed, these estates might perhaps be so organised as to give much larger revenues than they ever did with the help of unblushing extortion and injustice in the time of Ismail. All I mean to maintain is, that in a country like Egypt, an insatiable, unscrupulous autocrat, whose arbitrary will is law, can extract from estates a larger revenue than can be obtained by a weak, conscientious administration. Certainly honesty is the best policy in a well-regulated country, where the honest man has the law and an army of upright

intelligent officials on his side, but in a country where lawlessness and corruption are universal, the scrupulously honest man is like a polar bear in the tropics, or a delicate plant in an uncongenial climate. However we may regret the fact, it is a fact all the same, that when one lives among robbers and scoundrels without any protection from the police, honesty may still be a source of delicious internal satisfaction, but pecuniarily speaking, it does not pay.

So much by way of illustrating the transparent fallacies; now for a few lines to illustrate the unjustifiable assumptions. It was naturally assumed that the men chosen to represent European enlightenment, at a salary of between £2,000 and £3,000 a year, would all be themselves enlightened—that those who were to show to the ignorant Egyptians the practical advantages of that scientific and technical knowledge which has made the industrial and commercial greatness of England and France, should themselves be men of scientific and technical attainments. Now I regret to say that this assumption has been only very partially justified by experience. The successive English and French representatives have been all honourable men, anxious to fulfil conscientiously the difficult duties of their position, but none of them, with perhaps one exception, have possessed the general scientific attainments, or the special technical knowledge requisite for conducting successfully these gigantic undertakings; and none of them, so far as I am aware, have displayed that natural administrative genius which sometimes compensates

for the want of technical training. I am quite aware that there are many people in England who consider the possession of scientific and technical knowledge quite unnecessary, or even positively disadvantageous, in such a position, and who triumphantly point to our own War Office and Admiralty as conclusive proofs of the soundness of their views, but for my part I cannot concur in this opinion. I may admit, for the sake of argument, that an Englishman who has never learned the goose-step will be *cæteris paribus* a better Secretary for War than the General who has successfully conducted a dozen campaigns, and that his uncle or cousin who has never seen an ironclad will direct the Admiralty with more ability than the most distinguished, scientifically trained Admiral of the Fleet. But when I have made these tolerably large concessions I do not see what practical conclusions can be drawn from them with regard to the Daira and Domains administrations in Egypt. In the first place the War Office and the Admiralty in England are not gigantic industrial and commercial undertakings, as the Daira and the Domains really are; and I have heard pretty competent authorities declare that if a commercial undertaking were conducted in the same way as the War Office and the Admiralty, they would rather not invest their own money in it. Lord Hartington or Lord Northbrook may commit a long series of blunders without having to fear retribution in the form of an "insufficiency of receipts." The member of the English Cabinet who most nearly resembles a director of the Daira or the Domains is

the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and it is generally admitted that the Right Honourable gentleman who occupies that position may, without injury to the country, possess some acquaintance with arithmetic, and even some little knowledge of finance. England once, it is said, very nearly had the good fortune to obtain a Chancellor of the Exchequer who had never been able to do a sum in long division, but these good old times are past now and not likely to return. Even if we believe that they are to be regretted, that is no reason for wishing to exclude technical knowledge from the direction of the Egyptian administrations which we are considering, for there is no analogy between English and Egyptian institutions. In England a Cabinet Minister is above all a political personage, and is the connecting link between his department and Parliament. In his department he simply gives the general direction, and in this duty his want of scientific knowledge is counterbalanced by his freedom from technical crotchets. Under him he has a whole hierarchy of carefully trained officials on whose knowledge and honesty he can implicitly rely. Very different is the position of the foreign director of the Daira or Domains! If he trusts any one he will probably have reason to repent it; but he cannot avoid trusting to others if he has not himself the knowledge required; and how can he exercise any efficient control if his subordinates find that they can rob or commit mistakes under his very nose without fear of detection? I could mention the names of more than one intelligent, active, well-intentioned

gentleman, who might have made a very good Secretary of War in England, and who in Egypt, simply from want of technical knowledge, became the laughing-stock of his subordinates.

There is here, as it seems to me, a second lesson to be learned with regard to the work of Egyptian re-organisation, and there is grave reason to apprehend that it has not yet been learned by the English Government, for when it became necessary a few months ago to fill up a vacancy in the direction of the Daira, the old system was followed. The qualifications of the successful candidate, according to the official personage chiefly responsible for the choice, were, first, that he was a gentleman; secondly, that he knew several European languages, but not Arabic; and, thirdly, that, though he had no technical knowledge, he was willing to learn. I wonder whether this official personage, if he had been himself the proprietor of vast sugar plantations and numerous sugar factories, would have named as general manager a man with no better qualifications. If he had done so, and if I had been pecuniarily interested in the enterprise, I confess I should have withdrawn my capital as speedily as possible, so as not to pay for the inactivity and mistakes of the new manager during the long term of his technical education. To this it may be replied, that the new director is only co-manager and has a French colleague who is practically acquainted with sugar manufacture. This is quite true, but suppose the French colleague retires, and the French Government follows our worthy

example of appointing a man who has no technical knowledge. Certainly it will not be for us to complain. Since we have learned the wisdom of appointing competent trained officials in India, why should we not do likewise in Egypt, where undesirable comparisons are liable to be made between ourselves and the French?

Let us glance now at the practical results of the existing system. The aforementioned "insufficiency of receipts" is in itself eloquent, but it may be well to indicate some of the facts by which this ugly phenomenon is to be explained. In the central offices the well-intentioned, hard-working directors sit all day, reading letters, telegrams, and reports, holding councils, giving orders, examining statistics, and doing the various kinds of routine work of great central administrations. And certainly they have enough to do, for in theory nothing can be done, even in the remotest corner of the most distant estate without their formal permission. In reality, however, much is done and much left undone, of which these hard-working, well-intentioned gentlemen have no cognisance, and possibly no suspicion, even in estates by no means remote. Let us visit some of the estates, and try to discover from the "mufettishes," as the managers are called, what is the real reason of the deficits. This is no easy task, for the mufettishes are precisely the men who have the greatest interest in concealing the secret, and the last thing in the world that most of them would do, would be to initiate a stranger, who is probably a friend of the

directors, into the mysteries of his craft. In the path of scientific investigation, however, difficulties can generally be overcome by judgment, tact, and perseverance, and in a numerous body of human beings there is always some one who can be "worked upon," through the channel of supposed interest or disinterested feelings, in such a way that he communicates what he might naturally be disposed to conceal. In proof of this I may quote here the confession made to me by an honest mufettish—a *rara avis*—in a moment of unaccustomed expansiveness: "I am placed," he said, "over a large estate, but I have no power to work it in the way I know to be most profitable, because everything is decided in Cairo by men who know nothing about the local peculiarities of the property, and there is no use, and much personal risk, in protesting against foolish decisions. I receive, let us suppose, an official order—or what is practically the same thing, I am privately given to understand by the inspector—that I must cultivate this year 4,000 feddans of cotton or sugar-cane. Now I know that, with the present condition of the land and the present state of the irrigation system, and with the working power which I have at my disposal, it would be much more profitable to cultivate only half of that amount. If I were my own master I should certainly do so, but I have to obey orders, and after all, it is not I who will be the loser. Besides this, the estates are far too large. No one practically acquainted with agriculture will imagine that I can really look after 40,000, or 30,000, or even 20,000 acres. If I

spent twelve hours out of the twenty-four in the saddle, under a broiling sun, I could not do it, and why should I exhaust myself and ruin my health in vain attempts to accomplish the impossible, when all my efforts would not add one piastre to my income, or otherwise advance my interests? I take life easy, therefore, and I know very well that so long as the estate gives about as much as it did in preceding years, that is all that is required."

This confession is satisfactory so far as it goes, but it does not tell us much, and we must not rest satisfied with it, for the honest mufettishes constitute only a very small minority. If we could only get one of the dishonest ones, who constitute the majority, to speak out unreservedly! That is not easy, as I found by experience, but for those who know Orientals well, it is not impossible. In my dealings with Orientals I have generally found that their boasted cunning is rather shallow and remarkably transparent. Though I have known hundreds of them who could lie unblushingly, I have never known one who could lie for a few minutes without exposing himself to the risk of detection. In the accurate memory, the sense of artistic perspective, the eye for harmony of colour, and above everything the instinct of logical consistency—in a word, the qualities which go to make up a really good liar—they are all lamentably deficient. After a little practice the European of ordinary acuteness, who gives his mind to the subject, will learn to distinguish the true story from the false one as easily as a painter can distinguish whether

a sketch has been made from nature or "out of the artist's own head." What often leads the European astray is the fact that he chooses a wrong method; he imagines he can detect falsehood, if any exists, in the eyes or expression of the speaker. This is a mistake. To look for truth or falsehood in the eyes or features of an Oriental is as foolish as to look for indications of the weather in a barometer without mercury. It is conscience which speaks in the eyes and features, and in this matter of lying the Oriental has, as a rule, no conscience whatever. Another peculiarity of the Oriental deceiver is this: his attention is generally so engrossed with the work of deceiving you and he has such a poor opinion of your intelligence—that is to say, of your cunning, for in the East the two terms are synonymous—that nothing is easier than to ensnare him either in his own toils or in some little trap of your own invention. The latter expedient is preferable, because it requires less effort, and if it succeeds it will raise you immensely in his estimation—more than the catching him in his own toils, because he will attribute that to his own awkwardness rather than to your dexterity.

Now in trying to extract from a certain dishonest mufettish some secrets of his craft I utilised my experience of Orientals and laid a beautiful little trap for him—so simple in its construction that he never suspected its existence, and he has probably at the present moment not the slightest idea of ever having been in it. As I do not like to infringe on other people's patents, I may state at once that the funda-

mental idea was not my own. It was suggested to me by certain novelists who communicate their own experiences in the form of words and acts of fictitious personages. Of course I could not induce the dishonest mufettish in question to write a novel, but when he had once convinced himself that I believed what he told me about the incorruptible honesty of his own character, he had no hesitation in relating to me amusing anecdotes about the tricks played by less respectable anonymous colleagues. I need not tire the reader by reproducing these anecdotes in detail. The substance of them was briefly this : that dishonest mufettishes, in exercising their authority, thought chiefly of enriching themselves ; that they systematically levied black mail from all who came within their reach; that they half-starved the cattle in order to sell part of the fodder, and did not feel much regret when considerable numbers died, because the purchase of others to replace them was always a profitable operation ; that they occasionally cultivated more land than was shown in the annual statements, and secretly disposed of the surplus crop for their own benefit ; that when they let land by auction to the peasants, the best lots were always knocked down to those who agreed to share the profits with them ; that when an inspector visited the estate they had no difficulty in conciliating him by generous hospitality or occasionally by a little bakshish ; and that when any of the big personages happened to make a tour of inspection it was the easiest thing in the world to make them see what the French term

midi à quatorze heures. Of course managers of this type expose themselves to the danger of dismissal, and even of criminal prosecution, but there is really very little risk of detection, and no risk whatever of being sent to prison, for the Central Administration dislikes public scandals which fall indirectly on its own head, and has no confidence in the existing tribunals. The worst fate therefore that can befall the unfaithful steward is dismissal, in which case he will easily find employment elsewhere, for little accidents of this kind, even when they produce some scandal at the moment, do not in Egypt permanently damage a man's prospects in life. I could name several men who are known to have been dismissed for peculation and who now occupy honourable positions in other spheres of official activity.

Viewing then the Daira and the Domains as a whole, what we find is this: two large and expensive central offices, each containing two foreign highly paid officials, honest, intelligent, hard-working, and well-intentioned, but deficient in technical knowledge, endeavouring to direct and control the great enterprises by means of a highly centralised but very inefficient system of administration. Here, as in all kinds of administration in all countries, inordinate centralisation and a minute formal control which is not really efficient do more harm than good, for without preventing abuses they destroy all zeal, initiative and sense of responsibility in the local agents on whom success mainly depends. If reforms are to be introduced, I would venture to make the

following suggestions: The bureaucratic machinery might be greatly simplified, the working expenses very much reduced, the injurious effects of the apathy, incapacity, and dishonesty of the managers of estates considerably diminished, and the net revenues very materially increased, if the administrations would, as far as possible, abandon farming on their own account, and let the estates in large or small parcels to the landed proprietors or the peasantry of the neighbourhood, or to any one who could furnish the necessary guarantees. The administration of the Domains has already made an experiment in this direction by increasing the area of leased land from 127,872 to 209,786 feddans, and the result is declared to be satisfactory. The revenue of some of the estates has thereby been raised thirty per cent., and one estate which, under the old system, gave a deficit, has been let at the rate of thirty shillings per acre. For estates which cannot conveniently be let, as well as for the sugar mills and cotton-ginning factories, a new system might be introduced, the main feature of which would be that the chief local officials, after being carefully chosen, should enjoy greater liberty of action, and should be incited to exert themselves by the prospect of a share in the surplus profits of the estate or factory of which they have the management. On the Daira estates of Erment in Upper Egypt, the principle has been adopted, and I can speak from personal observation of the excellent effect it has had in stimulating the zeal, prudence,

and inventive faculties of the official interested. This is, in fact, the only instance I have seen of a local administrator acting not merely as an upright, conscientious official, but at the same time concentrating all his intelligence and energies on the problem of how to increase income and reduce expenditure, precisely as if he had been directing a great private enterprise of his own. The official in question is a Frenchman called M. Bouillon. Being by profession an engineer, his proper duties are to manage the sugar factory and attend to the steam pumps, but as he knows that the revenue of the factory depends upon the amount and quality of the sugar cane, he is always ready to assist the mufettish, who superintends the cultivation. I mention these facts because in Egypt it is very unusual and very refreshing to light upon an official who not only takes a lively rational interest in his own work, but who is also anxious to assist colleagues whose spheres of activity are closely connected with his own.

As the Egyptian Government is responsible for the regular payment of the interest on the Daira and Domains loans, it has to make up all "insufficiencies of receipts" of the two administrations, and as it has at present some difficulty in maintaining the general equilibrium of income and expenditure, the question as to how the Treasury can be relieved of this serious burden is naturally being much canvassed in the official world of Cairo. Some authorities are in favour of such gradual reforms as I have suggested, while others recommend a com-

plete and immediate liquidation by the sale of the lands. Already a project has been started for applying this radical mode of solution to the Domains. Apart from the charms which it naturally has for the financiers, who expect to take part in the operation, it has certain very solid advantages. If it could be successfully effected—that is to say, if the lands could be sold for an amount sufficient to extinguish the entire debt—the Government would be liberated from all further liabilities; and a large area of State-lands, by being transformed into private property, would certainly become much more productive. There are, however, serious obstacles to be overcome. At the present time there are not many people in Egypt anxious to purchase land at a fair valuation, and among the would-be purchasers there are very few who possess the requisite amount of capital. In order to remove these difficulties a local banker has promised—without incurring, however, any pecuniary responsibility in the event of his promise not being fulfilled—to find purchasers for the lands at their officially estimated value, on condition that upon all sales, whether negotiated by him or effected without his intervention, he shall receive a commission of two per cent.; and a local bank, the Crédit Foncier, has undertaken to advance, when desired, sixty per cent. of the purchase-money on the security of the property, at a rate of interest one per cent. above the rate at which it can procure money for the purpose in Europe. The practical result of the operation, if it succeeds, will be that the Domains loan will be

paid off, and the Government will be liberated from all further responsibility, but the foreign debt of the country, as opposed to that of the Government, will not be much diminished, because there is not enough of native liquid capital to pay for the lands. The offer of the Crédit Foncier will, therefore, be generally taken advantage of, and accordingly about sixty per cent. of the sum represented by the extinguished loan will appear in the foreign markets in a slightly different form, namely, as scrip of a new land-mortgage company created without government guarantee under the auspices of the Crédit Foncier. Whether native capital will be able to provide the forty per cent. required to make up the price of the lands, is a question which I do not venture to decide, but on which the success of the operation mainly depends. I have been assured that provision will be made for helping the peasants expropriated by Ismail and the usurers to recover their old lands, or rather to obtain others; but I confess that what I know about Eastern financiers generally, and about the character and capacities of the Egyptian Ministers, makes me a little sceptical with regard to such benevolent promises; and I very much fear that it is the financiers and their accomplices, and not the peasantry or the State Treasury, that will chiefly derive benefit from the operation.

CHAPTER XI.

THE GREAT PROBLEM TO BE SOLVED.

Is our position in Egypt a legitimate one?—How long have we the right to remain there?—The pledges given by the British Government—Which of the pledges is the most important?—Why the prolonged presence of English troops is necessary—The proposal to remove the troops to Cyprus—Why some people are in such a hurry to terminate the occupation—The problem of reorganisation—The new army and constabulary—The means for preventing new political agitation—False official conceptions of the late insurrection—Real nature of the movement, and practical conclusions to be drawn—Administrative reform—Economic problems—Exhaustion of the soil—Defects of the irrigation system—Taxation and national debt—Indebtedness of the fellaheen—Foreign interests in Egypt—Definition of the problem.

We have now, I think, rambled about long enough in the nooks and corners of the Egyptian Question. Fortunately we have been steadily, though in somewhat devious fashion, advancing towards our goal, and I have now much pleasure in announcing to the patient, indulgent reader who has kindly accompanied me thus far, that we have already reached the heights from which, as I promised, a view of the question as a whole can be obtained. If the reader will therefore so far prolong his kindness as to look backwards and around him I shall endeavour to act

the part of faithful cicerone by pointing out the objects most worthy of his attention, and offering respectfully a few explanatory remarks and suggestions. But first of all a few words by way of general introduction.

We have come, gentle reader, to this elevated point not merely for the purpose of gazing at the surrounding prospect or of admiring any picturesque scenery which happens to be within sight, but also for the purpose of deciding—not of course officially, for that is the duty of Parliament or of the Cabinet, to neither of which we have the honour to belong, but merely in our own simple unofficial minds—what the British Government ought to do with regard to Egypt. Such has been, at least, the idea which I have constantly kept in view all through our wanderings—in the humble mud-hovel of the poor fellah as well as in the distinguished society of intelligent Beys and influential Pashas. If I have not often forced this idea on the attention of my travelling companions it was because I did not wish to bias unfairly their opinions by inducing them to draw conclusions prematurely from fragmentary evidence.

We are at present in Egypt and it may safely be assumed that we have something to do there, but before endeavouring to determine what that something is, we had better examine our passports. This proposal may not perhaps meet with general approval, for Englishmen as a rule hate passports and every kind of *légitimation* as an unjustifiable restriction of the inalienable right of a free-born

British subject to go where he likes and do what he chooses without interference from the police; and at the present moment the attending to such a formality may seem to practical people positively and quixotically absurd—a mere bit of antiquated red-tapism—because there is no danger of the police interfering with us. We are not merely in possession, which constitutes, as we know, nine points of the law, but we have also unquestionably the tacit approval of Prince Bismarck, who plays at present the part of dictator, or at least leader of the orchestra, in European diplomacy. Nothing would be easier for us, therefore, than to say to any one who might think about calling on us to *legitimise* our position—*J'y suis, et j'y reste!* But though we are thus in no immediate danger of being asked for our passport, and much less of being brought up before a tribunal to answer to a charge of illegal trespassing, we ought not, I think, to take our stand upon the principle that might is right. A country which in diplomatic affairs so often plays the part of the Pharisee—I do not mean the contemptible, hypocritical Pharisee who merely pretends to believe that he is better than his neighbours, but the respectable, genuinely devout, cruelly misjudged Pharisee, who believes in his heart of hearts that he is incomparably more moral and religious than other people, and who sincerely thanks God that he is not like the miserable sinners around him—such a country, I say, ought not to give to wicked continental Governments, which do not keep the fear of God and the love of respectability con-

stantly before their eyes, a bad example in showing disrespect to the immutable principles of international law. To the people who pride themselves on being what they call "practical"—a vague word by which they cover a readiness to do all sorts of naughty things when the eye of the schoolmaster or of the policeman is not upon them—I would say that the principle of honesty being the best policy, the universality of which I have previously called in question, here holds good. Not many years ago, in a moment of reckless audacity, we rather sinned against our conscience by occupying Cyprus, and thereby gave a *coup de canif* to the respectable and useful fiction which is known in diplomatic circles under the pompous title of "l'intégrité de l'empire ottoman." Well, there our sin has found us out, and will probably some day find us out again, for the French have already occupied Tunis, and other undesirable consequences have occurred which are not yet visible to short-sighted observers.

Let us, then, carefully examine our passport, and if we find that it is not *en règle*, then the first thing which we have to do in Egypt is to get out of it as quickly as possible. We must examine it, however, very carefully, for it cannot possibly be in the ordinary form. The circumstances in which we undertook the mission to Egypt were so peculiar that all the chancelleries in Europe might be ransacked in vain to find a fitting ready-made formula. At the time of the Conference the Italian Government requested Prince Bismarck to invent for it and grant it a special

kind of passport under the name of a *mandat*, but he flatly refused. The good Chancellor had at the moment quite enough of work in controlling the wilful deputies and electors which an unkind Providence had given him, to invent new diplomatic formulas or give to foreign Governments vague, roving commissions, the ultimate consequences of which even his keen prophetic eye could not possibly foresee. It is not according to the petrified formulas of diplomatic chancelleries, but according to the broad principles of international equity and plain common sense that we must judge of our position in Egypt. To do this we must recall the peculiar circumstances which induced us to undertake the mission.

Whether any foreign diplomatic agents fostered the insurrectionary movement we need not inquire. That is a curious and interesting topic, about which I might speak at considerable length, but for the moment it is entirely beside the question. The insurrection, however produced and fostered, soon attained such dangerous proportions, and assumed such a menacing attitude towards Europeans that all the Powers, except of course the Porte, were unanimously of opinion that it must be suppressed by military force. The Sultan, it is true, repeatedly declared that tranquillity reigned in Cairo and Alexandria, that under his august auspices things would right themselves, and even after the massacres of Alexandria, when the ephemeral Raghib Cabinet was formed, he executed some very daring variations on

the old *motif* of *tout est pour le mieux dans le meilleur des mondes.* But to those mellifluous strains all the representatives of the Powers assembled in conference turned a deaf ear. Even the Cabinets of Vienna and Berlin, whose diplomatic agents in Alexandria had co-operated in the formation of the Raghib Cabinet, concurred in the opinion that military force must be employed. The only question to be decided was: who should bell the cat? After a good deal of discussion, it was agreed that the Sultan as suzerain should be requested to perform the disagreeable operation, but for reasons which I have already explained, his Majesty was not at all disposed to do anything of the sort. While he was still hesitating, the bombardment of Alexandria occurred, and the British Government declared openly that it would be obliged to take a more active part than it had intended in the suppression of the revolt. When Lord Dufferin made that announcement in the Conference, not one of his colleagues raised the slightest objection, or made the faintest show of protest. A little later, the Russian ambassador manifested a desire to raise a certain opposition, but his aim, as we have seen, was to establish a kind of European control which might prevent possible annexation, and not by any means to prevent England from reestablishing order. The Powers all knew very well that the Sultan had been intriguing and was still shuffling, and that if the work of pacification were left to him, they would have long to wait, and would probably have to face new and dangerous complications both in the work of

reorganisation and in getting the Turkish troops out of Egypt. But though all the Powers thus gave at least a tacit consent to England's action, not one of them showed the slightest inclination to join her. Whether France was simply paralysed by contending factions and by the fear of a German invasion, or whether she had an additional motive for inaction in the idea that she might intervene more advantageously at a future stage of the proceedings, I cannot tell; but I know that she declined to co-operate in any way, and Italy, *faute de mandat*, followed her example. None of the other Powers had sufficient interests in Egypt to justify their active interference, and they all remained passive spectators. Thus we had to undertake single-handed the work of restoring order in Egypt, and we did so with at least the tacit approval of all the Powers. So far, therefore, as our actual presence in Egypt is concerned, we are perfectly *en règle*, and no foreign Power has any right, or shows any disposition, to complain.

But what about the length of our stay there? The passports of all foreign Governments are given *à terme*, for a definite space of time; has ours not a clause of the kind? So far as I can perceive, it has not. As I read the document it is as free from any such restriction as a passport of the English Foreign Office.

But the pledges which Mr. Gladstone and some of his colleagues have given from time to time? That is for me rather a difficult question, for these pledges have never, so far as I am aware, been collected and codified, and, consequently, there may possibly be

some of which I know nothing. All those which I know of may be reduced to three: that the occupation is temporary, and will not be unnecessarily prolonged; that Egypt will be reorganised in such a way as to secure, humanly speaking, permanent order in the future; and that there will be a prudent development of popular institutions.

In enumerating these pledges I have arranged them, not chronologically or logically, but according to the frequency with which they are cited. As they are mentioned and dilated upon chiefly by people who are nervously afraid of our incurring unnecessary responsibilities, or who, for some other reason, are extremely anxious that our troops should evacuate Egypt as speedily as possible, it is the pledge about the essentially temporary character of the occupation that we are most frequently reminded of. In the order of importance, however, as it seems to me, that pledge should come last. Suppose, by way of analogy, that a respected member of the medical faculty, with a high professional reputation to sustain, should solemnly undertake to remain with a patient until all serious danger of relapse had disappeared, and to employ a certain approved method of treatment for the disease. Suppose, further, that this grave, respectable disciple of Esculapius, should consider it necessary, at the moment of his departure from home and as occasions for communication presented themselves during his absence, to assure his weak, fussy, hysterical wife that he would return to the bosom of his family as soon as possible. Which of these two

pledges, may I ask—the pledge to the patient and his anxious friends, or the pledge to the fussy hysterical wife—ought to be considered the most important by calm, impartial observers, and which of the two ought the physician to think about most during the course of the treatment? What would we say of this physician if, after weakening the patient by bleeding and depriving him of his accustomed diet, he should suddenly, before the curative treatment had begun, abandon the weakened man to Providence and quacks, and rush home to calm the fussy spouse's hysterics, which have really no bad consequences except that of annoying the people with whom she lives? I think we should be justified in using some very strong uncomplimentary language with regard to that physician; and I think we should be justified in applying identical or very analogous terms to the British Government, if, in deference to the clamour of certain nervous, fussy people at home, it abandoned the work of Egyptian reorganisation which it has begun, or refrained from using the means necessary to insure success. If we were not resolved to create something like permanent order in Egypt, why did we go to Egypt at all? If we did not mean to create really good government—why did we destroy the National Party, which had a far better chance of preserving order of some kind than the Khedive whom we reinstated? If we intended to let the Egyptians stew in their own juice, why did we wantonly interfere in the operation and send the fat into the fire? If we did not mean to do something serious in Egypt,

why did we heedlessly and needlessly offend France by abolishing the Dual Control ? The time for considering the question as to whether we should undertake the work of Egyptian reorganisation was in the early part of last year, before we overthrew the Arabi dictatorship, and before the destruction of Alexandria. It is rather late in the day now to have conscientious scruples, and very foolish to imagine that by shirking our duties and responsibilities we can make for ourselves a reputation of disinterestedness and generosity. The man who begins to have conscientious scruples after having accomplished the destructive part of a great work, and who timidly shrinks from the unquestionable difficulties and possible dangers in the constructive part, does not gain a high moral reputation, but gains—and gains justly—the reputation of a miserable, canting coward. We have done the work of destruction in Egypt very thoroughly. I do not speak merely of the blackened ruins of Alexandria, which was, previous to our demonstrative naval visit, one of the finest and most prosperous cities of the Levant; I mean that we have thoroughly destroyed the old despotic system of ruling the country, and have thoroughly dislocated the whole system of government. Perhaps it may be said that it was not we, but Arabi and his friends, who accomplished this work of destruction and dislocation. To that assertion I give an emphatic denial. Arabi and his friends certainly did produce temporary disorder of a very dangerous kind, but they did not permanently and radically destroy and dislocate as

we have done. If we had left them alone they would have created some kind of despotism either with or without the external forms of constitutional government; and perhaps, after a time, some kind of popular liberties, in the native, Oriental sense of the term, might have sprung up. Never since the days of Mehemet Ali—or perhaps from a much earlier date—was there a man in Egypt who had such a firm hold of the country as Arabi, for he had not only the army and police at his disposal, and consequently was in a position to terrorize to any extent he chose, but he also enjoyed, as I have shown, the sympathies of nearly every section of the native population. The common theory, for which I suspect some of our diplomatic agents are responsible, that he was merely a military adventurer without any kind of popular support, and that the solution of the Egyptian question consisted simply in having him and a few of his accomplices shot or hanged, is now found to be utterly untenable. Certainly he was, in a certain sense, a military adventurer, as Mehemet Ali had been before him, and if he had been promptly exiled or executed when he first showed signs of insubordination, the political crisis might have been indefinitely postponed; but who prevented him being put out of the way in the informal Oriental fashion? The British Consul-General, acting no doubt according to the instructions of his Government. Thus we prevented the Khedive from getting rid of Arabi at the commencement Next, when the National Party were victorious, we prevented Arabi from getting rid

of the Khedive; and, lastly, when the Khedive was re-established, we prevented him, as we shall see presently, from recovering his moral authority and prestige by the exercise of what he, and all impartial Egyptians, regarded as an act of necessary severity. Ever since our occupation of the country we have compelled the Khedive to play the part of a liberal ruler, in our sense of the term, and we have forced the Minister of Interior to issue an edict abolishing the use of the kurbash. In other words, we have partly wrecked and wholly undermined and paralysed the old system of government, and what have we as yet put in its place? A few English officers and officials who complain that they have no power to act, a few foreign policemen in Alexandria and Cairo, and a paper constitution which even the educated men among the natives do not understand! If we are to stop short at this point in our labours, and thereby incur the ridicule or indignation of the civilised world, we should have done far better to let the Egyptians stew in their own juice without putting the fat into the fire. As for the supposed necessity of showing our disinterestedness and generosity, if it is absolutely necessary to make a display of these qualities to an admiring crowd of foreign *gobemouches* we can easily do so by paying part of the indemnity for property in Alexandria which we helped to destroy, or by taking over the expenses of the occupation which are at present paid by Egypt, or by advancing a little money towards the liberation of the fellaheen from their usurious creditors, or

in half-a-dozen other ways which I am ready to suggest. That kind of generosity and disinterestedness could be appreciated and admired even by the meanest Egyptian intellect, whereas it requires a casuist of no mean capacity to appreciate and admire a generosity and disinterestedness which consist in smashing another man's crockery and then running away without paying the bill, on the plea that our further presence in his house might be personally disagreeable to him or might be misinterpreted by the neighbours!

The number of timid political wiseacres who clamour openly for an abandonment of the unfinished work in Egypt is perhaps not very great, but they have unfortunately the support of a group of influential men who, perhaps unknown to themselves, indirectly make that demand by insisting on certain measures which would practically prevent the carrying out of the work with success. To these gentlemen I would recommend a course of meditations on the old French proverb, which says, that he who wishes the end must wish the means. If they really wish, as some of them profess, to see the work carried on and finished, then they should give up clamouring incessantly and worrying the Government about the withdrawal of the troops, for by the premature withdrawal of the troops the chances of success, not very brilliant as it is, would be diminished by at least eighty per cent.

The presence of the English troops for some time longer is, in my opinion, necessary for several reasons.

In the first place, their presence insures public tranquillity. I have no fear of any spontaneous explosion among the civil population, for they are as submissive, docile a population as is to be found on the face of the earth. What I fear is a recrudescence of insubordination in the native army. The common soldiers will not spontaneously mutiny against their officers, for they are simply submissive, docile fellahs in uniform, but if the officers mutiny their men will obediently follow them as they did in the late insurrection. Now, it must not be forgotten that by disbanding the old Egyptian army we threw a great number of officers out of employment, and many of them, having neither pay nor pension, are probably on the brink of starvation. Such men, hating the Khedive as they do, will no doubt do all in their power to tamper with the fidelity of the native officers in active service, and if there are no English troops at hand to overawe, and if necessary quell, any attempt at insurrection, I do not see why the officers in active service should not yield to the suggestions and solicitations of their friends and relations—especially as the mutineers in the last insurrection were allowed to go unpunished. I am supposing that the dismissed officers are not worked upon either by Turkish intriguers or by the secret agents of any foreign Power, and that consequently they have no reason to hope for any foreign support; but that is rather an unjustifiable supposition; for it is very certain that Yildiz Kiosk—one of the most fertile hotbeds of intrigue in the known world—will not quietly accept

English predominance in Egypt, and I am not quite sure that France will long passively acquiesce in the present arrangement. Already I hear about intrigues in Constantinople, and I observe that the French diplomatic agent in Cairo, who recommended an inactive, expectant attitude, has been recalled. If either of these two Powers should wish to provoke new disturbances, they will find willing, experienced agents in the unemployed needy officers, and if these men can induce some of their comrades in active service to join in an insurrection, the common soldiers will follow them, and the great mass of the civil officials, whose evil tendencies may be controlled and whose illicit gains may be diminished by the reforms we recommend, will certainly sympathise with any insurrectionary movement, and actively assist it as soon as they think they can do so without serious personal risks. In dealing with questions of this kind we must constantly keep in mind certain important facts which I have already mentioned in the preceding pages, but which I think it expedient to repeat here. First, the Khedive, in so far as he awakens any feelings in the population, is decidedly unpopular, partly on account of certain personal characteristics, and partly because in the recent struggle he sided with the foreign invader. Secondly, Tewfik has none of the qualities of a far-seeing, energetic ruler, and we do not allow him to use the means commonly employed by Oriental potentates for maintaining their authority. Thirdly, any scheme of genuine efficient reform, being contrary to the immediate interests of the great

majority of the officials, high and low, will encounter open resistance or secret opposition from those who have to put the scheme into execution, and who are most capable of influencing the masses.

But might not any tendency to insubordination among the native troops, and any tendency to insurrection in the population, be effectively overawed by keeping a respectable English garrison in Cyprus, whence it could be transported to Egypt at a few days' notice? I think not. The Egyptians would know nothing, and would not take the trouble to inquire, about the precise number of English troops in Cyprus, or about the precise degree of determination in the English Government to undertake, if necessary, another expedition to Egypt. When they saw the last detachment of British soldiers sail away from Alexandria, they would thank Allah that they had got rid of the foreigner, and attribute the departure to the peremptory orders of the Sultan, the diplomatic pressure of other foreign Powers, or some such imaginary reason, and they would at once jump to the conclusion that they might again do as they pleased without exposing themselves to much risk of a new foreign intervention. And I am not at all sure that they would be very far out in their calculations, for in all probability the English Government would think twice, and even three times, before undertaking a new expedition; and when it had at last decided in principle that such a measure was desirable, it might find that there were serious diplomatic obstacles in the way. The

Sultan would begin to talk about his sovereign rights being infringed, and might suggest a European Conference to consider the question; while France, on the plea that the interests of French subjects were in danger, might reasonably insist on co-operating in the work of restoring order, and might plausibly hint that, as the English had failed to maintain public tranquillity, it was now her turn to attempt the work of re-organisation. Meanwhile, the disturbances in Cairo, which might have been quelled at the outset by the vigorous action of Lord Dufferin's famous "corporal's guard," would naturally assume very serious dimensions, requiring the employment of a considerable military force. Is it not strange that wise, honourable members of Parliament should fail to foresee all these probabilities, and that it should be left to simple, unprofessional observers like you and me, dear reader, to discover and point them out?

But it is not merely in order to prevent military insubordination or an insurrectionary movement that the presence of British troops in Cairo is still for some time required. The occupation must be prolonged also as a means of accelerating the introduction of the proposed reforms. To some people this reason may at first sight seem rather strange, but those who know Eastern countries generally, and Egypt in particular, will understand at once what I mean. If we withdraw our troops no Oriental will believe that we are really in earnest about the reforms, and it will be extremely difficult for us to

find the means of applying strong enough pressure to overcome the apathy and stubborn, passive resistance of the Egyptian Government and the Egyptian Administration, both of which, it must be remembered, are secretly hostile, or at least indifferent, to reforms of any kind, as they have already pretty clearly shown since Lord Dufferin's departure from Cairo. On this point we should take a lesson from what happened in Turkey after the Congress of Berlin. An International Commission elaborated a scheme of reforms for Eastern Roumelia, and afterwards another scheme for the remaining provinces of European Turkey. The former was successfully realised because Eastern Roumelia was occupied by Russian troops, and the latter has remained a dead letter even unto this day.

A third reason for prolonging the occupation, not perhaps as important as the two preceding ones, but still worthy of consideration, is that the foreign population of all nationalities consider it necessary for the safety of their lives and property. I am quite ready to admit that the foreign population of Egypt, like all populations containing a large Levantine element, is rather timid, and that the oft-repeated declarations about immediately abandoning Egypt if the British troops are withdrawn, might not be in all cases literally carried out, but there is no doubt that European capital, which is more timid than the Levantine, would not readily flow into a country where Europeans considered, rightly or wrongly, that their lives and property were in danger.

And why, may I ask, should we be in such a desperate hurry to withdraw the troops? In the hope of obtaining from competent authorities some information on this point, I have put the question to some of my friends, who have repeatedly expressed, both in private and in public, their extreme anxiety to see the occupation terminated as speedily as possible; but I must say that their answers did not seem to me very satisfactory. One replied that it was a very expensive affair, and that the interests of the British taxpayer, as well as those of the Egyptian fellah, must be taken into consideration. This was decidedly a bad shot, because it is the Egyptian and not the British Exchequer which pays the bill. A second friend, whose opinion has considerable weight with a large section of the British public, was kind enough to explain to me, at considerable length, that if our troops were in Cyprus, instead of being in Alexandria and Cairo, we should be able to exercise sufficient influence in Egypt without incurring responsibility. This explanation, I confess, rather staggered me. Apart from the fallacy about our being able to exercise sufficient influence, which I have refuted above, I was not prepared to hear from an eminent public man—least of all from an Englishman—the new and strange doctrine that power and responsibility can be divorced from each other, and that we, as a nation, should seek to exercise the one and try to shirk the other! If I must tell the whole truth, I felt, as an Englishman, a little humiliated. I had often, as doubtless every Englishman has done,

deplored and censured the real or imaginary ignorance, folly, obstinacy, and other bad qualities of my countrymen in general, and of those who guide the destinies of the Empire in particular, but my censure had always been to some extent tempered by a secret admiration for their manly pluck and the courage with which they frankly accept the consequences of their acts. Now, to hear one of the most eminent among our legislators recommend and justify the doctrine that we should seek power and shirk responsibility, seemed to me to indicate that we were gradually losing those few sterling, manly qualities which, as a nation, we possess, and of which we stand sorely in need, in order to atone to some extent for the multitude of our national sins. But I was destined to hear things stranger still. When I had explained my views on the Egyptian Question, and finished by drawing the conclusion that it was impossible to withdraw our troops for a considerable time, my friend replied: "You must not say impossible, for we are capable of wonderful feats in that way; remember Afghanistan and South Africa. How many people told us that it was impossible to withdraw our troops, and yet we did it!" As he uttered these words there was a note of pride and exultation in his tone which jarred harshly with my own feelings, for in the results of the Afghan and South African campaigns I do not see anything to be proud of. If there is any one who would be satisfied with having in Egypt the state of things which at present exists in Afghanistan and South Africa, I cannot agree with

him, and our points of view are so wide apart that it is quite useless to discuss the question. Let us leave, then, that topic and talk of something else. When I come to speak of the pledge about the prudent development of popular institutions I may have again occasion to refer to the necessity of prolonging the occupation.

Assuming, then, that we really mean to pay honourably the bill for the smashed crockery, and that we are determined to establish in Egypt an order of things which has a reasonable chance of preventing future disturbances and permanently benefiting the country, let us consider what means must be employed to attain those laudable objects. When we have for this purpose carefully formulated the problem to be solved, we may consider what we have already done towards a solution, and what remains for us to do.

The recent troubles began, as we have seen, by military insubordination. A number of officers made military demonstrations, overawed the Ministers, got the direction of the civil administration into their own hands, threatened to depose the Khedive, and brought about foreign armed intervention. It is to the army, therefore, that we should first direct our attention. The old army has been disbanded and is consequently for the moment harmless, but in creating a new force we must take carefully the necessary precautions to prevent it from following the example of its predecessor, and this duty is all the more incumbent upon us, because, as we shall see hereafter, we prevented

summary punishment being inflicted on the mutineers as a warning to others.

When we examine closely the nature of the military insubordination which led to the insurrection, we perceive that it proceeded, not from the men, but from the officers. From beginning to end, the rank and file observed strict discipline, and did as they were told ; and as soon as the resistance of the leaders collapsed, they ran home to their villages as fast as they could, and felt very grateful to Providence that the term of their forced military service had so speedily come to an end. With regard to the future, we may safely assume that the common soldiers will always, as they have done in the past, mechanically obey their officers and do as they are told ; for the fellaheen are, as I have already said, one of the most submissive, docile populations on the face of the earth ; and, if they have an opportunity of returning to their ordinary peaceful avocations they will assuredly do so, for they dislike soldiering in all its forms. It is plainly, therefore, to the choice and discipline of the officers that we should chiefly direct our attention.

The officers of the old army were, as we have seen, partly of fellah and partly of Turco-Circassian extraction, and it was the mutual dislike and rivalry of these two coteries which first produced the disturbances. To prevent any such rivalry in future, two schemes have been suggested : the one is to exclude the fellahs from promotion, and the other to exclude the Turco-Circassian element from the service. In my opinion, neither of these two schemes

is satisfactory. To exclude men of fellah origin from promotion to the higher grades would be, abstractly speaking, an injustice, and, politically speaking, a mistake. As it is the native fellah element which supplies the rank and file, it is only just that this element should be admitted to partake of the honours and rewards, and if it were excluded, the injustice would supply more than a flimsy pretext for political agitation. On the other hand, to exclude the Turco-Circassian element from the service, would likewise be at once unjust and inexpedient. These men are native-born Egyptians, like the fellaheen they have no other fatherland than Egypt, and they are at heart as capable of Egyptian patriotism as the men who are the descendants of Arab conquerors or of Coptic renegades. So much for the question of abstract justice. When regarded from the professional and political point of view, the necessity of employing these men appears still more urgent. They undoubtedly possess many of the finest requisites of a professional soldier, in which the great mass of the Egyptian population are lamentably deficient, and none of the successive Khedives ever dreamed of dispensing with their services. It would be wise, therefore, for technical reasons "to introduce," as Lord Dufferin graphically puts it, "a certain amount of professional backbone into the invertebrate ranks of the fellaheen soldiery, by the admission amongst them of the descendants of those hardy warriors who carried the standards of Mehemet Ali from Cairo to Konieh." It would be wise, too, for other reasons of which Lord Dufferin

does not speak in his Report, but which such a well-informed, far-seeing statesman must have had in his mind. These descendants of hardy warriors have not merely the decision, the personal bravery, the dash "the eye to threaten and command," and the other, qualities which go to make up what is known in military circles as "a smart officer"; they have also, in a much higher degree than the fellah officers, the sentiment of military honour, and chivalrous fidelity to superiors. They are, therefore, much less likely to be seduced from their allegiance and made to forget what should be most sacred for a soldier, by the eloquent dissertations of a dreamer like Arabi, or by the artful suggestions and tempting promises of a cunning intriguer like Ali Fehmi or Mahmoud Sami. Dreamer as he was, and eloquent defender of the eternal principles of abstract justice, Arabi was still intelligent and practical enough to understand that in order to carry out his schemes successfully it was advisable to transport the Circassians to the White Nile. If he had any conscientious scruples about the summary procedure employed, they were overcome by the suggestion that the Circassians had been plotting against his life; for the eloquent Arabi, though possessed of many qualities required by a popular Tribune, was not sublimely indifferent to considerations of personal security.

These smart officers have, it is true, what a Frenchman would call *les défauts de leurs qualités.* They are apt to overstep the line which separates the strict disciplinarian from the brutal martinet, and they do

not by any means always remember that strict discipline should be founded on strict justice. Born and educated in Egypt, they have largely imbibed the arbitrary, law-despising spirit of Egyptian officials; and like almost every one else in Egypt who has a little authority, they are inclined to treat the submissive fellaheen with contemptuous brutality. These objectionable tendencies must of course be curbed, and as far as possible eradicated, and this can easily be done by the presence and influence of a certain number of English officers whose services will be required for some time, both for professional and for political reasons.

Following the path indicated by the recent disturbances, we find that the next subject which ought to engage our attention is the creation of an efficient police and constabulary. At the critical moment of the massacres in Alexandria the police sided with the native rioters, and greatly increased the number of the victims, and in the massacres which occurred in Tantah and other towns of the interior immediately after the destruction of Alexandria, the police, if they did not take an active part in the murders, remained at least passive spectators. Here again, as in the army, it is to the officers rather than to the men that we should chiefly direct our attention, for in the events just mentioned the men would have done their duty if the officers had given the example. In Cairo, according to the testimony of the few foreigners who ventured to remain, the efforts of a well-intentioned, energetic prefect of police sufficed to

maintain perfect order all through the insurrection; and at Tantah the vigorous initiative of a private landed proprietor, Ahmed Bey Menshawi—to his name be all honour!—sufficed to curb the fanatical rage of the excited populace. The practical problem which we have to solve in this section of the work of re-organisation is an extremely difficult and delicate one, for we have to create a force which will have authority enough to maintain order, and which will at the same time refrain from the traditional habits of oppression, extortion, and brutality in which nearly all men in Egypt who happen to have a little authority, unhesitatingly indulge. What has been already done in this direction, and what it is necessary still to do, will appear in the sequel. Before entering on details we must get a general idea of the problem to be solved. Let us pass then at once to the second phase of the revolutionary movement and see what precautionary measures are suggested by it.

The military leaders, it will be remembered, after obtaining the concessions which they demanded, found their personal safety endangered, and in order to make their position permanently secure they determined to get the civil and political power into their own hands. For this purpose they widened the basis of their action and produced a popular agitation for constitutional reform, under which term was tacitly comprised, as very soon appeared, complete freedom from all foreign control in the internal affairs of the country. The agitation spread rapidly through all sections and ranks of the official world, so

that Arabi, who had up to that moment relied exclusively on the army, speedily obtained the support of the entire civil administration. Now, with regard to the future, how are we to take reasonable precautions against all untoward incidents of this kind?

This question brings us face to face with the very essence of the problem, and I do not see how we can advance further without making a public confession to the effect that our Government, in spite of electoral reforms and Midlothian speeches, has not yet attained, in questions of foreign policy at least, to absolute official infallibility. There can be no longer any reasonable doubt that it totally misconceived—for I cannot admit for a moment that a Cabinet, which prides itself on its conscientiousness, could rightly understand and wilfully misrepresent—the real nature of the Egyptian revolutionary movement. Again and again our responsible statesmen expressly declared, or tacitly assumed, that Arabi was simply a military adventurer and nothing more; that the military leaders represented no one but themselves, and produced a mere phantom of popular support by terrorising the population; that the real National Party, in so far as anything of the sort existed, were represented by the virtuous Sherif, and had no manner of sympathy with Arabi and his wicked accomplices; that all sections of the population were animated with loyalty and affection for the amiable young prince who was their legal ruler, and were only prevented by the terrorism of the military despots from giving public expression to their feelings; that everybody

in Egypt, with the exception of a few interested partisans, was panting to be freed from the intolerable tyranny of these despots ; and that as soon as they could be removed the whole population would joyfully rally round the Khedive, and would cheerfully, loyally, and energetically co-operate in "a prudent development of popular institutions," under the auspices of the beloved, amiable young prince, who was supposed to be enthroned in the affections of his faithful subjects !

Now, I do not wish to inquire who are responsible for this absurd caricature of the revolutionary movement, and, whoever they may be, I do not wish to be hard upon them, for I know by experience how difficult it is to draw accurately and in proper perspective a great surging crowd which is rapidly advancing, or to discover what takes place in, and what is desired by, a disorderly, excited mob when one has the misfortune to be in the thick of it. Let us pass, therefore, in due form, a bill of indemnity in favour of those who involuntarily misled us, but in the name of common honesty and common sense, let us frankly abjure our errors, let us refrain from increasing our difficulties by adopting the silly device of timid, stupid ostriches, and let us look the facts bravely in the face, however ugly or unpleasant they may be. Arabi did not acquire and preserve his influence by terrorism, for at the commencement he had no power to injure any one, and during the whole time of his power he never caused a single individual to be beheaded, hanged, or shot. If he had gone to the

poll with Tewfik, and all corrupt practices had been excluded, he would have obtained the votes of an overwhelming majority of the free and independent electors. The amiable young prince never possessed the faculty of inspiring his subjects with affection or enthusiasm, and he became decidedly unpopular when he sided with the foreigner against Arabi. The virtuous Sherif represented merely his own views, and those of a few respectable moderate men, who might be counted perhaps on the fingers of one hand. Nearly everybody in Egypt, intelligent and educated enough to understand what the question at issue was, wished to be freed, not from the tyranny of military despots, but from the wholesome checks created by the Anglo-French Control, while the great mass of the ignorant peasantry wished to be liberated from the yoke of the usurers, which was the only kind of foreign influence with which they were personally acquainted. When the beloved young prince was re-enthroned, with the help of British bayonets, in the supposed affections of his faithful subjects, a great number rallied round him in the hope of obtaining lucrative posts, or of at least escaping punishment for their connection with the insurgents; but very few were animated with disinterested affection or loyalty to his Highness, and these few were not at all anxious to co-operate in such reforms as the British Government recommended. Of the men who had really remained loyal to Tewfik all through his troubles and who sincerely wished to see Egypt well governed, every one with whom I had an opportunity of

conversing freely, considered that the most essential and most pressing reform was the summary execution of all the leaders of the National Party and the creation of a trustworthy corps of foreign mercenaries. Though I saw in Cairo during the course of the winter a great many members of the official class, I cannot recall the name of a single individual, except Sherif and Nubar, who ever professed to sympathise cordially with liberal reforms in our sense of the term. There may perhaps be, somewhere in the Egyptian administration, a few men who, from sincere conviction and patriotic motives, are ready to accept our reform-scheme and honestly do all in their power to carry it out, but to suppose that these few individuals, if they exist, can by their own strength and without extraneous assistance, realise our benevolent intentions with regard to their country, is as absurd as it would be to suppose that two men and a boy in a little dinghy could tow the *Great Eastern* out to sea!

The practical inference to be drawn from these disagreeable facts is that in the work of reorganising Egypt our co-operation must not be confined to simply removing fortuitous obstacles, such as military despots and the like, and to giving the native workmen valuable hints for their guidance. We must, if the desirable result is to be attained, take a much more active part in the work, and it seems to me that success may be best assured by adopting the following principles: First, the general scheme of reorganisation must be carried out under our direction. In this part of the work we ought, of course, to obtain as

much information—as much *lumen siccum*—as possible from native sources, but we ought to sift very carefully all native suggestions, because native advisers are generally very deficient in administrative organising talent, and any little sound judgment which they may possess is pretty certain to be obscured by considerations of personal interest. Secondly, our constant aim should be to prevent in the future all dangerous political agitation by removing as far as possible all legitimate grounds of complaint, but we must not expect that our disinterested exertions will immediately obtain official support or popular approbation. Many of the most urgent reforms will naturally be distasteful to the corrupt officials, who comprise, unfortunately, a very large proportion of the educated classes, and the unofficial public is for the most part too ignorant immediately to understand and appreciate what is being done for their benefit. Thirdly, any political institutions which may be created should be so constructed that they may give information and advice rather than exercise political power, and precautions should be taken against their being used, as the late Chamber of Notables was, for the purposes of revolutionary agitation. Fourthly, a considerable amount of power must be given to the Khedive and his Ministers because it is to them that we must apply the necessary pressure to have the reforms executed.

To all this it may be objected, that if my suggestions were adopted the real power would remain for some time in the hands of the British Government.

and consequently there would be no commencement of political life in Egypt. That is precisely what I desire; for I have not been able to discover in Egypt any native element desirous and capable of spontaneously undertaking, and successfully carrying through, the reforms which are in my opinion absolutely essential for the permanent preservation of order and the general welfare of the country. When these necessary reforms have been accomplished, it will be time enough for the Egyptians to begin their independent political life.

But what are the mysterious reforms thus vaguely referred to? I proceed to explain.

In a previous chapter I sketched rapidly the present state of the Egyptian administration, and pointed out some of its radical defects. Though I refrained from entering into details, I think I said enough to convince the reader that we cannot, if we are seriously to undertake the work of Egyptian organisation, allow such a state of things to continue. There is here, in fact, an Augean stable to be cleansed, and it is very foolish to imagine that the work can be planned and executed by the natives. The men who have the power have neither the wish nor the requisite qualifications for the task; and the great mass of the people, though they may desire, in their vague, apathetic way, that their position should be improved, have no means of making this vague desire felt and respected in official circles. The great majority of the Egyptian officials, being habitually corrupt and despotic, have no wish for any reforms which would

diminish their illicit gains or curb their arbitrary power; and if there are amongst them a few men of purer moral character and higher aims, these men have no adequate conception as to how the end is to be attained, and when the road is pointed out to them, they show themselves sceptical, apathetic, or incompetent. It is not enough that there should be a little administrative tinkering, or even that there should be radical administrative reconstruction according to the admirable principles which some young Egyptians have read about in learned treatises on *le droit administratif*, or *das Verwaltungsrecht*. The whole spirit of the Egyptian administration must be completely changed, and I do not see how this can be effected except in one of two ways: either by the irresistible pressure of enlightened public opinion among the natives, or by irresistible pressure and active co-operation from without. Now, I am all in favour of the former method, where it can be employed, but I do not see how a strong, healthy, enlightened public opinion can come into existence within a reasonable time in Egypt, and I believe that we delayed its birth for a generation by our armed intervention; for in the national movement there were some undeveloped germs which might, after passing through an invigorating struggle for existence, have ultimately borne fruit. Progress and purification, therefore, in the Egyptian administration, must as it seems to me, be of the Indian rather than of the English type. As there is no likelihood of such plants spontaneously springing up, they must be

imported, and for some time carefully tended. When they have once struck deep root, they may, perhaps, be left to take care of themselves; for we often find that exotic plants ultimately flourish luxuriantly in soil and climate very different from those of their native country.

But it is not merely the indispensable administrative reforms which I have in view. There are at the same time other problems to be solved, which are at least as important, and which likewise require, for their successful solution, very energetic foreign pressure and co-operation. About these I must say a few words.

In the days of our great-grandfathers it was generally assumed by professional and amateur philosophers that political freedom, especially when embodied in republican institutions, necessarily insured for a people all conceivable blessings, of a temporal as well as of a spiritual kind. This fallacy arose, partly at least, from a superficial comparison of the impoverished condition of the French peasantry under the oppression and extortion of the *ancien régime* with the material prosperity of the rural classes in America—a prosperity which was in reality produced chiefly by the possession of unbounded tracts of virgin land, and by the exceptionally enterprising spirit of the colonists, but which was commonly attributed to the miraculous influence of a republican form of government. Since that period it has been found by experience that men enjoying very extensive political freedom may suffer from

hunger, and occasionally even die of starvation; whilst, on the other hand, the masses may have plenty to eat and be in all respects tolerably prosperous, in the material sense of the term, under a vigorous, enlightened despotism. The fallacy, therefore, is no longer regarded as an unquestionable, immutable truth, and many advanced thinkers now believe that the material salvation of the masses is to be sought elsewhere—witness the rapid growth of socialism, which is a reaction against the tendency to regard political freedom as a panacea, and especially the growth of so-called State-socialism, which is radically opposed to liberty, as that term was previously understood. The truth is, that political liberty, though generally conducive to national prosperity, is only one of several factors in the complicated problem of insuring the well-being of a nation. There are always certain great, immutable economic laws which have to be attended to under penalty of the most terrible consequences, and a moment may come in the national life when the economic problems, clamouring for solution, may be solved by a vigorous, enlightened despotism, or even by a foreign conqueror, far more successfully than by any kind of native popular self-government. Now Egypt is, as it seems to me, in such a position at this moment. She is, I believe, on the verge of a most serious economic crisis, and I cannot imagine any form of Egyptian self-government capable of averting it. This is a point which deserves most serious attention, because, if my views on the subject

are correct, the recent disturbances were merely the premonitory, superficial symptoms of a most dangerous, deep-rooted evil, and they will inevitably return some day with ten-fold virulence, like usurers claiming heavy interest as well as capital, unless curative measures be in the meantime adopted.

If I were a writer of the sensational school, I should here begin a new chapter and head it in large type with some such title as this : Inevitable Economic Crisis in Egypt ! The Boasted Fertility of the Egyptian Soil is Exhausted ! ! ! I should then go on to describe in the turgid, sensational style, the terrible form and savage, relentless expression of Hunger—the capital H indicating that it is personified—waiting patiently but watchfully for the moment when it may sweep down, like the Destroying Angel in the time of Moses, not only on the innocent first-born, but on all men, women, and children indiscriminately, throughout the whole land of Egypt. Of course I have no intention of thus trifling with the reader and unnecessarily harrowing his benevolent feelings, but I should like to startle him a little, so as to rouse him out of the somnolent state to which he has naturally been brought by some of the preceding pages, for the question is really very important. Speaking in all seriousness, Egypt is at present threatened with a very terrible economic crisis, and if we do not take the necessary means to avert it—means far more energetic than the mere "prudent development of popular institutions" —we shall be in some measure responsible for the famines and other consequences which it may produce.

Those who have taken the trouble to read attentively the foregoing chapters, must have already come to the conclusion that there is something rotten in the state of Egypt, and the same conclusion would certainly be drawn by any tourist of ordinary powers of observation who would at present travel in the Delta, the Fayoum, and the lower portion of the Nile Valley. In Cairo and Alexandria he would no longer hear, as he might have heard before Tel-el-Kebir, rhetorical tirades about the necessity of protecting Islam in general and Egypt in particular against the open covetousness and secret machinations of aggressive Christendom, but alike in towns and in villages, amidst the cotton fields of the Delta, as amidst the sugar plantations of Middle Egypt, he would meet with a much more significant symptom of coming troubles—plain, unvarnished, unrhetorical complaints that the native rural population is impoverished, that the soil is losing its fertility, that the difficulty of paying the taxes is every year increasing, that the fellaheen are sinking deeper and deeper into debt, and that a very large proportion of those who are still landowners must soon sell their land to satisfy the claims of the importunate foreign usurers to whom it is mortgaged.

Should our tourist happen to meet intelligent agents of land-mortgage companies, the disagreeable impression caused by the above complaints may be momentarily obliterated, for these gentlemen can explain to him, with great plausibility, that the impoverishment of the fellaheen, when viewed in the dry

light of political economy, is an encouraging symptom of economic progress, and that land-mortgage companies have been expressly created by Providence for the salvation of Egypt. I know this pleasant song of the land-mortgage Sirens, for I have had it often enough drummed into my sceptical ears, and justice compels me to say that these gentlemen have at least a more than average amount of perseverance. I have never been able, however, to agree with their conclusions, and I have no doubt that our intelligent tourist, when he has had time to sleep off the intoxicating effects of land-mortgaging eloquence, will concur in my opinion. No one is more ready than I am to accept the principle that the dormant natural resources of Egypt should be vivified by European capital, and that in this work of vivification such institutions as land-mortgage companies may play a very useful part. What I maintain is, that hitherto the great mass of European capital which has been poured into Egypt has not been invested productively —I mean, not productively for the country, though often productively enough for the lenders—and that the great mass of the money-lenders have never thought about improving agriculture, on which the prosperity of the country mainly depends, but have confined themselves to the lucrative operation which is known as "financial blood-sucking." This reminds me of an amusing discussion I once had with one of those interested apostles of Egyptian national regeneration by means of land-mortgage companies. When I had logically cornered him by explaining

the difference between financial blood-sucking and remunerative investment, he betook himself to the desperate expedient of declaring that the company which he had the honour to represent never indulged in the operation which I stigmatised, and that it devoted all its capital and energies to the beneficent work of reclaiming and improving land with a view to reselling it to native proprietors. In making this assertion he presumed a little too much on my supposed ignorance, for I could prove, from the prospectus and annual reports of his company, that its real object was simply to lend money at a high rate of interest, and that it had made a few experiments in reclaiming land, merely because it could not find the requisite number of needy persons to borrow its capital. An unforeseen accident of this kind would have sufficed to discomfit and silence most dialecticians, but my opponent was a man of no ordinary perseverance and resource, so he at once abandoned his outworks and betook himself to his citadel. "Let it be granted," he said, "that money-lending by foreigners accelerates the expropriation of the native landowners. The expropriation is only a momentary misfortune, or, rather, it is not a misfortune at all, for it is the first step towards a better state of things. When the natives are thoroughly ruined their land will be bought by foreigners. Now please refrain from sentimentalism, and look at the matter as a clear-headed political economist. The productiveness of the country will be immensely increased, and the condition of the natives greatly ameliorated by trans-

forming the fellaheen landowners into agricultural labourers on farms improved by European capital and managed by European intelligence." Here, at last, we have got to the *fond du sac* of land-mortgage benevolence. The native landowners, on receiving visits from the usurers, entertain angels unawares, for these benevolent gentlemen, by accelerating the ruin of their clients, are preparing for them in the distant future a position in which they will be regularly fed, and will lead altogether a much more regular life than at present. Precisely so. Just as the money-lending Jews of great cities benefit the extravagant youth by helping him on his way to the debtor's prison or the workhouse, where he will lead a most regular life and be in no danger of starvation. Happy fellaheen! How short-sighted they are not to recognise, under a repulsive exterior, the genuine kindness of their benefactors in disguise! We must, however, as practical politicians, take their culpable short-sightedness into account, and think a little of the intermediate space which separates us from the happy, distant future. If we do not take care, these generous benefactors of the fellaheen may not only accelerate the economic crisis, but also bring upon us prematurely another political crisis as serious as the one through which the country has just passed. Ignorant fellaheen cannot be expected to shape their conduct according to the abstract principles of European political economy, and submit quietly to becoming hewers of wood and drawers of water in the

service of foreign masters. Any Government which actively encouraged such a transformation, or passively allowed it to take place, would be universally execrated by the rural population, and would constantly expose itself to the dangers of native agitation and foreign intrigue.

In considering how I can best explain briefly this unsatisfactory condition of things, this rottenness in the state of Egypt, I feel myself confronted by a serious difficulty. I do not know what manner of person my reader is. If he be a man who habitually soars high in the intellectual empyrean, who loves grand general principles and hates wearisome details, I could dash off for him a satisfactory explanation in a single sentence. But if he happens to be, like myself, a man whose mental characteristics suggest the mole rather than the eagle—a man who can only attain to general principles by patiently burrowing through compact masses of hard fact, and complicated mazes of careful generalisation, then I must devote to the explanation at least several pages. What am I to do? Perhaps I had better take a hint from prudent, enterprising shopkeepers, who tempt the public by exhibiting wares suited to the tastes of different customers. I shall begin, then, by giving a one-sentence explanation, and afterwards offer a few details for the benefit of those who cannot easily digest such highly concentrated intellectual nourishment.

The one-sentence explanation is this: Egypt has been for some time, and is still being, deluged with

European commercial enterprise, European capital, European cupidity, European domination, in a word, with European civilisation, falsely so-called; and this spirit of material progress, or whatever else the aggressive influences may be termed, acting suddenly on Oriental stagnation and traditional routine, has thrown out of gear the old economic organisation of the country, and has produced a state of confusion and impoverishment, containing the germs of a life-and-death struggle between the stolid, stubborn native and the active, enterprising foreigner. Those who can digest, and are satisfied with, the condensed explanation contained in this rather unwieldy sentence had better skip the next few pages, for they contain nothing but developments of the above, intended for weaker brethren.

To explain the sentence fully, would be to write the history of the Egyptian people from the beginning of the present century. Some of the most salient points of that interesting story have been given in Chapters VIII. and IX., and here I may as well confess that in reproducing old Abdu's reminiscences and writing a commentary upon them my chief object was to prepare the reader for the present investigation. Instead of going over again the ground already traversed in company with the old blind beggar of Kafr-Suleiman, I shall now take two or three of the most conspicuous facts in the present unsatisfactory condition of the fellaheen and explain their origin.

The first and most startling fact is that the soil

shows unmistakable symptoms of exhaustion. Where-ever we may travel, from Alexandria to Assiout, we hear complaints on this subject. In the Delta the peasants declare that land which formerly gave five *kantars* of cotton now gives only two or three; and in Middle Egypt, where sugar-cane is the most remunerative product, similar complaints may be heard. Now, I do not mean to say that the decrease of productivity is really as great as is commonly asserted. I am quite aware that the Egyptian fellah, like the farmers in countries with which we are better acquainted, is apt to exaggerate his misfortunes and to take a gloomier view of his prospects for the future than is warranted by facts. I know, further, that the soil of Egypt has not, as some pessimists maintain, already lost fifty per cent. or even twenty-five per cent. of its old fertility; for the exportation statistics show that the production of cotton and cereals has as yet only very little, if at all, decreased, and the recent extension of cultivated area has not been sufficient to counterbalance anything like a diminution of fifty or even twenty-five per cent. in the productivity of the soil. If, therefore, the assertion that the fertility is decreasing were made only by a few individuals, it might be summarily dismissed as a mistake or a crotchet, but when we find it supported by the unanimous testimony of all those who ought to know best, we must admit that, though it may sometimes be put forward in an exaggerated form, it cannot be entirely without foundation. And we shall have less difficulty in making this admission

when we know that a serious impoverishment of the soil is exactly what would be expected by any scientific agriculturist well acquainted with the recent economic history of the country.

But how is it possible to admit such conclusions about a country which has for thousands of years enjoyed a well-deserved reputation for extraordinary fertility? Has the Nile ceased to flow or changed its course? Has the sun suddenly hidden its face or become niggardly in dispensing its life-giving rays? Has some awful tornado swept across the desert and buried the soft green fields in hard yellow sand? Certainly not. No great natural cataclysm has taken place. How then is it possible that a country which, though employing only the most primitive modes of agriculture, preserved its fertility for thousands of years, should have suddenly lost it at a time when great agricultural improvements have been successfully introduced?

If the reader will kindly refer to pp. 240-51 he will find the materials for preparing an answer to this question. It was precisely because only primitive methods of agriculture were employed that the soil so long showed no signs of exhaustion. In the Pharaonic system of agriculture, which remained in use till the beginning of the present century, and which still exists almost undisturbed in the Upper Nile Valley above Assiout, the crops were raised not in the soil of Egypt but in the alluvium of Central Africa, brought down annually by the inundation. If a small portion of Egyptian soil was used, it was not robbed of its

fertility, because the cultivators could not, with the inundation system, raise exhausting crops, such as cotton, sugar, and maize. In the new system of perennial irrigation, introduced by Mehemet Ali and greatly extended by Ismail, all this has been changed. Exhaustive products, unknown to the ancient and mediæval Egyptians, are raised in the genuine soil of Egypt, and they are irrigated with water which, for reasons already explained, contains only an insignificant amount of fertilising mud. The peasant, who knows nothing about agricultural chemistry, is surprised to find that after a few years the produce decreases in amount and deteriorates in quality, but he is told that the evil may be counteracted by scattering on his fields the fine dust taken from the *koms* or mounds which represent the sites of ancient cities. This venerable dust—containing only a small quantity of the phosphates which the cotton and sugar-cane require, and a large quantity of ammonia and other ingredients which act merely as a momentary stimulant—seems for a time to restore the ancient fertility, but the final result is precisely what might be expected from the supplying of stimulants without giving at the same time a good quantity of nutritious food. An outburst of ephemeral energy is produced. and is followed by a reaction which leaves the patient weaker than he was before. Thus we find in the improved system of agriculture, introduced for the purpose of supplying the European markets with cotton and sugar, one of those disturbing forces which have dislocated the old economic organisation

of the country. The great majority of the fellaheen now absolutely require to have every year a large crop of cotton or sugar, and the fertility which provided this crop has begun to disappear.

Another instance of dislocation is shown by the new irrigation system. The Egyptian Department of Public Works amply sufficed for all the modest requirements of the old system of annual inundation but it has not kept pace with the improvements in agriculture introduced by Mehemet Ali and his successors. The attempt to work the new and more complicated system of perennial irrigation has never been very successful, and now seems to be on the point of completely breaking down.

A third illustration may be found in taxation. Formerly the peasant gave a certain proportion of his crops to the tax-gatherer, worked for a certain number of days on the embankments, canals, and other public works, and thereby acquitted all his obligations to the Government. Now he has to pay to the tax-gatherer in money a larger sum than he can generally obtain from the sale of his crops. In recent years—since the deposition of Ismail—his burden has been somewhat lightened, but it must not be supposed, as is often asserted, that he can now bear it easily because the arrears of land revenue are not great. A considerable part of the land revenue has been paid, not by the annual crops, but by the advances of the village usurers, who are now clamouring for payment.

Why, then, should the fellaheen not return to

their old simple mode of life, abandon the cultivation of cotton and sugar-cane, raise their *dura*, beans, and other simple products in the Nile mud, brought down now, as before, from Central Africa, pay their taxes in kind and labour, and sever the burdensome connection with Europe and European civilisation? Unfortunately, in the life of a nation there is no possibility of going back to some point in the distant past, and to this general rule Egypt presents no exception. In the course of making those changes which have dislocated her old economic organisation, she has contracted an enormous national debt, like her more civilised European cousins, and even with her new and more productive system of agriculture she has great difficulty in paying regularly the half-yearly interest. If she returned to the old primitive system, she could not pay a tithe of the sum required. Besides this, she has, whilst contracting her national debt, become so permeated with European interests, commercial and political, that even if she contrived, by some inconceivable miracle, to pay off her debt, she could not possibly extricate herself from the close embrace of the dear cousins aforementioned. There may have been, perhaps, some imaginative members of the defunct National Party who indulged in such childish dreams, but assuredly the idea never entered the head of any practical statesman. Perhaps some ingenious analytical chemist may discover a means of separating methyl and alcohol after they have been combined, but we may pretty confidently

predict that no political chemist will ever invent a means of eliminating European influences from Egyptian affairs. The struggle between the active, enterprising foreigners and the stolid, stubborn natives has been going on too long to be terminated by the summary expulsion of the aggressors. All that can be done now is to insure that the natives have something like fair play, and to assist them at certain points where they are much weaker than their antagonists, and this can be done much more effectually by the British Government than by any native rulers or national assemblies. We cannot, certainly, by Act of Parliament increase the fertility of the Egyptian soil, or diminish the Egyptian national debt, or liberate the fellaheen from their obligations to the usurers, but we may do a very great deal in an indirect way, as I hope to show in the sequel, towards improving the economic position of the Egyptian rural population. If we fail in this, then we must confess that we have failed in our mission, for no political or administrative reforms can insure national welfare so long as the economic condition of the great mass of the people is lamentably unsatisfactory, as is the case in Egypt. This is a matter in which I feel a very deep interest, and about which, consequently, I fear to be unnecessarily tedious. I leave it, therefore, for the present, and proceed to sum up briefly the main points which I have advanced, so as to obtain something like a definition of the great problem to be solved. If I have mastered the problem thoroughly the main factors of which it is composed are :—

1. To create a military and police force of such a kind as to insure public tranquillity.
2. To introduce certain administrative and judicial reforms which are urgently required.
3. To ameliorate the economic position of the rural population.
4. To endow the Egyptian people with certain political institutions, not because there is any immediate pressing necessity for them, but in order to provide for future wants, and at the same time redeem one of the pledges given by our Government.

We have now to inquire how far these various factors of the problem have been already solved, and what still remains to be done.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM.

Diplomatic and military success followed by a period of indecision and inaction—Lord Dufferin sent to Cairo as Special Envoy—State of the question at the time of his arrival—The political prisoners—Native scheme of reorganisation rejected by Lord Dufferin—Main lines of his own scheme—His General Report—Army reorganisation—The raw material—Traditional repugnance of the fellaheen to serve in the army—Sir Evelyn Wood's scheme—The new constabulary and police—Judicial reforms—Function of the new courts in the work of administrative reform—The economic questions clamouring for solution—The indebtedness of the fellaheen—The irrigation system—Reallotment of the land revenue—Diminution in the fertility of the soil—The national debt—Advisability of modifying the elastic sinking fund—The political institutions.

The Egyptian diplomatic and military campaigns were carried through with a promptitude and success which were certainly not expected by many people who considered themselves more than respectable authorities in Egyptian affairs. For once in English diplomatic and military history a thing was done resolutely, energetically, and well; and as is generally the case in human affairs when resolution and energy are displayed, the element of good luck was not wanting. Before the end of September, thanks chiefly to Lord Dufferin, Sir Beauchamp Seymour, and Sir Garnet

Wolseley, we found ourselves in complete possession of Egypt, without being trammelled with the co-operation of Turkish or other foreign troops, or with European diplomatic intervention. Thus the field was cleared for the display of our reorganising activity.

Then came a momentary pause, in which it became only too evident that the official conceptions of the situation in Egypt were very far from being accurate, and that any rough plans of organisation which the British Government may have prepared beforehand, were not applicable to the circumstances of the case. Our Government, like our friend Osman when he bought a pampered, capricious Circassian slave, had evidently got a white elephant, and the keepers of our political menagerie did not know what to do with it. Sir Edward Malet enjoyed the confidence of his official superiors, but he was suffering from the effects of prolonged anxiety and over-work, and there was a pretty general apprehension in the public mind that he was in danger of being carried away by unknown currents beyond his depth. Some disrespectful people went so far as to insinuate publicly that the British Government itself was being carried away by these mysterious currents, and that we were about to follow up our diplomatic and military successes by a lamentable display of political incompetency. In these circumstances it was generally felt, both in official circles and in the unofficial world, that in order to retrieve our position and make ourselves thoroughly masters of the situation it was necessary to send to Cairo

some new man, with a keen, fresh eye and a strong, muscular arm. In a fortunate moment Lord Granville bethought himself of our ambassador in Constantinople. He had recently had many occasions to appreciate Lord Dufferin's sound judgment, calm energy, and exquisite tact; and he rightly judged that a man who, in addition to these personal qualifications, had the external advantages of being a British Peer, an English Ambassador, and a Knight of any number of Most Honourable Orders of Chivalry, would have incomparably more weight in Cairo than an ordinary consul-general and diplomatic agent. Lord Dufferin, therefore, was intrusted with a special mission, to which no precise official name was attached, and on the 2nd of November, 1882, he started in H.M.S. *Antelope* from the Golden Horn for Alexandria. Though his Excellency was far from being popular in Yildiz Kiosk, the Sultan sincerely regretted his departure, not from any sentiment of deep personal affection, but rather from a vague fear that the diplomatist who had checkmated him in the deep-laid, complicated Egyptian intrigues, might be even more dangerous on the banks of the Nile than on the shores of the Bosphorus. As the *Antelope*, on that bright autumn afternoon, steamed slowly round the Seraglio Point and out into the calm, deep-blue Sea of Marmora, she seemed to one, at least, who watched her attentively from the carefully-guarded palace of Yildiz Kiosk to be carrying away with her not merely his Excellency the British ambassador, Lady Dufferin, and a couple of

secretaries, but also that much-prized nominal sovereignty over Egypt which the Sultans had so long possessed, and which Abdul Hamid had dreamed of transforming into genuine administrative authority. To that attentive observer on the heights of Yildiz it seemed only too probable that Lord Dufferin had secretly exchanged his title of ambassador for the higher title of viceroy, and that one more limb was about to be amputated from the poor mutilated Ottoman Empire. His Excellency had, indeed, in the course of his short audience, uttered some kind, soothing words, and had even assured his Majesty that he intended to return to Constantinople, but what value can be attached to the vague, polite phrases of a diplomatist on the shores of the Bosphorus?

When Lord Dufferin arrived in Cairo he found affairs in a very critical state, and if he received any instructions from home he must have felt that they did not tend to lighten the onerous task imposed upon him. Egypt was at that moment like a country-house which has had the misfortune to be the key of the position in a great battle, and which has consequently been so riddled with shot and shell that the very foundations have been shaken, and every part of the ruins are in danger of crumbling to pieces. The British Government, which had reluctantly taken a very prominent part in the work of destruction, had undertaken to reconstruct the building to the entire satisfaction of the proprietors and of the world in general; but when it undertook this engagement, it had no idea of how complete the work of destruction

had been, and how difficult it would be to find the men and materials for creating anew something like the *status quo ante.* A very able architect had been found, and his great reputation necessarily secured for him a certain liberty of action, but he was subjected to many restrictions, which must have been very irksome to a man endowed by nature with a happy combination of strong, practical common sense and creative artistic power. He was not to pull down the shaky, dilapidated walls and replace them by a new structure, and in any changes which he might consider necessary he was to employ, as far as possible, the old materials and native workmen. In all his plans he was to avoid anything like expropriation, and was always to consider the interests and wishes, not only of the proprietor, but also of those who had vague hopes of one day inheriting or otherwise acquiring the property. The new house was to be more solidly built, more commodious, and much more in accordance with modern, liberal conceptions of political architecture than the old one, and it was to be completed, decorated, furnished, and tenanted in the short space of a few months. Even the space of a few months was not quite assured, for there was a small group of influential men in England who demanded that the contract should be at once cancelled, and the proprietor left to deal with his dilapidated ruin as he might think fit. As soon as these restrictions on the architect's liberty of action became known, the great majority of the spectators, native and foreign, unhesitatingly and unanimously

declared that the enterprise was doomed to failure; but the architect himself, conscious of his powers and heedless of popular clamour, set himself bravely to the task and succeeded beyond reasonable expectation. If he did not entirely convince and silence the unbelievers and self-constituted critics, many of whom had personal or patriotic motives for desiring failure, he at least so far turned the current of popular opinion that many of the persons most competent to judge were heard to say: "If Lord Dufferin could only remain here for a year or two all would be well, and if the British Government sends us a worthy successor and gives him the necessary support, there is little reason to fear." Lord Dufferin had, in fact, not only confidence in himself, but he displayed also the equally necessary talent of inspiring confidence in others. Every one who conversed with him—and no one who had the slightest claim to be listened to was ever refused an interview—came away with the conviction that behind that courteous manner and amiable smile there was a keen, many-sided, penetrating intellect, and a resolute, imperious will, and those who worked under his guidance soon learned by experience that underneath the velvet glove there was a hand of iron.

Before beginning the constructive work, it was necessary to dispose of the delicate question as to what should be done with the leaders of the insurrection, and this portion of the task turned out to be extremely difficult, in consequence of the state of bewildering entanglement into which the question

had been allowed to fall. The native Government wished to execute the rebel leaders with as few preliminary formalities as possible, but the problem was much too complicated to be thus summarily dealt with. The leaders had not been captured by the Egyptian authorities, but had surrendered to us, and we had handed them over to the Khedive. Now, though we have often no scruples about hanging our own rebels, we never deliver up political prisoners to a foreign Power unless they are accused of ordinary criminal offences, and then only on condition that they shall not be punished for political misdemeanours. It could be argued, therefore, that we could not ourselves punish Arabi and his accomplices, because they were in their relations to us not rebels but enemies, and that, as we had given them up, contrary to our usual custom, to their offended master, we ought to see that they had every kind of fair play. In deference to this generous current of public opinion and in compliance with a request made by Mr. Wilfred Blunt, Lord Granville informed the Egyptian Government that the prisoners must be allowed to employ English counsel in their defence as a guarantee against any possible want of impartiality in the Egyptian tribunals. The Egyptian Ministers, foreseeing the confusion that must inevitably be produced, and fearing the dangerous consequences to the Khedivial authority and prestige which would result from a miscarriage of what they considered justice, at first resisted, but were ultimately compelled to yield, and Mr. Broadley, with Mr. Mark Napier as junior,

arrived in Cairo as counsel for the prisoners. These two gentlemen very soon discovered that in consequence of certain extraordinary irregularities which had been committed during the insurrection, it would be extremely difficult for the prosecution to prove their clients technically guilty of rebellion, and still more difficult to prove, according to strict rules of evidence, that they had been accessories to the massacres and destruction of Alexandria. Further, with great professional dexterity, they obtained from the Egyptian Government formal permission to use a kind of procedure which would enable them to give to the affair all the importance and *éclat* of a great State trial, in which the Khedive, his Ministers, the Sultan's Envoys, and other important personages, might be called as witnesses and be subjected to a searching cross-examination. Such was the entangled state of the question when Lord Dufferin arrived in Cairo, and he wisely considered that the excitement and the postponing of serious work which such a *cause célèbre* would necessarily occasion were much to be deprecated, all the more as it was tolerably certain that the prosecution on the criminal charge of complicity with the rioters and assassins would ultimately break down; but on the other hand he did not wish to interfere dictatorially with the course of justice by insisting on the rapid condemnation or acquittal of the prisoners. In this difficult position he signally displayed all his accustomed prudence and tact. Without officially interfering with the proceedings, he contrived to

bring about, by his personal influence, a satisfactory compromise, according to which the criminal charges, which probably could not have been technically proved, were withdrawn by the prosecution, and the prisoners, without raising any awkward preliminary issues, pleaded guilty to the charge of rebellion, on the understanding that any capital sentences which might be pronounced by the judges would be commuted by the Khedive into sentences of exile.

As yet little or nothing had been done in the way of administrative and political reconstruction, but the ground was being carefully examined, the ruined walls tested, and the leading principles of construction decided upon. The general tentative conclusions drawn from the preliminary inspection were not at all in accordance with the views of the native statesmen. The anxiety which they had displayed to secure the summary execution of Arabi and his friends, was merely one manifestation of a general policy. With ordinary Oriental short-sightedness, and with a very natural spirit of retaliation, the re-established native Government and its partisans wished to avenge by wholesale severity the insults and indignities which they had suffered at the hands of the rebels, and to prevent any future revolutionary disorders in the name of the fellaheen, by creating a *régime* of Turco-Circassian terrorism. This seemed to them, as some of them took the trouble to explain to me repeatedly at great length, the only possible way for the Khedive to recover his prestige, and for the administration to re-establish its authority.

"You do not understand," these men used to say to me, "the character of Oriental populations in general, and of the Egyptians in particular. An Oriental, and *a fortiori* an Egyptian, who has lived all his life under fear of the kurbash, has only one motive for fulfilling his duties to the Government, and that motive is fear. When he finds that a Government does not punish an open act of disobedience, he assumes that it is weak, and consequently need no longer be respected or obeyed. The assumption is proved by all his own experience, and by the experience of all preceding generations. How can you expect him to believe that a Government can be actuated by elevated motives which he never heard of before? And remember that, though he may be ignorant and stupid, he is sharp enough to detect where weakness or strength lies. When acute foreign diplomatists were still imagining that Arabi was too weak to endanger the power of the Khedive, simple ignorant fellahs had recognised in him the strong man who had far more right to obedience, or, in other words, far more power, than his nominal master. It is for this reason that prestige in the East often serves the purposes of severity, just as severity serves the purposes of justice, intelligence, and all the other qualities which you Westerns falsely consider the essential characteristics of every form of government. The Khedive's prestige was pretty well destroyed by Arabi, and now you English are completing the work which Arabi so successfully began. Prestige being gone, the Government must employ severity, and it

must continue to employ it until the prestige has been recreated. No doubt you English are animated with the very best intentions, but, if you were half as practical as you are generally believed to be, you would perceive that you are defeating your own ends. With your humanitarian views you wish to abolish all unnecessary severity, but by preventing the Khedive from recovering his prestige, you prevent the creation of the only possible substitute for severity. Consult those who have Oriental blood in their veins, and who have known the country from their infancy, and they will unanimously tell you that the first reform to be introduced is the hanging of a few rebels in every town of Egypt. When you have in that way constituted the essence of Government, you may amuse yourselves as much as you please with the invention of what you call 'institutions,' or any other ornamental appendages."

In accordance with the principles enounced in this choice specimen of Eastern political logic, and in harmony with the desire for retaliation already alluded to, the Government had decided to judge and condemn a large number of men more or less compromised in the recent troubles, and to create, in place of the disbanded native army and police, a prætorian guard of Albanian mercenaries and a police force recruited from various European nationalities. Already the prisons in the capital and the provinces were filled with men accused, or at least suspected, of complicity with the insurrection; and numerous enrolments had been made in Turkey, Austria, and Switzerland for a

foreign police, which would be in no danger of being contaminated by secret sympathy with native discontent.

All this was speedily brought to an end by Lord Dufferin. As a far-seeing statesman and a liberal-minded man, he strongly disapproved the policy, and by acting *suaviter in modo sed fortiter in re*, he induced the Khedive and the ministry to abandon it. His own policy was to found the new *régime* not on terrorism but on justice and good administration, and to employ foreigners, not to keep down the natives, but to perform special services for which no competent natives could be found. In accordance with this view, the persons accused of complicity with the insurrection were speedily released, the foreign enrolments were stopped, the disorderly foreign policemen who had actually arrived were sent back to their homes, and the organisation of a native army and a native constabulary were intrusted to Sir Evelyn Wood and to Baker Pasha.

Having thus terminated what might be called the liquidation of the insurrection, and taken the required preparatory measures for creating a force sufficient to insure public tranquillity, Lord Dufferin had time to study the situation in its multifarious details, and to prepare a general scheme of reorganisation, which should meet the local exigences and at the same time obtain the approval of his own Government and of English public opinion. His careful study of details confirmed his first impression that, apart from philosophical and humanitarian considerations, the

best practical policy lay not in creating a *régime* of terrorism supported by foreign policemen and mercenary troops, but in establishing a genuinely liberal native Government, enlightened and assisted by a small number of competent foreign officials. Even less penetrating and sagacious minds had come to perceive that underneath the military insubordination and personal ambition, which were the immediate causes of the late troubles, lay real grievances which would before long again clamour for redress, as well as some difficult economic problems which must, if neglected, sooner or later produce complications much more serious than those through which the country had just passed. To redress those grievances in time, and solve those problems before they could produce a serious crisis, was a work which could not safely be intrusted to an unenlightened, repressive despotism, or indeed to a native Government of any kind without foreign assistance.

The chief results at which Lord Dufferin arrived by a careful study of details were embodied in an elaborate General Report dated February 6, 1883, and since presented to Parliament in the form of a Blue-Book. In that remarkable document, which may be called a comprehensive picture of the present condition of Egypt, with useful hints, suggestions, and proposals as to how the present unsatisfactory state of things may be remedied, the writer not only explains how the Government is to be reorganised, but also describes the principal questions with which

the reorganised Government will have to deal. He thus prepared an extensive programme, the complete execution of which will require the unremitting labour of specialists for many years to come, and as his own sojourn was necessarily limited to a few months, he wisely confined himself to constructing the most essential parts of the machinery by which the programme might be successfully carried out. Having already taken measures for the creation of a military and police force sufficient to insure public tranquillity, he now turned his attention specially to the judicial administration and the political institutions. A project of judicial reform was discovered in the archives of the Ministry of Justice, and was gradually modified, according to the actual requirements, by a commission which worked under the nominal presidency of the responsible Minister, but really under the guidance of Nubar Pasha, whose name is so intimately associated with the creation of the International Tribunals. The political institutions were at the same time elaborated under Lord Dufferin's personal direction, with a view to redeeming Lord Granville's pledge about a prudent development of popular liberties.

The inquiry which we have undertaken thus naturally falls into two sections. First we have to inquire what has been actually done in the way of reorganisation, and, secondly, we have to examine the political machinery invented for completing the programme.

The first thing actually done in the way of

reorganisation was the creation of a military and a police force to insure public tranquillity. Let us see how this part of the programme has been executed.

In the military reorganisation the fundamental principles are thus explained by Lord Dufferin: "Isolated on three sides by the desert, the military forces of Egypt need not be numerous. Many persons have argued that she requires no army at all; but contingencies might arise which would render it advisable that she should have at her disposal a certain number of well-disciplined battalions. Her villages have more than once been the birthplace of wild fanatics and impostors, who have passed themselves off upon the simple population as endowed with a supernatural mission. Claims of this kind are only too readily admitted, and create an amount of religious excitement, which, unless quickly checked by the arrest of the pretender and the dispersion of his followers, has more than once occasioned serious disturbances. On the other hand, the Bedouin tribes occasionally give trouble, and might be tempted to make an inroad upon the richer Egyptian towns—perhaps on the capital itself—if they imagined they would find them destitute of troops. But the Egyptian army ought to be essentially a latent force, and the fact of its being called upon to act should be regarded as a proof that the adminstration had failed in adequately providing against emergencies which ought to have been foreseen and forestalled. A force of 6,000 men will be sufficient for the purposes indicated. *The composition of this body should be native*

Egyptian. The great temptation of a ruler in the position of the Khedive, especially after recent events, will be to surround himself with mercenary troops. This has been in all ages the resource of Oriental dynasties. But such a precaution ought, *ex hypothesi*, to be unnecessary. Nor should the army, though sufficiently trustworthy for all legitimate purposes of government, be so constituted as to become the blind and mechanical instrument of despotism. Its composition should be such as to convey a wholesome consciousness to those in authority that it is not well adapted to subserve purposes of arbitrary oppression."

As it is thus clearly decided that the new army shall be recruited from the native population, let us see what kind of material the native population is likely to supply.

There exists great diversity of opinion about the national character of the fellaheen, but on one point all authorities are agreed—that the fellah is one of the most unwarlike types of mankind and heartily detests military service in all its forms. Any one who travels in Egypt during the time of the conscription must be painfully impressed with this fact. When stopping in a quiet village, which he naturally supposes to be the abode of perpetual undisturbed tranquillity, he may be suddenly awakened at night by a violent altercation outside, which begins by gruff, bass male voices, and culminates in shrill, hysterical falsetto tones, resembling the unmusical plaintive howlings of the professional wailers at a

native funeral. The first time he is so disturbed, he probably assumes that it is a case of burglary or manslaughter, and rushes out with the laudable intention of supporting vigorously the party of law and order, but he finds to his disappointment that it is nothing more serious than the capturing of a recruit for the army; and though it may be quite true, as the women tumultuously declare, that the village-sheikh, in making the choice of the victim, has been influenced by considerations of bakshish, the arguments adduced *pro* and *con* involve such contradictory statements of fact, and such complicated considerations of law and morals, that he will probably as a stranger not feel justified in interfering with the action of the legally constituted authorities. In the principal towns .where the recruits are collected, similar scenes take place in broad daylight on a larger scale. The conscripts are brought into the court of the Mudirieh or some other open space under an escort of kawasses armed with sticks and switches, in order to be examined by the medical officer and the military authorities. Among them are a good many respectable representatives of the halt, the maimed, and the blind, and these, after being carefully eliminated from the others, are allowed to return to their homes amidst the jubilation of their friends and relatives. Of the remainder a few may perhaps conduct themselves with the apathetic dignified air of the fatalistic Mussulman, but the great majority endeavour to prove by wordy arguments, solemn asseverations, expressive gestures, and

revolting contortions, that they are totally unfit for military service, or that they have some legal or illegal right to claim exemption; and when arguments fail, importunate entreaties, heart-rending appeals, or indignant protests are employed. In vain the kawasses, with the aid of their sticks and switches, endeavour to keep order and impose silence; the more obstinate persistently break from the ranks and have to be kept in their places by force, till at last a rough assortment has been made. Those who have no glaring corporal defect, and who have not succeeded in privately conciliating the medical officer or the military authorities, are then marched off to prison—to be kept there until the time comes for transporting them by rail or steamer to Cairo. When the moment for their departure arrives, the most extraordinary melodramatic scenes may be witnessed. Here it is not the conscripts, who have meanwhile become resigned to the will of Fate, but the women that play the chief part. The conscripts have each an iron collar round his neck, and by means of a long chain which passes through a ring in the collar, they are bound together in groups of ten or a dozen. Around them stand their female relations weeping and wailing. As the moment of separation approaches the excitement of the women increases, and it reaches a terrific climax when the train or steamer begins to move off. The wives, mothers, and sisters sit down on the ground, throw dust upon their heads, ejaculate, shriek, and gesticulate like maniacs, whilst the most excitable among them, if not restrained by force,

literally rend their garments, or try to rush after their departing relatives. A stranger ignorant of the cause of all this excitement and despair might naturally suppose that the men in chains had been condemned to death, and were being taken to Cairo to be executed.

This repugnance to serve in the army is not a thing of yesterday. When Mehemet Ali first imposed the conscription for the purpose of creating a large force, less expensive and less turbulent than the Albanian bands which had enabled him to exterminate the Mamelukes, he encountered in the fellaheen's dislike to military service the chief obstacle to the realisation of his plans. With the assistance of Colonel Sèves, better known as Solyman Pasha, and a considerable number of Turks and Circassians, he succeeded in forming and drilling several regiments, but as soon as these native troops were required for active service they began to desert and mutiny. One regiment, when ordered to Arabia to act against the Wahabees, openly revolted, killed its officers, and had to be decimated and disbanded, the survivors being incorporated in other battalions. When the expedition had reached the Hedjaz, and was in face of the enemy, a second regiment mutinied, and after having been brought to reason by Turkish bashi-bozouks, was sent back to Cairo. Meanwhile many of the young fellaheen at home, with a view to escaping the conscription, cut off their forefinger, or put out their right eye, until they found that the terrible Pasha, in order to checkmate such expedients, had formed

companies of one-eyed recruits, and made those who had mutilated their right hand pull the trigger with the fingers that remained. Gradually the fellahs submitted to their hard fate, and showed in the Hedjaz, the Morea, the Soudan, Syria, and Asia Minor, that they could, when properly handled, fight tolerably well, and even gain victories; but it must be remembered that in these victorious campaigns, they were led by Turkish and Circassian officers, and behind them were placed bashi-bozouks and artillerymen, with orders to shoot down ruthlessly any who attempted to run away. The first to employ men of fellah extraction as officers was Said Pasha, who made the army a plaything, and imagined that his picked troops by being pampered had become so attached to the service that they would not leave it if they had the choice. This delusion of his was destroyed in a way at once characteristic and comical. One day when encamped on the borders of the desert near Lake Mareotis, he related to some friends how devoted his troops were, and noticing an expression of incredulity on the face of one of his hearers, he proposed to supply an undeniable proof of what he had said, by giving the troops an opportunity of disbanding if they chose. Immediately a general order was issued informing the soldiers that his Highness had decided to allow all who were desirous of leaving the service to return at once to their homes. The Khedive, accompanied by his friends and armed with a field-glass, took his stand on a position overlooking the camp and awaited confidently the result of the experiment. He had

not long to wait. As soon as the soldiers heard the welcome announcement, they speedily got rid of their arms, boots, belts, and everything that could impede their movements, and started joyfully for their native villages, so that, if energetic measures had not been immediately taken to stop the stampede and bring back the fugitives, his Highness would have found himself alone with his officers and staff. This incident cured Said Pasha of his illusions, and doubtless had an influence in restraining him from promoting fellahs above the rank of captain. Under his successor Ismail some of the fellah captains were promoted to the rank of colonel, but the service did not become more popular among the lower classes. Whether the army became more efficient it is difficult to say, because during Ismail's reign it had no serious work to do in the field. In the Cretan insurrection it was paralysed by the political intrigues of the Viceroy, who opened secret communications with the insurgent leaders in the hope of obtaining the island for himself; and in the Russo-Turkish war the Sultan was too much afraid of his ambitious vassal to allow the Egyptian troops to take a prominent part in the operations. We may pretty safely assume, however, that under Ismail and Tewfik the unwarlike character of the fellaheen remained unchanged; for, apart from the recruiting scenes which I have described, we know that Arabi's troops at Kafr-Dawar and elsewhere, at the moment of capitulation, threw down their arms and accoutrements and joyfully ran home, precisely as Said Pasha's troops had done

before them on the borders of the desert near Lake Mareotis.

Such is the rather unpromising raw material out of which Sir Evelyn Wood has undertaken to form an efficient army, and the task, as he understands it, is a very difficult one. It would be easy enough for him, with the means which he has at his disposal, to get together the required number of recruits and teach them a certain amount of mechanical drill, for the fellahs, being naturally docile, submit quietly to irresistible force and learn rapidly, within certain limits, whatever they are taught. But Sir Evelyn has higher aims than simply to form a well drilled body of men. He desires that the whole military organisation should be in harmony with the high ideal which Lord Dufferin has endeavoured to implant in Egypt, and consequently he has decided that the old abuses of the conscription shall be removed ; that the fellah's deep-rooted dislike to military service shall be, if not eradicated, at least weakened ; that in the relations between superiors and subordinates strict discipline shall be combined with strict justice and humane treatment ; and that the chief incentives to efficiency shall be not the fear of punishment, but higher motives, such as *esprit de corps*, prospect of promotion and laudable emulation between individuals, companies, battalions, and brigades.

In order to carry out this programme, it is necessary, of course, to begin by making the service less unpopular. If a man considers being drawn for the conscription as something analogous to being

condemned to transportation or penal servitude for life, and has to be brought to head-quarters in chains like a dangerous criminal, he will probably desert on the first favourable opportunity. An English General can hardly employ the traditional method of preventing desertion by putting into foul, loathsome, prisons the wife and family of the defaulter, and if he invents some less objectionable means of keeping the men with the colours, the would-be deserters are not likely to become good soldiers. Evidently, therefore, the first problem to be studied is why the fellah has hitherto shown such a horror of service in the army, and this problem requires no lengthy or difficult investigation. Among all unwarlike populations a forced conscription is naturally unpopular, and among the Egyptian peasantry there have been special reasons for this unpopularity. In their minds enrolment in the army has hitherto meant life-long absence from home and family, the probability of exile to some distant and unhealthy country such as the Soudan, and the certainty of many long years of harsh, brutal treatment. This idea was only too often confirmed by the unquestionable testimony of the victims. The fellah who had left his native village at the age of eighteen, a strong, handsome youth, regarded by his parents as the future mainstay of the family and by the marriage-makers as a very eligible husband, returned, after an absence of thirty-five or forty years, a broken-down, wrinkled, useless old man. During all those years he had never once been heard of, so that his friends and acquaintances supposed him to

be dead, and it would have been well if their supposition had turned out to be true, for he has neither money, nor land, nor a sufficient pension, and he is too infirm to work for his living, so that he has become, from no fault of his own, a burden to poor people who are only a few degrees less needy than himself. He has not even the satisfaction of the old warriors who fight their battles o'er again for the entertainment of their unwarlike acquaintances, and who find in the respect and admiration of their hearers some compensation for the hardships and suffering which they have endured. Neither in his own breast nor in those of his hearers is there any martial ardour, and his reminiscences of military life form merely a monotonous tale of harsh treatment and hard work without pay. With one or more such representatives of the old military system in every village, it is not surprising that the fellaheen should detest military service, and that the men who are ready to pay a large portion of their yearly earnings to escape a *corvée* of sixty days on the necessary work of cleaning the canals, should use all the means in their power to escape an uninterrupted *corvée* of thirty or forty years from which they cannot derive any conceivable advantage.

Sir Evelyn Wood has determined to change all this by introducing a radically different system. The long service of indefinite duration is replaced by a term of four years with the colours, and about the same length of time in the reserve; and this term may be shortened by exceptional aptitude and zeal.

for soldiers may at once pass into the reserve as soon as they have thoroughly learned their work. Meanwhile they will every year get a leave of absence of from fourteen to thirty days according to the distance of their native village from the town where they are quartered, and an arrangement has been made with the railway administration by which such men may travel at reduced rates. When absent from home they will have facilities for communicating with their relatives. Another reform, very important in the eyes of the money-loving fellaheen, is that during service with the colours, the men receive their pay regularly on the last day of the month, under the personal supervision of English officers, one piastre ($2\frac{1}{2}d.$ English) a day for the privates, and a proportionately larger sum for the higher ranks; and stringent precautions are taken to insure that the quantity and quality of the rations are such as the regulations prescribe. As two piastres without food is considered a fair day's wage for an agricultural labourer, the soldier can save more, whilst he is better fed, clothed, and housed, than the fellah who remains at home. At the same time he is less exposed in barracks, than in his native village, to arbitrary, brutal treatment on the part of those placed over him, for it will be a long time before the tyranny and cruelty of the rural authorities can be checked, whereas in the army he lives under a carefully regulated system of discipline almost identical with that of the British army. Of course all these advantages will not be immediately appreciated at

their proper value. The fellah prefers his little mud-hovel to the most commodious barracks, his dirty blue shirt and skull-cap to the cleanest and best made uniform, the freedom and the lawlessness (though he may often be the victim of it) of his native village to the regularity and restraints of military life, however carefully these may be regulated by Western ideas of justice. I could not, therefore, conscientiously recommend Sir Evelyn Wood to repeat Said Pasha's experiment, but I think he may safely count on his reforms diminishing the popular horror of the conscription which has hitherto existed. Really the fellah is a human being after all, with at least some small rudimentary elements of human nature in him, and the fact that this has been for once recognised by the military authorities is a thing which deserves to be pointed out to future historians of Egyptian progress.

With regard to the officers, likewise, thorough reforms have been introduced. The principle, which I have advocated in the foregoing chapter, of continuing to admit to the higher grades men of Turco-Circassian and of fellah extraction, has been adopted, but the whole system of promotion has been profoundly modified. In the old army, promotion and appointments were determined chiefly by favouritism and occult palace influences, and the army was too often regarded as a sort of asylum for old or incapable military men who had no other means of livelihood. In spite of efforts in high quarters to continue this pernicious Oriental system, the English Sirdar insists

that military efficiency shall be the sole criterion for advancement, and that those officers who do not show themselves deserving of promotion shall be put on half pay, quite irrespective of all private considerations about the number of their family and the amount of their private means. The rigorous application of these principles will, doubtless, produce a good deal of discontent among disappointed officers and their patrons, but it is absolutely indispensable for obtaining a really efficient army. In the military budget little or no margin has been left for inevitable unforeseen expenditure, and the sum total is so small that every piastre must be expended in the most remunerative way possible.

It has been fully recognised that for some time the English commander will require some English officers to assist him, and the number of these has been fixed at twenty-seven. The presence of this foreign element must not however interfere unnecessarily with the promotion of natives, and accordingly the infantry has been divided into two brigades, one of which is officered in all grades by native Egyptians and commanded by an Egyptian brigadier-general. In the other brigade the first and second in command of each battalion will be Englishmen. The same principle has been applied to the artillery, which is commanded by an English colonel—the first two batteries, of six guns each, having two English officers, while the remaining ten batteries, of four guns each, are officered exclusively by Egyptians. The cavalry regiment, 500 strong, will

have Englishmen as first and second in command and an English subaltern attached.

How far this curious experiment will ultimately succeed, it is impossible to say. Of course the men of the old school, and all who have any profound respect for tradition and routine, confidently predict failure. Believing that the fellah is quite insensible to any finer influence than the clenched fist and the kurbash, they are convinced that the substitution of regularly administered, impartial justice for the dictatorial arbitrary brutality towards inferiors, which was formerly considered an essential part of military organisation, will necessarily undermine discipline and produce chaotic insubordination. The Egyptian soldiers, they say, cannot respect an officer who has not the right to punish them as he pleases, and who may be himself punished if he applies a little merited correction in rude patriarchal fashion on the spur of the moment ; for among uneducated Egyptians, as among all uneducated Orientals, there is no obedience without respect, no respect without fear, and no fear without uncontrolled authority. For my own part I am not disposed to accept unreservedly this argument, and I know that the practical conclusion drawn from it is not admitted by the English officers who have daily and hourly opportunities of testing it. They find, on the contrary, that their men are obedient, docile, and anxious to learn their duties, and that it is rarely necessary to inflict punishment of any kind. The men still show a tendency to desert, but the proportion of deserters is not greater than in

some European armies generally considered as fairly efficient; and it may be expected that it will soon diminish, for there are already symptoms that the hereditary unpopularity of the service, which is the chief cause of desertion, is beginning to disappear. Some of the old soldiers, for example, who have been incorporated with the new army are ready to remain voluntarily beyond their term of service, and some fellahs have actually presented themselves for enrolment as volunteers—a fact which is, I believe, quite unprecedented in the history of the Egyptian army! I may add, too, that many of the native officers display considerable ability and a laudable spirit of emulation, so that the second brigade, which is officered exclusively by Egyptians, can bear comparison with the first brigade in which English officers have been incorporated. It would be hazardous, however, as yet to draw from these facts any general conclusions, or to regard them as anything more than favourable premonitory symptoms. As for Sir Evelyn Wood he persists in the system which he has adopted, and is confident that it will succeed if it only gets a fair trial. *Qui vivra verra.* Meanwhile a fair trial is being accorded to it, for both the Khedive and the Minister of War are giving it their cordial support, and the plan is being carried out, not only in theory but in reality, under the watchful eye of the English Sirdar with the hearty cooperation of his English subordinates.

If Sir Evelyn Wood has a difficult task in the creation of an efficient army, Baker Pasha has a still

more difficult task in the creation of "an intelligent, active, and ubiquitous provincial constabulary." The fellah has less repugnance to serve as a policeman than as a soldier, because in the former capacity he is not liable to be sent to the Soudan, while he is less under discipline, and he has occasional opportunities of taking bakshish; but precisely for the two reasons last mentioned it is peculiarly difficult to organise and control the force in such a way as to make it efficient and satisfactory according to European standards. The old policeman was not at all a terror to evil-doers, but a burden and a scourge for the respectable inhabitants. To prevent the old abuses, as well as to create an efficient protection against predatory Bedouins, it is necessary to give the force a semi-military character, and to maintain strict discipline, but here there is a danger that, in attempting to avoid Scylla we fall into Charybdis, for "both officers and men," as Lord Dufferin has pointed out, "will be apt to mistake their proper functions, and to assume the careless and peremptory deportment of the soldier rather than the considerate and forbearing demeanour of the simple guardian of the peace." Perhaps the fact that they are placed under the Minister of Interior, and not under his colleague of the War Office, may have some slight influence in guarding against the danger. It is rather, however, to a careful system of inspection, and to the constabulary school which is to be established in Cairo, that we must look for the ultimate improvement in the bearing of the police

towards the peaceable, well-disposed villagers. The number of the force is fixed at 5,650, and the foreign element consists of an inspector-general and deputy, assisted by as many inspectors and sub-inspectors as may be found necessary. In the larger towns it is reinforced by an urban police, in which there is a considerable European element. The number of the constabulary and police forces combined is calculated as 7,390 men.[1]

However careful and efficient the inspection and control of the constabulary and police may be, the force cannot work satisfactorily until it has obtained its essential complement—a good judicial system. Let us see, then, what has been done in this direction.

Lord Dufferin has declared in his Report that there is at present no real justice in Egypt, and has pointed out the pressing necessity of immediately endowing the country with a judicial organisation, which will be at once pure, simple, and efficient. On this point there can be no diversity of opinion, but it is not so easy to decide how the end in view can be best attained.

The first difficulty which we have to examine is what is commonly called "the sacred, unbending character of the Mussulman law." People who have a superficial knowledge of Islam speak much of this supposed inelasticity of the Sheriat, and often represent it as an insurmountable obstacle to judicial

[1] Those who wish to study in detail the organisation of the new army and constabulary will find the requisite materials in Lord Dufferin's General Report.

reform and social progress. In reality the obstacle is not nearly so serious as is commonly supposed. In Islam, as in all other religions, we find that "avec le ciel il y a des accommodements." Though the fundamental principles of Mussulman law are derived from the Koran and from the sacred traditions, Mussulman jurisprudence is not a set of hard and fast rules rigidly crystallised by divine sanction, but rather an ingenious logical structure, built up slowly and laboriously by learned doctors, who made no pretensions to infallibility or divine inspiration, and who habitually showed remarkable tolerance towards those who held opinions different from their own. A tangible proof of this is found in the fact that the four greatest of these doctors and the four schools which they respectively founded, are all recognised as equally Orthodox. And it is not merely in the matters of detail which separate these four schools, that the Mussulman law is found on closer inspection to be tolerably elastic; it has undergone, and is still undergoing, important modifications in its more essential characteristics. In spite of its professedly divine origin it is becoming gradually secularised very much in the same way as legislation in Christendom, with this difference, that among the Christian nations the process of secularisation is much further advanced. The difference is one of degree rather than of kind. Enlightened Mussulmans may still declare theoretically that jurisprudence cannot be separated from religion, but practically they no longer place on the

same level, as the Sheriat does, such different things as the proper mode of performing ablutions and the precautions to be observed in a contract of sale. Hence in Mussulman countries more or less exposed to strong foreign influence, it has been found possible to restrict the jurisdiction of the Kadi to matters in which religious interests are involved, and to institute regular civil and criminal tribunals for the great mass of legal affairs ; and these regular tribunals employ a code of law much more in harmony with modern ideas and much better adapted to modern requirements than the old Sheriat. In Turkey for example we have the so-called *Nizamieh* courts, whose codes of law and procedure resemble closely the Code Napoléon ; and in Egypt we have tribunals of a similar kind, in which the judges are guided partly by old Mussulman legal conceptions, but much more by the principles of modern European jurisprudence, and by the arbitrary will of the Minister of Justice, who thinks more of practical convenience than of religious considerations. The supposed religious difficulty, therefore, is for Egypt not a serious obstacle to judicial reform. The Khedive might introduce at once by a decree almost the whole of the French codes of law and procedure without the slightest danger of calling forth a protest from the Ulemah. Still less, if possible, would be the danger of awakening religious fanaticism among the people, for the Sheriat tribunals, if they ever commanded the respect of the Egyptians, have long since forfeited it by the corruption and abuses in which for centuries they have indulged. In the

Egyptian popular tales, which have been handed down from generation to generation, and which may be regarded as an unpublished continuation of the Arabian Nights, the Kadi usually figures as a subtle, ingenious rogue, who twists and disfigures the Sacred Law to suit his bakshish-taking propensities; and the fellah in the villages, as well as the Mussulman merchant of the towns, is often ready to adopt some legal fiction in order to appear in the International Tribunals rather than in the Kadi's court.

This readiness of the Egyptian people to accept foreign legislation and foreign judges on condition that the new tribunals are incorruptible and efficient, will greatly facilitate the introduction of judicial reforms, but it creates at the same time a serious danger by fostering certain erroneous tendencies which unhappily exist among the native and foreign officials by whom the new system is being prepared. These gentlemen have been, almost without exception, trained in the French school of jurisprudence, and are consequently disposed to regard French codes and French procedure, not merely as logically and symmetrically perfect, but also as practically applicable to all conditions of human society. Working on this unjustifiable assumption, they have generally shown great reluctance to take into consideration those local peculiarities to which a judicial system ought to adapt itself; and their professional prejudices, instilled into them by their education, have been intensified by the hope that the native judicial organisation, when reformed and perfected, may some

day absorb the International Tribunals, in which a slightly modified reproduction of the French codes is used. The consequence of all this is that these gentlemen wish to impose on Egypt a judicial system which shall resemble as closely as possible that of the International Courts.

The English reader who has any knowledge of the law and law courts of our neighbours on the other side of the Channel will probably agree with me in thinking that the above project, if realised, would be a very great misfortune for Egypt ; but as this opinion will be summarily condemned as rank heresy by many who are regarded as authorities in Egyptian affairs, it may be well to give a few words of explanation.

It is quite unnecessary to discuss the general question as to how near the French juridical system approaches to absolute perfection, when regarded from the abstract, scientific point of view ; or to consider whether the hard and fast, complicated, pedantic procedure, so dear to the hearts of French jurists is absolutely better than the more elastic and more practical procedure which Englishmen prefer. What we have to consider is the much simpler question as to which of the two is more suitable for Egypt ; and it seems to me that on this point no unbiased arbiter who has lived in close contact with the Egyptian people can have much difficulty in coming to a decision. If it be admitted that judicial institutions should be created not for the intellectual satisfaction of theorists, but for the practical convenience of the people to whom they are to be applied, and that

consequently the best system is the one which comes nearest to providing a speedy, substantial justice to all classes of the population, then there can be no doubt that the Egyptians would do better to seek a model in England or in India than in France. As an illustration of the difference between the two systems, take the position and functions of the judges in the inferior courts. In French procedure the judge is reduced as nearly as possible to the position of a judicial automaton, whose conduct in every conceivable set of circumstances is carefully determined beforehand by elaborate rules and complicated formalities. According to English traditions, on the contrary, the judge is allowed great latitude, and is expected to conduct himself as a reasonable being, endowed with at least an average amount of perspicacity and common sense. The inapplicability of the former system to Egypt has been proved by the experience of the international tribunals, which take cognisance of all cases in which the interests of foreigners are concerned. In these courts the judges, like their colleagues in France, have been in the habit of confining themselves to the evidence spontaneously produced by the litigants, without attempting to get at the facts and equity lying behind the legal forms. Such a passive attitude on the part of the Bench may perhaps be what is required in countries where litigants are presumably acquainted with the existing legal formalities and are habitually guided and assisted by able counsel; but in Egypt it puts the natives at an enormous disadvantage, and there is no doubt that it has

powerfully aided the grasping rascality of unscrupulous foreigners in their usurious dealings with the fellaheen.[1] The uneducated Egyptian does not know, and can hardly be made to comprehend, that he ought to prepare carefully his case beforehand, and that the case will be decided according as it is presented to the tribunal, quite irrespective of its real merits. In his ignorance of French judicial principles and traditions he imagines that the judge should try to get at the real facts by questioning and every other means in his power, precisely as an unbiased private individual would do in investigating any matter which interested him. That judges should allow the plaintiff or defendant to tumble inadvertently into a legal pitfall artfully prepared for him by his antagonist, or to lose his suit by some little omission or irregularity which might have been remedied by a timely hint from the Bench, seems to the Egyptian a gross miscarriage of justice for which the judges should be held responsible. If, therefore, the courts employ such a procedure they will certainly fail to attain the object in view, and will be regarded by the natives as a new instrument of injustice, or at least as an objectionable foreign innovation. The fact, which I have stated, that peasants occasionally adopt a legal fiction so as to

[1] On this subject the reader may consult *passim* with advantage a volume called *L'Egypte et l'Europe, par un Juge mixte.* Leyde, 1881. The author, whose name is no secret in Alexandria, had so much sympathy with the legitimate interests of the natives, that he was by no means universally popular in the European colonies, and ultimately retired from his position as judge in the International Tribunals.

appear in the International Tribunals rather than in the Kadi's court, is no refutation of this prediction, for the peasants in question are men who, having had commercial dealings with Europeans, have gained some acquaintance with French procedure and who prefer any kind of honest tribunal to the native courts, which are notoriously corrupt. The great majority of the ignorant peasants who have had casually something to do with the International Courts are not, I believe, by any means ardent admirers of foreign justice.

In confirmation of all this I venture to quote some remarks made by Lord Dufferin in his Report. "It is," he says, "the natural and legitimate ambition of the Egyptian Government eventually to supersede the International Courts by its own tribunals, and, with this view, it has been proposed to adopt *en bloc* the civil, commercial, and maritime codes now in use by the former. Unfortunately these codes are anything but perfect, and their procedures, which are taken from the French, are altogether too cumbrous, complicated, and expensive for convenient application to the uses of the fellaheen population. What the Oriental understands is equity rather than justice; nor is he able to comprehend how essential procedure is to prevent equity from degenerating into arbitrary caprice. In order to prevent offending his instincts in this respect, and for other reasons, it is essential that the procedure with which he is supplied should be of the utmost simplicity."

The means taken to attain this end are thus

described by his Excellency: "I have urged," he says, "the Egyptian Government to abandon their original idea, and so to modify the codes now administered by the International Tribunals, as to render them more suitable to the requirements of the people." . . . These codes have accordingly "been supplemented, enlarged, and amended, and it will be easy hereafter to introduce into them whatever further ameliorations experience may prove to be necessary. The case, however, is very different with regard to the procedures which it had been intended to borrow from the International Courts. These will have to be entirely reconstructed from one end to the other. For some months past the Commission has been engaged upon the arduous task of elaborating an entirely new system."

These words were written last February, and since that time the Gallophile tendencies of the Egyptian jurists have been further counteracted by the appointment of Sir Benson Maxwell to the post of legal adviser to the government under the title of Procureur Général. Sir Benson is a man in whom extensive legal erudition and sound judicial training have not extinguished that plain, practical common sense and that freedom from pedantic prejudice which are generally to be found in English lawyers of the best type, and he has had long experience among an Oriental population, who are in pretty much the same primitive stage of development as the Egyptian fellaheen. The proposed scheme was nearly finished before his arrival, so that he cannot entirely undo what the

Commission, composed of Egyptian jurists had done, but he may do much to mitigate the evil effects of the above-mentioned tendencies of his colleagues, provided he has the energetic support of the English Government. Whether he will receive the necessary support remains to be seen.

The advantages of a simple procedure for the native Egyptian courts are so evident that it is unnecessary to dwell longer on the subject, but it will be necessary, of course, to take precautions against the dangers which it involves. By removing formal restraints a simple procedure gives great scope for the personal qualities of the judge—the bad qualities as well as the good—and consequently very great care must be taken to procure judges at once capable and upright. As the requisite number of such judges is not to be found in the native population, foreigners must be employed, and a certain number have already been engaged in Belgium and Holland. There will be at least one of these foreigners in each native tribunal, and they will doubtless exercise—especially when they have become familiar with the Arabic vernacular—a powerful influence on their native colleagues. As a further guarantee, some kind of supervision and control, such as exists in India, will probably be established in the lower courts, either by means of travelling inspectors, or by insisting that a summary of all cases, with a brief statement of the reasons for the decision, should be regularly communicated to the higher judicial authorities.

If the new judicial organisation succeeds it must have the effect of moralising the people by deepening the simple conceptions of right and wrong which have been obliterated by centuries of injustice. At the same time it ought to moralise the administration and the Government, by inspiring them with the wholesome consciousness that they have obligations as well as rights, that private individuals have also rights which must be respected, and that any infraction of these private rights by persons in authority is liable to punishment. For Egyptian officials, high and low, this will be a most astounding and most disagreeable discovery, for they have always been in the habit of acting in a most arbitrary, high-handed way, without much danger of being called to account by superiors as arbitrary and high-handed as themselves. On the Central Government, too, the startling innovation should have a beneficent influence by teaching it to use intelligence rather than brute force. If the Central Government has been already to some extent educated in this sense, it is because it has had many dealings with foreigners, who have always been protected by their consuls, and whose material interests are now protected by the International Tribunals. The salutary control thus exercised on the Government and its representatives has however made the officials of every degree, if possible, more arbitrary and lawless with regard to the natives, so that in order to complete their education it is necessary to extend to natives the legal protection which foreigners have hitherto enjoyed.

In order to attain this most desirable end it has been decided, in spite of strenuous opposition from the Gallophile jurists, to refrain from creating what is termed in French legal phraseology a *justice administrative.* In France, as in other continental countries which take France for their model, the Government imagines that its dignity, prestige, and moral authority would be materially impaired, if it allowed its local representatives to be judged for their official acts by the regular tribunals, and accordingly, in these countries, a special court, composed of administrative officials, has been invented for such cases. How far this *justice administrative* suffices in France for the prevention of abuses and the protection of private interests I do not venture to say, but I have no hesitation in declaring that it would certainly not suffice in Egypt. The Egyptian administrative hierarchy in all its degrees is so saturated with a corrupt, arbitrary spirit, and so imbued with a sovereign contempt for the rights of private individuals who have no official influence, that it is absolutely necessary to have independent courts with a strong admixture of the foreign element, for judging cases in which an official is accused of injustice, oppression, or extortion, or in which the real or supposed interests of the Government conflict with those of private individuals.

This brings us to the important subject of administrative reform, and suggests to us the means by which essential reforms may be effected. It is to these new courts, much more than to the Ministers and heads of

departments, that we must look for genuine reforms in the administration. A Cabinet composed of Ministers all of whom are arbitrary and tyrannical, and some of whom are corrupt, cannot reasonably be expected to cleanse the Augean stable in which they themselves contentedly live and thrive. Some extraneous influence, therefore, must be brought into play, and I know of none except the courts of justice which can be conveniently employed. Of healthy, controlling public opinion there is practically none in Egypt, and it is only under the ægis of independent, incorruptible tribunals that it can come into existence. As Nubar Pasha has justly declared, the new law courts must fulfil, for a time, the functions of healthy public opinion and a free press. We Englishmen justly pride ourselves on the way in which we habitually assert our private rights in the face of all would-be aggressors, private or official; and a learned German has written a most interesting pamphlet to prove that it is to this trait of the national character that we are chiefly indebted for the atmosphere of freedom, order, and legality in which we live. But how has this national trait of character been created and fostered? By a judicial system under which the poorest and humblest in the land may fearlessly defend any rights which they may happen to possess. And how did our officials learn to respect the rights of those who have no official influence? By being taught that persons in authority, for their official as well as their private acts, are amenable to, and liable to be punished by, independent courts of law, which

have quite as much sympathy with private rights as with administrative power. Tradition, habit, and education have gradually relieved the courts from the necessity of frequently judging officials, but it is to the courts that we primarily owe the good qualities of our administration, and it is to be feared that without them these good qualities, together with the national trait of character above mentioned, would gradually evaporate. Now, in Egypt, we ought to take a lesson from our own experience. The Egyptian has not, and cannot have, the courageous, sturdy independence required for standing up boldly and asserting his rights before an official, for he knows that the official can instantly silence his demands and protests, by calling in a couple of stalwart kawasses, armed with the kurbash. All he can do is to petition humbly for redress, and he knows by experience that such a course is at once useless and dangerous, because the higher authorities, for reasons which I have already explained, habitually turn a deaf ear to the complaints of humble suppliants, and the official complained of is generally free to avenge himself with impunity on the petitioner. The great difficulty in Egypt will be to give the tribunals the necessary moral backbone to resist illicit official pressure of every kind. This may partly be secured by introducing a considerable foreign element among the native judges, but the efforts of this foreign element, if they are to be successful, must receive for some time from the English Government very energetic support.

All that we have as yet done directly to improve

the Egyptian administration consists in having made the Minister of Interior issue a circular abolishing the kurbash. This is a meritorious act on our part if we mean to follow it up, but if we mean to do nothing more, then we have simply acted like Pharaoh when he ordered the Children of Israel to make bricks without straw, and have indulged in pseudo-liberalism at other people's expense. Suppose for a moment that England had been conquered by a foreign potentate of very advanced ideas, who believed, like certain social philosophers, that crime is a disease; and suppose that this victorious social reformer, without assuming responsibility for consequences, commanded us to shut up immediately our prisons and penitentiaries, and treat our criminals as hospital patients. Would we not complain that we were being very harshly treated, and would we not demand with reason that time should be allowed us to prepare, at least, the requisite hospital accommodation? Well, the Egyptians are at present in this position. The kurbash has hitherto played in their administrative organisation the part which prisons and penitentiaries play in ours, and we have suddenly ordered them to lay aside the time-honoured instrument of punishment without assuming any responsibility ourselves, and without giving them time to prepare the means for adopting our more humane methods of dealing with criminals. The consequence has been that the circular of the Minister of Interior has remained a dead letter, and the answer given one day by a provincial Governor to an Under-secretary of

State might be given, I believe, by every Mudir in the country: "If you ask me officially," he said, "whether the use of the kurbash is abandoned, I reply that the instructions of his Excellency the Minister of Interior are being strictly carried out in all parts of the province committed to my charge; but if you ask me the question privately as a friend, I may tell you that the old system is still in full force, and must continue to be so until some other and better means of pressure have been created. If I at once executed literally his Excellency's orders, there would be general disorder, and the taxes would remain unpaid, in which case I should be dismissed as incompetent." Mr. Rowsell, the English Director of the Domains, received at one moment a good deal of unmerited abuse for having expressed the opinion that if the kurbash were immediately abolished, it would be difficult or impossible to collect the taxes. From this statement it was falsely concluded that he must be an advocate of corporal punishment. His real intention, I have no doubt, was not to defend the use of the instrument in question, but simply to warn those in authority that if some means were not taken to replace the old system by a more humane and equally efficient one, there would be a serious diminution of revenue. Every one who has any acquaintance with the rural population of Egypt must admit that this warning deserves very serious attention.[1]

[1] What introduced the wholesale use of the kurbash in the collection of the taxes was the increase of taxation beyond reasonable limits. In

But is it possible to find an efficient substitute for the old system? I have often put this question to native administrators and have always received in reply an emphatic negative, based on the assertion that the fellah is utterly insensible to any other kind of pressure. I have always found, however, by cross-questioning, that those gentlemen, though probably quite sincere in making this assertion, did not themselves believe it. When they had momentarily forgotten what they had said, and did not suspect my motive in putting further questions, they would admit that the fellah will accept a great deal of bastinadoing rather than pay a few piastres, that he will pay a great many piastres rather than go to work on the *corvée*, and that he will go and work on the *corvée* many times rather than be taken for the conscription. Here then, according to the testimony of those very administrators, are no less than three means of pressure—fines, forced labour, and military service—all more powerful than the one which was declared to be the only one to which the fellah was not insensible. This is a typical instance of a principle which has often forced itself on my attention during my sojourn in Egypt: that the native administrators make very little use of the brains and common sense with which nature has kindly furnished them.

the time of Abbas and Said, as we have seen, it was very little, if at all, employed by the tax-gatherers. As it has now, however, come to be regarded as an essential part of the system, its immediate abolition would probably cause a temporary diminution of revenue, even if the taxation were not excessive.

I now proceed to glance rapidly at the economic questions which are clamouring for solution and threatening to produce an economic crisis.

The most pressing question of this kind is the indebtedness of the fellaheen. A debt of a good many millions sterling, reposing on the shoulders of an otherwise heavily-burdened population, and increasing at most usurious rates of interest—twenty, thirty, or forty per cent. per annum—is a most important, disagreeable fact, the consideration of which may fairly claim to be considered "urgent." It played, as we have seen, a prominent part in the recent troubles, by creating in the rural population that hatred of the foreigner which the leaders of the insurrection adroitly used for their ambitious designs, and in any future agitation it will, doubtless, if not meanwhile removed, again serve the same purpose. For the ordinary fellah all over Lower and Middle Egypt, the foreign element and foreign influence are represented by the Greek or Levantine usurer, who, like our friend Dhimitraki, settles in the village as a small shopkeeper, lends a little money to the needy, at three or four per cent. per month, accepts payment of the interest in grain or cotton, develops gradually into a collector of agricultural produce for the foreign exporters in Alexandria, and finally assumes in the village the position of a little financial autocrat. If he happens to have some grains of rudimentary honesty in his composition, he contents himself with exacting thirty or forty per cent. per annum on the money which he lends to the villagers, and with

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obtaining a fair profit on the grain and cotton which he buys for exportation; but if he is, as frequently happens, a man in whom lust of gain overrides all conscientious scruples, he may employ, besides the legitimate means of making money, such dishonest expedients as using false weights and measures, inventing fictitious claims, fraudulently changing the figures in contracts, and other ingenious tricks of pettifogging rascality. Whether honest or dishonest, he is always more or less detested and feared by those with whom he has dealings, and any announcement of deliverance from his power is sure to be hailed as good tidings of great joy. A much less pernicious but scarcely less important class of money-lenders are the special agents of the commercial houses in Alexandria, who refrain from usury in its simpler forms, but who lend money on the standing crops and refund themselves during the season of exportation. Lastly, there are the great credit institutions, such as the Crédit Foncier and the Land Mortgage Company, which lend money at what is considered a fair rate of interest on the security of regular mortgages. From these various categories of money-lenders the peasants have contracted a large debt, which is variously estimated at from five to fifteen millions sterling; and when, last year, the emissaries of the insurrectionary party declared Arabi would deliver the native debtors from their obligations to the foreigners, the name of the great national leader soon became very popular. Though the widespread illusions about the national leader's power and prowess

were speedily dispelled, many of the peasants still believe, or at least profess to believe, that during his short dictatorship he wiped out all their debts; and this error has been in some measure confirmed by the well-meant but injudicious action of the reestablished Khedivial Government. During last winter circulars were issued to the local authorities instructing them to take into consideration the difficulties created by the recent disturbances, and not to press for the immediate satisfaction of the claims against insolvent peasants. The immediate consequence of this was that, as a rule, the peasants refused to pay their debts even when they had the requisite means at their disposal, and, on the other hand, the money-lenders, great and small, declined to make any further advances on personal security or mortgage. As the impecunious cultivators trusted to obtaining these advances as usual, many of them had great difficulty in obtaining seed and working-capital, and some of them, it is said, were compelled to leave a portion of their land uncultivated. The situation is thus becoming worse and worse, and it is the duty of the Government to take some steps to facilitate a liquidation; for the poorer peasants, if left face to face with their creditors and exposed to the regular action of the tribunals, will be expropriated in wholesale fashion, and the economic disturbance which wholesale expropriation would produce might have very serious results.

But what practical remedy can be used to prevent the threatened evil consequences? The answer to

this question must depend on our diagnosis of the nature and causes of the disease, and in the matter of diagnosis the most competent doctors widely disagree. One category of them attributes the evil to the inborn, incorrigible improvidence of the fellaheen, fostered in recent years by fortuitous circumstances ; whilst others lay the fault entirely on the Government, or rather on Ismail Pasha, who first ruined the fellaheen by inordinate taxation and by an unprecedented amount of forced labour, and who then forced them to apply to the usurers. We must decide which of these two explanations is the true one, in order to choose the best means of curing, or at least alleviating, the evil. If the peasants have slipped into debt by thoughtlessness and remained in it from incurable improvidence, then all that remains to be done, after alleviating the burden, is to destroy all credit and make borrowing practically impossible. If, on the contrary, the peasant has been forced into this state of indebtedness by over-taxation and fiscal rapacity, then the present Government should seek to repair the injury committed by its predecessor, and help to replace the existing system of usury by a sound system of credit.

The reader who has perused attentively the preceding chapters will be able to form an opinion for himself on this subject, and I believe that he will agree with me that the latter explanation, though not absolutely complete, is much nearer the truth than the former one. That many of the cotton producers squandered money in an absurd way during

the few years of abnormal prosperity produced by the American war cannot be denied, and it is equally certain that, when the reaction came, not a few had recourse to foolish desperate expedients for obtaining money which they urgently needed; but these facts do not depict the true character of the Egyptian peasantry under ordinary circumstances. As compared with Europeans the fellaheen are in a certain sense careless and improvident, for they are deficient in the intellectual qualities which enable a man to foresee the remote consequences of his actions; but it is an utter mistake to suppose that they are, as a rule, reckless spendthrifts who take no thought for the morrow. If one of those critics who talk so fluently about their incurable improvidence and recklessness would go into the villages and try, by way of experiment, to make some leonine contracts in his own favour, he would soon convince himself that in pecuniary affairs the simple-minded fellaheen are not by any means so thoughtless and foolish as he imagined. The truth is, as any one at all intimately acquainted with the financial administration under Ismail Pasha must admit, the peasants were forcibly driven into the arms of the usurers, and no amount of prudence and forethought on their part could have saved them from a considerable amount of indebtedness. The regular taxation was extremely heavy, and the irregular exactions still heavier. Very often, and sometimes at the most inconvenient season of the year, the Mudir, in accordance with peremptory orders from Cairo,

would make a tour in the provinces and squeeze the last piastre out of the unfortunate agriculturists in the manner related to us by old Abdu. Those who had not sufficient money to give were told to apply to the money-lender, and not unfrequently a Monsieur Dhimitri or a Monsieur Ghiorghi, in the suite of the Pasha, was indicated as the benevolent capitalist who could afford the required accommodation at the rate of three, four, or five per cent. per month. Abstractly, we may say that it was foolish to accept such terms, but practically it is absurd to criticise the action of a drowning man who convulsively clutches at straws.

Those who have attempted to farm during hard times on insufficient capital know how difficult it is for the agriculturist who has once got into debt to extricate himself from his embarrassments, and no class of men have had better opportunities of learning this by experience than the fellaheen of Lower and Middle Egypt. As a class they were ruined by the taxation and irregular exactions in the time of Ismail, and they have never since been able to recover themselves. Though living for the last few years under a lighter and more regular fiscal administration, they have continued to sink under the combined influence of past liabilities and present obligations; and the sudden stoppage of credit to which I have above alluded has now thrown hundreds of thousands of them fairly on their beam-ends.

A Government which aims at founding public tranquillity on a solid, durable basis, ought, I think, to

come to the rescue of these poor people in distress, and the first thing to be done is to collect trustworthy, accurate information concerning the amount and nature of the existing debts. For this purpose a commission, with at least one foreign member, should be created in each province, whose duty it would be to prepare for each village a list of the debtors, with a statement of the amount and guarantees of their debts, together with the amount of land which each of them possesses. Those found to be hopelessly insolvent would probably have to be left to their fate, so that their creditors might take proceedings against them in the courts. Those, on the contrary, who might reasonably be expected to recover themselves if they had only to pay a moderate rate of interest, should receive financial assistance. The assistance might be afforded in this way: The Government would buy up the creditors' claims at a considerable reduction, and pay for them in treasury bonds, or some similar saleable paper, and it would take from the peasant a formal mortgage on his lands as a guarantee of payment. Very many of the creditors would be delighted to make such an arrangement at a considerable apparent sacrifice, for they would obtain much more than the sum originally lent, and they would escape from the delays, uncertainty and expense of judicial proceedings; whilst the peasants, instead of a monthly interest of two, three, or four per cent., would have to pay on a reduced capital a moderate rate of interest—say seven per cent. interest and one per cent. sinking-fund per annum. An

operation of this kind would not be without precedent in recent Egyptian history. When the price of cotton suddenly fell after the termination of the American war, and the peasants could no longer easily settle their yearly accounts with the money-lenders, Ismail Pasha began to fear that a large portion of the soil would pass into the hands of foreigners, and in order to prevent such a contingency, which would have seriously hampered him in his grand agricultural projects, he paid off, by means similar to those which I have suggested, about two and a half millions of the peasants' debts. Unfortunately, by his subsequent fiscal exactions, he rapidly created a new debt much larger than the one which he had extinguished, and the last state of the peasantry was worse than the first.

The liberation of the peasantry from their present load of debt would certainly be a most beneficent measure, and would greatly contribute to the solidity and permanence of the new order of things, but it would be, in the opinion of many respectable authorities, the solution of only one half of the problem. It is not enough, say these people, to free the peasant from existing debts; stringent measures must be taken to prevent him from contracting new ones. In this opinion I cannot entirely concur. No doubt it is very desirable in principle that the fellah should not contract debts, and I am ready to admit that possibly certain restraints might be introduced with advantage; but we must carefully bear in mind that legislative or administrative interference with the

natural rights of private individuals in the matter of borrowing is always a hazardous, and generally an unsuccessful, experiment, and that the contracting of a debt is sometimes the lesser of two evils. For the agriculturist, as for the merchant, the most desirable arrangement is that he should work with his own capital; but if he happens not to have sufficient capital of his own, it is better for him to work on capital borrowed at a moderate rate of interest than to remain idle and allow his land to lie fallow. Now, unfortunately, the peasantry of the Delta have not sufficient working capital for the cultivation of their land. The greater part of them have long since, as we have seen, abandoned the simple Pharaonic agriculture of their ancestors, and they can no longer fulfil their obligations to the Government by giving a portion of the harvest to the tax-gatherer and devoting their leisure time to labouring on works of public utility or royal caprice. They must, therefore, have recourse to borrowing, and if the Government tries to prevent them from applying to the ordinary money-lenders without itself advancing the money required, the practical effect of its efforts will simply be to raise the current rate of interest. Experience has proved that usury cannot be prevented by direct legislative enactment, and that the only way of coping with it successfully is to create as a rival a regular system of credit at moderate rates. Egyptian peasants are intelligent enough to prefer borrowing at 8 per cent. per annum to borrowing at 2, 3, or 4 per cent. per month, *if the*

two loans can be obtained with equal facility. It is the neglect of this important condition which has hitherto enabled the little Greek and Levantine usurers of the Delta to compete successfully with the Crédit Foncier and similar large credit-institutions. In consequence of the sudden loss of oxen by the cattle-plague, the unexpected breaking-down of a sakkieh or pumping-engine, or some such unforeseen occurrence, the peasant finds himself in urgent need of a small sum of ready money. In order to obtain it from one of the large banks he has to fulfil a number of complicated formalities involving considerable expense and loss of valuable time, whereas the little Greek is at hand and ready to supply the money at once with no other formality than that of affixing a seal to a bit of paper. In three cases out of four the advantage of getting the money immediately without further trouble, seems to outweigh the disadvantage of paying a high rate of interest, the burden of which is not felt for some time to come.

In thus advocating the creation of facilities for obtaining credit I may seem to some readers to be simply singing the song of the land-mortgage sirens which I previously condemned. The two melodies, I must confess, have a certain resemblance, but I think it is quite possible, with a little attention, to distinguish between them. First of all, the motives are decidedly different. The agents of the foreign companies naturally aim at securing the largest possible dividends for the shareholders, or, in other words, at taking out of the country the greatest possible

amount of capital, and they think that their aim may best be attained by accelerating the expropriation of the fellaheen. My object on the contrary is to prevent the capital from flowing out of the country, and to stop, or at least indefinitely retard, the expropriation of the small proprietors. Again, the aim of the land-mortgage companies is to maintain the high current rate of interest; mine on the contrary is to lower it as much as possible. For the money-lenders it is a matter of perfect indifference what is done with the money, provided the security is good; to me on the contrary it seems of the utmost importance that the money should be employed in a way remunerative to the borrower. Now what have the money-lenders, or at least a very large section of them, hitherto done? They have been, consciously or unconsciously, in league with the Government in the unholy work of "squeezing" the rural population. By advancing money to enable the peasants to pay inordinate taxation, they have practically enabled the Government to increase the national debt on the security of the peasants' lands. For this doubtless the Government is primarily to blame, but the money-lenders are morally responsible for having played the part of accessories, and for having exacted very high payment for their co-operation. The present Khedive has happily abandoned the fiscal sins and errors of his father, but the consequences of these sins remain, and it is impossible to create a healthy system of rural credit until some such preliminary liquidation as I have suggested has been effected.

In the foregoing remarks I have spoken merely of the peasantry of Lower and Middle Egypt, because it is only in that portion of the country that the evil has assumed alarming dimensions. In Upper Egypt the old primitive system of agriculture is still practised, and the Græco-Levantine element has not yet penetrated in large numbers into the villages. The peasantry, therefore, have had less need of credit and less temptation to borrow. Many of them, however, have already begun to contract debts, and the native Copts here play, as I have already remarked in the first chapter, the same part as the Greeks and Levantines in the Delta. It would be well, therefore, in dealing with the question of the indebtedness of the fellaheen, to appoint a special commission for investigating the position of the peasantry in Upper Egypt.

Whatever the Government may do in this delicate problem it will be impossible to prevent a partial expropriation of the present land-holders, for many of them are already hopelessly insolvent. It is a mistake, however, to suppose that their land will at once pass into the permanent possession of foreigners. The foreign capitalists in Egypt require a larger interest for their money than agriculture can supply, and consequently they will do all in their power to resell the land which comes into their hands by the foreclosing of mortgages or otherwise. The men who can afford to give the highest price for land put up to auction are neither foreigners nor the Turco-Circassian Pashas, but the native Omdehs and Sheikhs-el-beled,

that is to say, the richer class of peasants. It is this class which seems destined to become in the immediate future the great landed proprietors of Egypt.

The section of the economical problem which next deserves attention is the irrigation system. Nubar Pasha, one of the very few Egyptians who have any claim to be considered as statesmen, has declared that the Egyptian Question is a question of irrigation, and there is no doubt that the remark, though apparently paradoxical, has a solid nucleus of truth. Egypt is essentially an agricultural country, which derives the greater part of its budgetary income from the land revenue. The quantity and quality of the crops depend on the way in which the fields are watered, and the way in which the fields are watered depends on the administration, so that in Egypt the Government plays the part which in most other countries is assigned to weather-controlling Providence. If the Government continues to show the ignorance, negligence, and corruption which it has hitherto displayed in the Department of Public Works, the consequences will be very serious; the productivity of the land will decrease, the land-revenue will fall into arrears, the peasantry will sink deeper and deeper into debt, the existing popular discontent will increase, and budgetary deficits will produce an onerous floating debt, grave financial difficulties, and dangerous political complications. If, on the contrary, the irrigation system is greatly improved, the soil will produce abundantly, the rural population will pay their taxes

easily, the debts of the peasants will be extinguished, the general prosperity of the country will increase, and there will be few causes of popular discontent, and few pretexts for foreign interference. It is in this sense that the Egyptian Question is a question of irrigation.

In this matter the British Government has so far acted wisely, for it has caused to be appointed as Inspector General of Irrigation Colonel Scott Moncrieff, a gentleman of exceptional intelligence and energy, who has had long technical experience in various districts of India and Burmah, where the natural conditions closely resemble those of Egypt. He has already made a preliminary tour of inspection, and rumour says that he has been surprised and horrified by much that he has seen. From all I have heard from other competent authorities I can readily believe the rumour to be true. Before going into any details of the question we must wait for the comprehensive report which Colonel Moncrieff will shortly present to the Egyptian Government, but we may already confidently indicate the main lines of the work that is to be done. In the first place a check must be put on the unbridled rapacity of the officials who control the distribution of the water and the organisation of the *corvée*, but this reform should be regarded as nothing more than a temporary, palliative remedy. The root of the evil lies much deeper—in the fact that the existing system of canalisation does not supply water enough for the wants of the rural population as a whole; and it is the insufficiency of

the supply that enables the officials to levy such heavy black-mail on those who are rich enough to pay for being favoured. It is necessary, therefore, to study the problem as a whole, to decide upon some comprehensive system, to undertake new permanent works in accordance with the system adopted, and to create a method of inspection which will insure that the system is conscientiously carried out. Of the various systems which I have enumerated in a previous chapter, Colonel Moncrieff is, it seems, in favour of the one which consists in obtaining the requisite level by means of weirs and gravitation, as is done in India; and he thinks that the existing barrage, at the point where the Nile bifurcates to form the Delta, might be so modified and strengthened as to serve the purpose for which it was originally intended. When this is accomplished he will have to turn his attention to Middle and Upper Egypt, and here he will have to consider the grand scheme of M. de la Motte, who proposes to construct a gigantic barrage at Gebel Silseleh so as to flood the great plain of Komombos and so regulate the annual inundation that there may be a plentiful supply of water throughout the whole of Egypt all the year round. If the scheme could only realise one half of what is confidently predicted of it, Egypt would become many fold more productive than it has ever been before, and the name of M. de la Motte would obtain in Egyptian history a much higher place than even that of M. de Lesseps.

Whatever Colonel Moncrieff may decide as to the

best system to be adopted, and whatever means he may propose for the creation of an efficient control, he is certain to meet with determined obstinate opposition from all who profit by the existing state of things, and consequently he is certain to fail unless he is systematically and vigorously supported by the British Foreign Office. Political doctrinaires may reasonably maintain that we can safely leave this question to the new political institutions, because a popular assembly is sure to decide rightly in a plain question deeply affecting the material welfare of the whole rural population. Here there are no political issues, and no complicated issues of any kind, involved, and for once the interests of rich and poor, of landed proprietors and peasants, seem to be identical. In reality, however, it would be extremely hazardous to follow the suggestions of doctrinaire wisdom. No elective assembly in Egypt can, for many years to come, be strong enough to force the Department of Public Works to reform itself, or adopt any measure which is likely to deprive the officials, high and low, of their illicit gains; and even if, by some inconceivable combination of circumstances, an Egyptian elective assembly had the power to accomplish this herculean task, it is far from certain that it would have the wish to undertake it, because the interests of the rich landed proprietors, who would probably have permanent influence in such an assembly, are not by any means identical with the interests of the agricultural population as a whole. This was strikingly proved in the last national assembly, which was supposed to be

extremely patriotic, and to have the interests of the rural population at heart. When a scheme was mooted for raising the level of the water in the Delta, so that all the cultivators might have a larger supply for irrigation purposes, the project was summarily rejected *because it would render useless the pumping engines in the possession of the richer proprietors!* I offer no opinion as to whether the scheme in question was feasible or not; it is the motive given for its rejection that is significant. The logic of the Egyptian notables on that occasion was the same as that of the defenders of the Corn Laws in England; vested interests must be respected, even though a large proportion of the population be starved in consequence.

If great improvements can be made in the irrigation system, it may be possible to maintain the land-revenue at its present high rate, but it ought to be redistributed more equitably, according to the amount and quality of the land held. With this object a detailed survey was begun some years ago, but it has not yet made much progress. Now, fortunately, the work is intrusted to Mr. Gibson, one of the ablest of Anglo-Egyptian officials, and there is little doubt that under his direction it will advance more rapidly than hitherto. He must not, however, expect much sympathy or support from the influential members of the native administration, for it is the rich land-owners who would suffer by an equitable reallotment of the land-revenue. It will be necessary, therefore, to give him the same kind of extraneous support as

his colleague, Colonel Scott Moncrieff, will so urgently require.

But what about the diminution in the fertility of the land which I have explained above? It is certainly an alarming fact, but, like many other dangers which loom very terrible in the distance, it may be warded off with a certain amount of energy and perseverance. In reality it is not the soil of Egypt, but merely a superficial layer of it that has been exhausted, and underneath this thin superficial layer lie vast treasures of latent fertility, which, if properly used, would in many districts suffice for centuries. Hitherto the land has been scratched rather than ploughed; the rotation of crops has been determined with a view to immediate gain rather than permanent advantage; no care or discrimination has been exercised in the selection of seed; the cereals, cotton, and sugar-cane have received only insufficient and irregular supplies of water — in a word, agriculture has been practised with an ignorance, carelessness, and recklessness which in any land less favoured by nature would have already reduced the people to the brink of starvation. Let a Louisiana planter, for example, visit one of the Daira estates which were organised at such enormous expense, and which may be taken to represent the acme of Egyptian agricultural progress. When he sees how the land is carelessly prepared; how the canes are crowded together, and planted at a depth of six or eight, instead of twenty-five or thirty centimetres; how the fields are alternatively baked and flooded;

how the hoeing is carelessly done or entirely neglected; when he sees all this and much more of the same sort, he will probably wonder how the administration of these estates can expect to work them at a profit, and how Egypt can still compete, even in a modest way, with his native country, where things are done in such very different style. If the state of agriculture is so low on the estates of the Daira, expensively administered by an international council, we can easily imagine what it is on the lands of the ignorant peasant, who not only possesses no working capital but who is over head and ears in debt, and who is vainly struggling to keep the usurer at bay. From this unsatisfactory state of things, however, the afflicted Egyptian patriot who looks a little ahead, may derive some consolation and encouragement. The impoverishment of the soil is not a deep-seated, organic disease, but merely a passing weakness which may be cured by better cultivation. The first thing to be done—and that depends on the Government—is to improve the present system of irrigation so that the cultivator may have at all times as much water as he requires. The second thing—and that depends mainly on the people themselves—is to improve the methods and practice of agriculture. One of the simplest improvements is to introduce better agricultural implements, and by them to add gradually and cautiously to the thin layer of impoverished soil a portion of the virgin soil which lies underneath. The operation must be undertaken with circumspection, for earth which has been buried for centuries requires

to be well aired and watered to become practically fertile, and if too much of it be turned up at once the result will be a very bad harvest or possibly no harvest at all. At the same time, the customary rotation of crops should be so modified as to allow the land more time to recover itself after such exhausting crops as cotton and sugar-cane, and measures should be taken to give it back in a soluble form some of the mineral ingredients extracted by the plants. In cotton cultivation, for example, these ingredients are contained chiefly in the seed, so that instead of exporting the seed to fertilise foreign countries, as is at present done, the Egyptians would do well to keep it for themselves and transform it into manure for their own fields. If it is found that these measures do not give all the results that could be desired, the old stores of animal bones, which are to be found scattered over the country, might be used for the manufacture of phosphates in which the soil of Egypt is notoriously deficient. I make these remarks, of course, merely by way of suggestion. The native cultivators must discover for themselves by patient experiment and dogged perseverance how the present exhaustion of the soil can best be counteracted and the threatened economic crisis averted. All I wish to do is to show that the Egyptians have at present to face a most difficult economic problem, but that from the practical, as well as from the scientific, point of view, the problem is by no means hopelessly insoluble.

It may seem at first sight that in these complicated

economic problems the British Government can do nothing, and this opinion seems to have been adopted by some of our official representatives in Cairo, for they consented last year to the abolition of the agricultural bureau, which had been created for the express purpose of supplying the rural population with the scientific knowledge of which they so sorely stand in need. It seems to me, however, that the British Government might do a great deal. The Egyptian agriculturists are not so stupidly conservative and apathetic as is commonly supposed. When they are convinced by observation that certain things increase the fertility of the soil, they readily adopt them—witness the general habit of now scattering on the fields the fine rich earth of the *koms*, or mounds, which mark the sites of ancient cities. What the Egyptians are deficient in is the talent for initiative, and this defect might in some measure be supplied from extraneous sources. We must not expect, however, that any real progress will be made until the irrigation system is improved, and the fellaheen liberated from their present state of indebtedness to the usurers; for the two essential conditions of agricultural progress in Egypt are an abundant supply of water and a certain amount of working capital. Now, it seems to me that we can do much in the way of assisting the Egyptian Government to improve the irrigation and to solve the urgent problem of fellah indebtedness. We can perhaps do something, too, in the way of lightening the general burden of taxation, which is at present a fearful incubus.

In the short space of about fifteen years (1860-75) Egypt contracted on very onerous conditions a national debt of about ninety millions sterling, and the amount of benefit conferred on the country by the capital so obtained was not at all in proportion to the weight of the liabilities incurred. Ismail Pasha acted not as a cautious business man who borrows money gradually as he requires it for remunerative enterprises, but rather as a rich, reckless youth who rushes thoughtlessly into expenditure, remunerative and unremunerative, and ends by finding himself in a quagmire of financial embarrassments. Successive attempts, represented by the names of Mr. Cave, M. Vilette, M. Scialoja, and Messrs. Goschen and Joubert, were made to extricate him from his difficulties and place the finances of the country on a sound footing, but they were all frustrated by his incorrigible duplicity, bad faith and capricious interference, and it was not till he had been deposed and replaced by his son Tewfik that a serious liquidation could be effected. By the Liquidation Law the financial burden has been considerably diminished, but it might, I think, be still further diminished in a way that would be advantageous both to the country and to the bondholders.

According to recent official statements the budgetary revenue is about 8,747,000*l.*, and the annual interest of the debt, in round numbers, 4,196,000*l.*; but to the uninitiated these figures are apt to be misleading. The budgetary revenue is in reality not so large as it seems, for the above total includes the gross revenues

of the railways, the port of Alexandria and the Khedivial Steam-ship Company, without taking into account the working expenses of these departments, which in the case of the Steam-boat Company more than swallows up the receipts. On the other hand, the total of the annual interest paid on the debt includes the interest of the Daira and Domains Loans, while the budget does not include the revenues of the Daira and Domains Estates, out of which the interest on these two loans should be paid. Taking these and similar facts into account I should say that the following figures give a much truer picture of the situation :

Budgetary revenue	£8,150,000
Interest on the Debt (Privileged and Unified Stock, together with probable deficit of Daira and Domains)	3,600,000

In other words Egypt pays to her creditors an interest somewhat less than one half of her budgetary revenue.

In these figures, taken by themselves, there is nothing alarming. A country which has no great military or naval expenditure can easily give half of its budgetary revenue as interest on the national debt, provided that the taxation is not excessive. What makes the national debt so onerous for Egypt is the fact that the taxation is very heavy, and that the means taken for the redemption of the debt were very ill-chosen. By the Law of Liquidation Egypt was treated, if not as a fraudulent bankrupt, at least as a culpable defaulter who ought during many years to work

for his creditors and retain for himself only the amount absolutely necessary for his sustenance. Four of the surest sources of revenue (the customs, the port of Alexandria, the railways and the telegraphs) and the entire revenue of four of the richest provinces, with a deduction of only seven per cent. for administrative expenses, were appropriated bodily by the creditors as a material guarantee. The Government has therefore practically very little interest in the development of these revenues, for the surplus goes to the sinking fund, and the beneficent effect of the sinking fund will not be felt till the whole debt has been paid off, or, in other words, till the present generation has passed away. As no Government, at least no Oriental one, can reasonably be expected to work vigorously for future generations, without some direct advantage for itself, we must not expect that the assigned revenues and the assigned provinces will show anything like the development of which they are capable, so long as the present arrangement subsists. This is bad enough, but the worst remains to be told. Even the remaining revenues and the remaining provinces are, to a certain extent, under the control of the creditors, so that the Government has not command of the whole surplus ; for the liquidators fixed what they considered the normal necessary expenditure, and decided that the rest should be applied to the sinking fund. The revenue and expenditure were estimated, it is true, in such a way as to leave a surplus for unavoidable extraordinary expenses, but little or nothing for remunerative

works, by which the resources of the country might be permanently increased. Now, if there is any country in the world in which capital can be expended by the Government in a remunerative way that country is Egypt; for in the Delta and the Nile valley, as we have seen, the revenue depends chiefly on agriculture; agriculture depends, to a great extent, on a regular supply of water; and the regular supply of water depends on the irrigation works.

No doubt the creditors and their representatives thought it only fair and equitable that a country which had failed to fulfil its obligations ought to devote for many years every penny of its savings to paying off the capital of the debt; but they acted in a very short-sighted way. If they did not positively kill the goose that laid the golden eggs they at least reduced it to the brink of starvation, and they ought not to be surprised if the poor animal soon shows symptoms of inanition. Governments as well as individuals require a direct incentive to action, and, practically speaking, a prospective advantage which is not to be realised for half a century is no incentive at all. If a definite annual sum had been fixed for the sinking fund, the paying off of a million sterling of the Privileged Debt would immediately reduce the yearly expenditure by £50,000, and the payment of every million of the Unified would lighten the burden by £40,000 annually, whereas with the system of elastic sinking fund which has been adopted the payment of ten, twenty, or thirty millions merely

shortens the period of indebtedness without giving any immediate relief.[1]

So long, therefore, as the Liquidation Law remains unchanged, it is hardly possible that Egypt should make any vigorous attempt to develop greatly her natural resources, and consequently it is very desirable that the law should be modified. But will the creditors consent to any modification? They are quite satisfied with their present position, and probably do not see why they should be called upon to make any sacrifices. In reality, however, their position is not so satisfactory as they imagine, and I believe that in consenting to a modification of the Liquidation Law so far as to transform the present elastic arrangement for the sinking fund into a fixed yearly sum, they would be making no sacrifice but would be acting simply in accordance with their own interests. The surplus of recent years which has been devoted to the redemption of the debt has been obtained really not from revenue but from capital. To explain this in detail would require so much space, and on the reader's part so much patience, that I do not venture to undertake it, but I may mention one fact by way of illustration. The railways and telegraphs gave, according to the accounts during the three years 1880—82 a net profit of £2,781,000, but this sum was obtained by postponing necessary expenditure on the permanent way and rolling

[1] During the three years, 1880—1882 the total savings effected by the National Debt Commissioners amounted to 1,083,515*l.*, and with this sum they paid off 1,454,820*l.* nominal.

stock, which cannot be postponed very much longer, and which will be much greater than it would have been, if made at the proper time. The same policy is pursued more or less in all departments, and must end, if pursued much further, in a serious decrease of revenue. I am well aware that some short-sighted people laugh at all apprehensions of this kind, and point triumphantly to the fact that the arrears of the taxes are inconsiderable, but I do not admit the force of this argument, because I know that a large portion of the taxes has been paid not out of revenue but by mortgaging the land to the Levantine usurers and the more respectable class of money-lenders, all of whom are now clamouring for payment. Now it is evident that a Government in collecting taxes which are paid by mortgages on the land is not obtaining legitimate revenue, but is secretly drawing on the capital account. The rapid redemption of the debt is, thus, in great measure, an illusory operation, and reminds one of the proverbial Irishman's expedient for lengthening the bedclothes by cutting off a bit at one end and sewing it on to the other. Perhaps the most striking, and certainly the most easily understood, illustration of this policy was the expedient adopted for paying the indemnities to the house-proprietors of Alexandria. It was necessary for this purpose to find four or five million sterling, and the most natural way of obtaining the money, which was happily not all required at once, was to suspend temporarily the redemption operation. When a proposal to this effect was put

forward, it was at once met with the cry : "You must on no account infringe or attempt to modify the Liquidation Law, which has been sanctioned by all the Powers!" So the Liquidation Law was left intact, and it was decided that the money required should be borrowed in Europe. Thus the Egyptian Government reduces its national debt with one hand and contracts new debts with the other, thereby incurring, quite unnecessarily, the heavy expenses which a great financial operation always entails. It acts, in fact, precisely like the fellah in the well-known anecdote, who borrows money at twenty per cent. when he has money of his own carefully concealed and bearing of course no interest.

The Liquidation Law which thus ties up the hands of the Egyptian Government was made at a time when it was considered necessary to take very stringent precautions against the prodigal tendencies of Khedivial autocrats, and when the creditors naturally demanded increased security as compensation for the diminution of interest to which they had to consent. At present the position is changed. There is no longer any reason to fear Khedivial autocracy, and experience proves that the strait-jacket, which was put on the debtor to prevent him from injuring himself and his creditors, prevents him from doing efficiently the work that is required of him. By fixing for a long term of years the normal budget of expenditure, no scope was given for the natural economic growth of the country. The liquidators acted, in fact, like the Chinaman who puts his little girl's feet into iron shoes,

with this important difference that the Chinaman foresees the consequences of his action, whereas the liquidators seem to have overlooked the natural consequences.

It would be impolitic, perhaps, to raise the question officially at present, because it is necessary to obtain the consent of France to any modification of the Liquidation Law, and the French Cabinet is not for the moment disposed to assist us in the work of Egyptian reorganisation ; but the time is perhaps not far distant when the French bondholders, understanding their true interests, will put pressure on their own Government, and when consequently a modification of the law may be obtained. Let us hope that this time may come quickly, for the Law of Liquidation in its present form is a very serious obstacle to the economic and financial prosperity of Egypt.

This chapter has already spun itself out to a most unjustifiable length, but before closing it I must say a few words about the political institutions which are intended to co-operate in the working out of the programme roughly sketched by Lord Dufferin. My remarks on this subject need not be long, because the skeleton of the institutions is fully described in Lord Dufferin's Report, and it is as yet impossible to predict with anything like certainty what kind of animated being these dry bones will ultimately become.

The attentive reader must have already concluded that I am not very sanguine about the immediate

beneficent influence of these institutions in the cleansing of the Augean stable and in accelerating the solution of the complicated problems which at present threaten to produce an economic crisis. The Legislative Council, if it happens to contain some intelligent, independent, energetic, influential men, may exercise a wholesome controlling influence on the Government, because the Cabinet is obliged to submit to it all important projects, and must, in case of declining to follow its suggestions, give a statement in writing of the reasons for the refusal. But where are the intelligent, independent, energetic, influential men to be found? There lies the great difficulty. I happen to know something of all the men who are likely to become members of the Council, and of these there is only one who possesses all the abovementioned qualities. I mean Nubar Pasha. He certainly might make the Council a living, powerful institution, but it is very hazardous to make any unconditional predictions about an institution whose fate depends upon one man; for, though it must be admitted that in a country like Egypt, a single individual, if he has the requisite power, can do much to improve the administration and increase the well-being of the population, we have no guarantee that the individual in question will obtain, and be allowed to exercise, the power required. As for the larger Elective Assembly, I do not think it can do much good for many years to come, except perhaps in the way of making suggestions and furnishing information to the Government. If the Government is strong, it

will be docile and subservient, and if the Government is weak it will side with any one who has the real power, or it will be used as an instrument of foreign intrigue. Such, at least, is the practical conclusion to be drawn from the history of previous elective assemblies in Egypt. When Ismail created the first germ of parliamentary institutions —for the purpose it is said of getting a grand national petition praying to have the vice-regal succession changed in the way he desired—he explained to the deputies, that they ought, in accordance with English parliamentary customs, to take their places on the right or on the left of the President, according as they intended to support or oppose the general policy of the Government. As the Assembly was composed chiefly of Omdehs and Sheiks-el-beled, who were habitually obsequious to the Sub-governor, who was habitually obsequious to the Mudir, who was habitually obsequious to the Minister, who was habitually obsequious to the Khedive, the idea of openly opposing "the general policy of the Government," which meant in plain language, the arbitrary will of Ismail Pasha, appeared so wildly absurd that all the members seated themselves on the President's right hand, and the Opposition benches remained empty! During the recent troubles the Assembly acted in the same way. When called together, they could not decide at once whether it was the Khedive or Arabi that was master of the situation, so they hesitated and shuffled for some time, but as soon as Arabi had completely gained the army and the

civil administration, they were as docile and obedient to him as he could wish. Egyptian deputies, like Egyptians generally, appreciate the wisdom of their own homely adage, which I have already once quoted: "Dance before the monkey in the days of his power!" In questions where the Government leaves them complete liberty of action, they will probably think of their own interests more than of the interests of the country, as they did in the above-mentioned instance, when it was proposed to improve the irrigation of the Delta. If, instead of native agitators, some foreign Power endeavours to gain the ascendency and appears likely to succeed, the Assembly will be found very useful for furthering its designs.

It is quite possible, however, that these sombre anticipations may be belied by events, and that the Egyptians may display an unsuspected capacity for genuine self-government. In that case the institutions will afford abundant scope for this capacity, while they do not stake all on the chance of the possibility being realised. The common assertion that the Legislative Council and the Elective Assembly are a mere fifth wheel to the coach is, in fact, inaccurate and misleading. They are, in reality, the fourth wheel, which is necessary for completeness, symmetry and comfort ; but, as the coachbuilder knew that this fourth wheel must necessarily be made of unseasoned, untried materials, he wisely constructed the coach in such a way that it can go for a time, if necessary, on three wheels without danger of being upset.

The true functions of these political institutions and the attitude which the British Government ought to adopt with regard to them, as well as to Egypt generally, have been so accurately described by Lord Dufferin, that I cannot do better than quote his significant words, in which genuine political sagacity and sound common sense shine brightly through the "bushel" of official reserve: "A great part of what we are about to inaugurate," he says, "will be of necessity tentative and experimental. This is especially true as regards the indigenous courts of justice and the new political institutions, which will have to be worked by persons the majority of whom will be without experience or instruction. Had I been commissioned to place affairs in Egypt on the footing of an Indian Subject-State, the outlook would have been different. The masterful hand of a Resident would have quickly bent everything to his will, and in the space of five years we should have greatly added to the material wealth and well-being of the country, by the extension of the cultivated area and the consequent expansion of its revenue; by the partial, if not the total, abolition of the *corvée* and slavery; the establishment of justice; and other beneficent reforms. . . . . Her Majesty's Government and the public opinion of England have pronounced against such an alternative . . . . but though it be our fixed determination that the new *régime* shall not surcharge us with the responsibility of *permanently* administering the country, whether directly or indirectly, it is absolutely necessary to prevent

the fabric we have raised from tumbling to the ground the moment our sustaining hand is withdrawn. Such a catastrophe would be the signal for the return of confusion to this country (Egypt) and renewed discord in Europe. At the present moment we are labouring in the interests of the world at large. The desideratum of every one is an Egypt peaceful, prosperous, and contented, able to pay its debts, capable of maintaining order along the canal, and offering no excuse in the troubled condition of its affairs for interference from outside. . . . But the administrative system . . . must have time to consolidate, in order to resist disintegrating influences from within and without, and to acquire the use and knowledge of its own capacities. If the multiform and balanced organisation we have contrived is to have a chance of success, it must be allowed to operate *in vacuo.* Above all, the persons who have staked their future on its existence must have some guarantee that it will endure. How can we expect men born under a ruthless despotism to embark on the duties of an Opposition—which is the vital spark of constitutional government—to criticise, condemn, and countervail the powers that be, if to-morrow the ark of the constitution to which they trusted is to break into fragments beneath their feet? Amidst the applause of the liberal world a parliament was called into existence at Constantinople; a few months later it disappeared, and its champion and fugleman is now languishing in the dungeons of Taïf. Unless they are convinced that we intend to shield and foster

the system we have established, it will be in vain to expect the timid politicians of the East to identify themselves with its existence. But even this will not be enough. We must also provide that the tasks intrusted to the new political apparatus do not overtax its untried strength. The situation of the country is too critical, the problems immediately pressing on the attention of its rulers are too vital to be tampered with, even in the interests of political philosophy. Various circumstances have combined to render the actual condition of the Egyptian fellah extremely precarious. His relations with his European creditors are becoming dangerously strained. The agriculture of the country is rapidly deteriorating, the soil having become exhausted by over-cropping and other causes. The labour of the *corvée* is no longer equal to the cleansing of the canals . . . and unless some remedy be quickly found, the finances of the country will be compromised. With such an accumulation of difficulties, native statesmanship, even though supplemented by the new-born institutions, will hardly be able to cope, unless assisted for a time by our sympathy and guidance. Under these circumstances I would venture to submit that we can hardly consider the work of reorganisation complete, or the responsibilities imposed upon us by circumstances adequately discharged, until we have seen Egypt shake herself free from the initial embarrassments which I have enumerated. This point of departure once attained, we can bid her God-speed with a clear conscience, and may fairly claim the

approbation of Europe for having completed a labour which every one desired to see accomplished, though no one was willing to undertake it but ourselves. Even then the stability of our handiwork will not be assured unless it is clearly understood by all concerned that no subversive influence will intervene between England and the Egypt which she has re-created."

CHAPTER XIII.

BRITISH INTERESTS IN THE EGYPTIAN QUESTION.

The policy of diminishing our imperial responsibilities no longer applicable to the Egyptian Question—Our paramount interest in that Question—The Sick Man and his physicians—Our true policy as a conservative Power—Necessity of prolonging the British occupation—Our future relations with Egypt—Pan-Britishism—An unpublished prediction of Lord Palmerston—A disagreeable alternative—The Suez Canal--British and European interests identical—The abortive provisional arrangement with M. de Lesseps—Its merits and defects—Our best policy with regard to the Canal—Other solutions suggested—M. de Lesseps' claim to a monoply—Good cards in our hands—The Canal in time of war—Conclusion.

HITHERTO I have considered the Egyptian Question almost exclusively from the point of view of Egyptian interests, and I suspect that the reader has often felt inclined to object that I was writing as an Egyptian rather than as an Englishman. Why, it may be asked, should we take so much trouble and incur such responsibilities for the material and moral welfare of a country which we have no intention of annexing? We already govern directly or indirectly far more than our fair share of the habitable globe, and we have already more "imperial" responsibilities than we can well bear. Surely it is time to contract rather than extend the sphere of our

political influence, and to concentrate all our attention and energies on what we already possess.

This view of our foreign and colonial policy is at present regarded with much favour by a very influential section of our leading politicians, and I have certainly no intention of attempting to discredit it, for I fully appreciate the prudence and wisdom on which it is based. Had I been writing at the beginning of 1882 I might perhaps have warned the Government that it was drifting into new responsibilities, and counselled it to refrain from interfering needlessly in Egyptian affairs. To offer any such warnings or advice now would be like warning and advising a cholera patient in a state of collapse to beware of infection and to take preventive measures against it. As I have already shown in a previous chapter, the time for considering whether we ought to interfere energetically in Egyptian affairs is long since past, and the question may now be safely left to speculative historians and to those politicians who have personal or party reasons for weakening the Government by retrospective criticism. For those who direct their attention chiefly to the present and the immediate future, the question has no longer any practical interest. We have already interfered very energetically in Egyptian affairs; first, by causing the destruction of Alexandria; secondly, by suppressing the National Party; thirdly, by preventing the Khedive from re-establishing his authority and prestige; fourthly, by abolishing the Dual Control,

and fifthly, by completely dislocating and disorganising the old despotic system of administration. At the same time we have solemnly pledged ourselves to follow up the work of destruction by a work of beneficent reorganisation, and to replace the administrative chaos and political ferment which the National movement produced by a more stable and in every respect more satisfactory order of things. Any attempt on our part to sneak out of the responsibilities which we have thus incurred would expose us, as a nation, to very serious charges, which I may leave others to formulate, and would discredit at home any Government, however strong, which would thus betray our national honour and our national interests.

But what are those national interests which I assume to be identical with our national honour?

The first and paramount interest which we have in that part of the world lies in the preservation of peace and tranquillity, which are so necessary for our commercial prosperity. It would be absurd to imagine that the present political compromise in south-eastern Europe is a permanent solution of the Eastern Question, or to expect that the knotty problem can be solved without a great war, but it is certain that the inevitable catastrophe may be accelerated or delayed, and that our interest lies in maintaining the *status quo* as long as possible. It is for this reason that in the Eastern Question England has long been, and still is, an essentially conservative Power, and assuredly the Sultan, if he understood his real

interests, would seek to make England his permanent ally, and would at once render an English alliance possible by introducing genuine administrative reforms among all classes of his subjects. In the Balkan Peninsula, where the explosive materials are chiefly collected, we have little or no political influence, and, consequently, we can do little or nothing towards directly accelerating or retarding the explosion; but we can do much indirectly by preventing or encouraging disorders in that other portion of the Ottoman Empire where our influence is, for the moment, paramount and undisputed. The Sick Man's whole organism is necessarily affected by any local irritation, and the latent organic diseases, which must ultimately prove fatal to him, are pretty certain to be stimulated by inflicting or opening a wound in the extremities. Even if he has strength enough to overcome temporarily his many and complicated diseases he is in danger of being sent to a better world by his foreign physicians, who generally insist on holding a consultation whenever the chronic diseases assume an acute form. He naturally tries to prevent such consultations, for he knows that the physicians are his presumptive heirs, and that their deliberations will probably not result in any advantage to himself. The experience of the past warns him that if they can agree among themselves they will impose upon him some weakening regimen and exact a heavy fee for their advice, and, if they cannot agree, they are likely to come to blows, in which case he will be in danger of

being strangled in the conflict. His efforts, however, are nearly always unavailing, and the result generally justifies, in some measure, his apprehensions. The physicians meet in a congress or a conference, and write out prescriptions which he consigns to his waste-paper basket; and then they proceed to examine the inventory of his real and movable property, with a view to making preliminary arrangements for the final partition of the inheritance. These arrangements are not always entered in the protocol, but they are none the less objectionable from being kept secret. The Congress of Berlin, for example, besides prescribing reforms for all the provinces of European Turkey, as also for the Asiatic provinces inhabited by Armenians, confirmed some of the most objectionable clauses of the San Stefano treaty, and placed two large Ottoman provinces under Austrian rule; and in the intervals between the formal sittings, two of the plenipotentiaries made a secret, amicable arrangement by which, as a compensation for the British occupation of Cyprus, France was allowed to establish a Protectorate in Tunis. If the last conference of Constantinople made no modifications in the *status quo*, and produced no political complications, it was simply because the ground was cut from under its feet by the energetic action of the British Government in Egypt, so that it died a natural death before it had time to enter on serious work.

As a conservative Power desirous of maintaining the *status quo* in south-eastern Europe, we ought

to prevent, as far as possible, any local irritation in the Sick Man's extremities, and carefully avoid giving occasion for a consultation of his foreign physicians; and the best way in which we can do this is to carry out resolutely, conscientiously and efficaciously, the task which we have voluntarily undertaken in Egypt. What that task is, and how it may best be accomplished, I have endeavoured to explain in previous chapters, and I need not again go over the ground already traversed; but there is one point about which I must add a few words: I mean the necessity of prolonging for a considerable time the British occupation. From the point of view of Egyptian interests we have seen that the presence of British troops for some time longer is very desirable.[1] But how about our own interests? Some respectable authorities

[1] When writing the above lines and when the preceding sheets are already passing through the press, I hear that the British Government, out of deference to the supposed susceptibilities of foreign Powers, has decided to withdraw the garrison from Cairo and concentrate the troops in the neighbourhood of Alexandria. If this rumour should prove true, the Government has committed a grave mistake. So far as the moral effect on the population, on the ulemah, and on the native government, is concerned, the presence of a single battalion in the Cairo citadel is worth more than the presence of half a dozen regiments at Alexandria or Ramleh. An English force in the neighbourhood of Alexandria means simply, according to native conceptions, that we wish to overawe the Levantine and native rabble of that town and prevent a recurrence of the massacres, whereas an English force in the Cairo citadel—though unnecessary perhaps from a purely military point of view—is a public announcement, in language which Egyptians can understand, that we mean to maintain order throughout the length and breadth of the land, and that we are determined to have our programme of administrative, economic and political reforms conscientiously carried out. As for the supposed susceptibilities of foreign Powers, I cannot see why—unless they wish us to fail in the task we have undertaken—they should prefer to see our troops in Alexandria rather than in Cairo.

assure us that by prolonging the occupation we expose ourselves to a grave danger, because there are premonitory symptoms of the Eastern Question being reopened next spring, and in that case the presence of English troops on Egyptian soil would trammel our political action. To me it seems that the persons who put forward this argument must be endowed with a most unusual share of political obtuseness. Suppose that, before our troops are withdrawn from Egypt, serious complications should arise in south-eastern Europe, and the whole Eastern Question should be again opened up, would we not be able to look on, with comparative complacency, at any territorial or other rectifications which the Great Continental Powers might see fit to make in the Balkan Peninsula? I do not wish to use the above reasoning as an argument for prolonging the occupation, but I venture to submit that it cannot fairly be used as an argument for terminating it prematurely. If great perturbations in the Ottoman Empire are really imminent, I should prefer to see them come while Egypt is still under British armed protection.

I have said enough, I trust, to show that it is our interest, as well as our duty, to carry out conscientiously the good work which we have begun in Egypt. Alike from the English as from the Egyptian point of view, it is desirable that we should create in Egypt a stable order of things which will insure for the people a long period of peace and prosperity. But what are we to do after we have laid the foundation of this new and better order of things?

Are we entirely to abandon the country to fate and its own resources, or are we to maintain in Cairo the paramount influence which we now enjoy? This question ought to be decided at once, because the decision must affect not only our future policy, but also in some measure our present action.

The people whom I may venture to call the apostles of Pan-Britishism—I mean the people who assume as an axiom that British influence should be created, maintained, and increased in every part of the habitable globe—have, of course, a ready-made answer to the question; but I am not myself an adherent of this doctrine, and I shall do my reader the justice of assuming that he is likewise innocent of any such political heresies. Let us examine the question, therefore, on its own merits, from a plain, practical, common-sense point of view. Though apparently a somewhat complicated question of duty, it can easily be reduced to a very simple question of fact: Have we, or have we not, any important, permanent interests in Egypt? It is in this simpler form that I prefer to discuss it.

I begin by asserting, without fear of contradiction, that in the Delta and Valley of the Nile we have no direct interests which would justify us in running the risk of serious political complications for the sake of upholding our paramount influence in Cairo—no direct interests which could justify us, for example, in offending France, as we have done, by abolishing the Dual Control. No doubt a considerable portion of the Egyptian national debt is held by British

capitalists, and a very large portion of the Egyptian foreign trade is carried on with England, but if we are to aim at establishing political predominance in every country which borrows money from us and carries on trade with us, then we must adopt at once the whole doctrine of Pan-Britishism. If Egypt, therefore, were composed simply of the Delta and the Nile Valley, we might allow the Egyptians to stew either in their own juice or in any foreign sauce they might prefer. Unfortunately, the geographical boundaries of Egypt include a vast extent of desert, and through a portion of the desert runs the Suez Canal, which is an essential part of our line of communication with India and the Far East. The natural consequence of this is that in ordinary times the Egyptian Government has a very important influence in the decision of all questions affecting the Canal, and in time of war, the Power which has at its disposal the military resources of Egypt dominates our shortest line of communication with our Eastern possessions. More than a quarter of a century ago Lord Palmerston predicted that if a practicable water-way were created between the Gulf of Pelusium and the Red Sea, England would be compelled sooner or later to annex Egypt; and as he considered it undesirable that England should annex territory in that part of the world, he strenuously opposed M. de Lesseps' scheme.[1] In spite of

[1] Such was the explanation given confidentially by Lord Palmerston at the time to one of his subordinates in the Foreign Office. I regret to say that I am not at liberty to name the subordinate in question.

his opposition the Canal was made, and now we find ourselves within a measurable distance of the alternative which he foresaw and deprecated. We are still firmly resolved to avoid, if possible, any kind of annexation, but we are equally determined, I trust, to prevent any other Power from annexing Egyptian territory or from acquiring in Cairo a political influence greater than our own. How we are to insure that this decision of ours will be respected after our troops are withdrawn I cannot pretend to say, and I fear it will turn out to be a more difficult task than is generally supposed. The talented Russian author who writes under the initials O. K. has suggested that the future relations between England and Egypt will perhaps be similar to the present relations between Russia and Bulgaria. This is what is to be desired, but I am not at all sure that it is what will actually happen; for the two cases, though presenting a strong superficial similarity, are in reality not at all analogous. Russian influence in Bulgaria is based on community of race[1] and religion, and on the fact that the Bulgarians regard the Czar as their liberator from the hated Turkish yoke, as their ever-vigilant protector, and as an all-powerful ally in the future. In Egypt there is no such broad, solid basis for British influence, moral and political. The masses will always regard us as infidel foreigners, from whom they have nothing to

[1] The Bulgarians may not be Slavs in the strict ethnographical sense of the term, but practically they are as thoroughly Slav as any other section of the Slavonic race.

fear and nothing to expect; and the officials—that is to say, the educated classes—will be hostile to our influence in so far as it curbs their arbitrary, despotic tendencies towards inferiors and diminishes their illegal gains. If the native self-government, which we are creating, succeeds, we shall be confronted by a new National Party, which will make a bid for popular support by attacking the British Control; and if the native self-government does not succeed, there will probably be some kind of disorder sufficient to serve as a pretext for foreign intervention. And we ought to remember that, once our troops withdrawn, we shall in all probability not be allowed to intervene again single-handed, for France is not likely to commit a second time the mistake which she committed last year and which she has since so bitterly regretted. We shall then be obliged to choose between two disagreeable alternatives: either to create a new Joint Protectorate, in which France would naturally be always on the look-out for an opportunity of paying us off for having abolished the old Dual Control; or to let France assume the position which we now hold, and thereby allow a foreign Power to dominate an essential link of our chain of communications with India.

The practical British mind seems to perceive dimly some such eventuality in the future, and consequently certain prudent people are urging the Government to make hay while the sun shines. In principle the advice is perfectly sound, but we must take care that the hay which we make really belongs to us. This

condition is, unfortunately, sometimes overlooked. Not long ago, for example, we heard a civic dignitary publicly propound doctrines which might have been fitly enounced by a Special Envoy of some Tartar Khan in the thirteenth century, but which were hardly to be expected from a law-respecting Englishman of the present day. He boldly explained that we had conquered Egypt, and that by the right of conquest we could do as we liked with the Suez Canal, which runs through Egyptian territory, as if the Great Powers had tacitly consented to our occupying Egypt for the purpose of resuscitating in that part of the world the antiquated principles of Tartar international law. Of course the British Government did not adopt this aldermanic view of its mission, but it considered that it might use with moderation the legitimate influence which it had acquired in Egypt for bringing about a just and satisfactory solution of the Suez Canal Question, and for this purpose it opened negotiations with M. de Lesseps as representative of the Compagnie Universelle.

The provisional arrangement with M. de Lesseps produced such a violent storm of popular indignation that the Government wisely determined to break off the negotiations and allow the question to lie dormant until the popular excitement had somewhat subsided. I am not at all sure that the public is now in a fit state to examine the subject calmly and impartially, so I shall refrain from discussing the question in detail, but I shall venture to make, with

all due deference, a few practical suggestions which seem to me worthy of consideration.

In the first place I would remark that it is not only our duty, but also our interest, to refrain from all high-handed proceedings and to show a scrupulous respect for all legal rights. It was on the assumption that we should act in this upright, English fashion, that the Great Powers allowed us complete liberty of action at the time of the Conference; and we may be pretty certain that if this assumption is not justified by our conduct, some of the Great Powers will soon combine and render our position in Egypt extremely uncomfortable. It is only by taking our stand on the firm ground of strict legality that we can venture to disregard exaggerated French susceptibilities, and it is only by constituting ourselves the representatives of European commerce, rather than of exclusive British interests, that we can hope to obtain the necessary diplomatic support in dealing with the question. When the European public perceives that the interests of all commercial nations are at stake, the technical rights of a private company must give way to considerations of general expediency; and it will doubtless be generally recognised that the nation which pays four-fifths of the transit dues and possesses nearly a half of the Canal shares, ought in justice to have a preponderant voice in the solution of the problem. Our aim, of course, in dealing with it should be to create the greatest possible facilities of transit at the least possible expense; and if we persistently strive to attain this object we shall be

working not merely for our own benefit, but likewise in the interests of the world at large.

The gentlemen who negotiated the abortive provisional arrangement with M. de Lesseps may fairly claim to have had this object in view, and it must be admitted that one part of the arrangement was well calculated to attain it: I mean the advancing of the requisite additional capital at the low rate of $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. At the same time, however, they inadvertently betrayed the interests of commerce and of the public—for it is on the consumers that the expenses of transit ultimately fall—first, by consenting to a prolongation of the monopoly; secondly, by admitting that the company might, for the benefit of its shareholders, exact from European commerce with the East an annual tribute, amounting to one half of the capital expended on the construction of the Canal; thirdly, by allowing the administration to remain in the hands of pedantic officials, who certainly obstruct the traffic and who are strongly suspected of systematically favouring the French mercantile marine to the detriment of the ships of other nations; and fourthly, by omitting to take stringent precautions for insuring that the capital to be advanced by the British Government should be expended as economically as possible, and in such a way as to secure the greatest possible advantages to commerce. In preparing any new provisional arrangement these essential points must, in my opinion, be taken into consideration. No doubt there are other points which likewise deserve atten-

tion, and certainly our Government would do well, before reopening negotiations with M. de Lesseps, to consult, and invite suggestions from, the best authorities among shippers and commercial men, not only in England but also in other countries. In this matter our interests are identical with those of other nations, and we ought to prove to the world at large that in seeking to improve the communications between Europe and the Far East, we are acting in a fair, liberal spirit, and are not striving to obtain any exclusive advantages for ourselves. A proposal for a considerable reduction of the present high dues will come well from one who is a shareholder to the extent of nearly one half of the share-capital; and a partner who acts in this liberal spirit may well claim to have a much larger share in the administration than we at present possess. To the private shareholders who, unlike ourselves, have no direct interest in the development of trade with the East, and who can prove that a reduction of the dues would impose on them a serious loss, we might pay a reasonable amount as compensation. As we are always ready, for the sake of India, to enter on expensive wars like the recent Afghan campaign, surely we could expend a comparatively small sum on a useful undertaking with which the permanent prosperity of India is so closely connected. If, in addition to all this, we show a just regard for French susceptibilities and prove by our acts that we have not forgotten how the Canal was originally planned and executed by Frenchmen in the teeth of British

opposition, I have no doubt that our efforts to secure a lasting benefit for the commerce of the world will ultimately be crowned with success.

A very competent authority in Egyptian affairs, Mr. Edward Dicey, has put forward the idea that we ought to solve the difficulty by simply buying the Canal, and he has shown that the purchase might be effected by making a remunerative investment of about thirty millions sterling. From the point of view of British interests this would be, perhaps, the most satisfactory solution; but we must remember that we are not the only parties interested in the Canal, and that any attempt on our part to obtain exclusive possession of it would meet with strenuous opposition not only from France but also from other Powers. For that reason I am of opinion that we should reject Mr. Dicey's proposal and identify our interests with the interests of Europe generally.

Other schemes of a more or less fanciful kind have been suggested. It has been proposed, for example, to dig a ship canal from the coast of Syria to the Valley of the Jordan, and thence to the Gulf of Akaba in the Red Sea. Apart from the enormous engineering difficulties, which have never been seriously examined, this scheme would encounter determined opposition from the Porte, because the Sultan believes that the execution of any such project would accelerate the amputation of Syria from the Ottoman Empire. Perhaps his Majesty's apprehensions are not altogether unfounded. If they were realised, Syria would in all probability be annexed by

France, and we should find, to our disappointment, that our new line of communications with India lay through French territory.

Scarcely more feasible are the projects for making a fresh-water ship-canal from Alexandria to Suez. A long canal, which would necessarily be obstructed by locks and sluices, and which would have to cross a great river subject to torrential inundations, could not possibly compete with a short canal free from all such obstructions. As a compensation for the delays, dangers and expense of working the more complicated enterprise, the fresh-water canal might, it is said, be used for irrigation as well as navigation purposes, and the ships passing through it would have the advantage of getting their bottoms cleaned by the action of the fresh water. These promised advantages are, I believe, entirely illusory. The proper *tracé* for a great arterial irrigation-canal would not by any means coincide with that of a canal intended for navigation, and any attempt to combine the two would probably end in the projectors finding that they had "fallen between two stools." As for the cleaning of the ships' bottoms, on which the promoters of the scheme lay great stress, competent authorities assure me that steamers trading with the East do not seriously foul in the course of a single voyage, and that, if they did, the passage through a fresh-water canal would not clean them.

I have still to answer those who urge the British Government to test judicially the validity of M. de Lesseps's claims to a monopoly. Whether M. de

Lesseps, or the Compagnie Universelle, has really the exclusive right to dig a canal through the isthmus, I need not attempt to decide. The practical question for us to consider is whether we could get a competent tribunal to declare that we have the right to dig a new canal in close proximity to the existing one. On this point there is very little uncertainty. The question would be tried, I presume, in the Egyptian International Tribunals, and we could hardly expect that a Court, in which French influence is predominant, would decide in our favour a difficult point of law which our own judicial authorities have already decided against us. Thus, from whatever point of view we examine the subject, it seems advisable that we should endeavour to arrive at an amicable arrangement with the existing Company, and it is certain that the Company ought, in its own interest, to meet us half-way, for if it provokes our hostility, it can merely play the undignified part of the dog in the manger. Though its charter and statutes may create a monopoly, they do not convey a right to dig a second canal, and a concession for a second canal could not be obtained without our consent. In these circumstances ought we not—as some people advise—to let the matter rest until M. de Lesseps, in the ordinary course of human affairs, has retired from his present position? I think not. Though the next President, in accordance with the spirit and letter of the concessions and statutes, should be an Englishman, and consequently more likely to favour our views, he would not have the

same influence with the shareholders, ; and it must be admitted that M. de Lesseps has many of the qualifications required for bringing about a satisfactory arrangement. He is an enlightened man of broad, liberal views, who habitually subordinates pecuniary to higher considerations, and so far as his personal ambition is concerned he would prefer being known to posterity as a benefactor of humanity, rather than as a vulgar millionaire. To complete his great work by the creation of a second canal would afford him infinitely more satisfaction than any conceivable increase of dividend. We may safely rely, therefore, on his doing all in his power to remove the existing difficulties. As President of the Company he is obliged to defend its pecuniary interests, and as a Frenchman he is obliged to prevent the enterprise from passing entirely into English hands ; but he will certainly use his great interest with the shareholders in the direction of inducing them to make some apparent pecuniary sacrifices, and even some small sacrifice of national *amour propre*, in order to get the great work completed. This is a somewhat delicate matter, in which it would be unwise, perhaps, to insist further ; but I trust I have already said enough to show that our negotiators have very good cards in their hand, if they only know how to play them properly.

I have hitherto spoken of the Suez Canal as of a great commercial highway, but the reader must not suppose that I am overlooking the fact that

the Canal has for us a very great importance in a military sense. If I refrain from enlarging on this topic, it is because I feel that, as a civilian, I am not competent to deal with it and because I think that, in this matter, it is wise "to let sleeping dogs lie." So long as we retain command of the sea and prevent any foreign Power from establishing a political preponderance in Egypt, we can in time of war effectually dominate the Canal by our iron-clads without infringing the rights and interests of neutrals. Certain professors of International Law might like, perhaps, to exercise their talents in elaborating a beautiful set of complicated rules for regulating the conduct of belligerents with regard to the Canal, but I cannot perceive any advantages which such rules would afford us, and I can imagine a good many irksome restrictions which they might impose. Unforeseen circumstances might arise in which we should be compelled to act very energetically, and in view of such an eventuality it is very desirable that the restrictions necessarily imposed upon us by International Law should be as elastic as possible.

And now, gentle reader, if you have had patience enough to accompany me thus far, we must part, for I have reached the end of my journey, and my duties call me to investigations in an entirely different section of the Eastern Question, in which we may possibly some day meet again. Pardon me my tediousness, as also any unseasonable levity of which I may have been guilty. If I have inadvertently

expressed opinions without giving good and sufficient reasons, let such go for nothing, for I have no pretensions to any authority of the *ipse dixit* kind; but, on the other hand, pray consider carefully and impartially the arguments which I have adduced. My ambition is to serve, in the labyrinth of the Egyptian Question, merely as a sort of finger-post to show the direction in which our national honour and our national interests lie. If I can be of some little service in fulfilling this humble function, my labours will be amply rewarded.

THE END.

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