CHAPTER V

THE FIRST-FRUITS OF THE HARVEST

On March 15, 1922, the Sultan assumed the title of "His Majesty the King of Egypt". The announcement aroused no popular enthusiasm, and the Zaghlulist attitude was everywhere one of sullen dissatisfaction and hostility. On the same day it was officially notified that the High Commissioner had resigned control of Egyptian Foreign Affairs, which had been assumed by the Prime Minister of Egypt. The Proclamation of Independence, made upon the following day, was accompanied and followed by disorderly demonstrations in large towns. It was clear that the new Ministry was widely unpopular, and that the prevailing discontent was by no means allayed. Indeed, unpleasant symptoms were apparent everywhere. A Commission for the purpose of framing a Constitution had not long been appointed before one of its sub-committees laid hands upon a reserved subject—the Sudan. This sub-committee recommended that the Constitution should make provision for the Sudan, and was careful also to give its recommendations publicity. Emphatic representations from the High Commissioner put a stop to these provocative activities, but the affair was symptomatic of what was to be the Egyptian attitude towards the Declaration of 1922. They would recognise that declaration fully

in so far as it surrendered British powers, but not at all when it asserted British claims.

A further indication of coming trouble was afforded by the negotiations in regard to the position of European officials in the service of the Egyptian Government. It was obviously essential in the interests of good administration and of the new Government's credit that a definite agreement should be speedily come to, setting out the right of such officials to resign, and the compensation which would be awarded them upon resignation or dismissal. The Secretary of State was most anxious that the matter should be settled upon a defined basis, and officials themselves were harassed beyond measure by the uncertainty and anxiety which hung over their future. The Egyptian Government maintained, however, an obstinately *non possumus* attitude, and Lord Allenby was not willing to press them in the matter. He pointed out the danger that they might resign, and suggested that the matter might safely be left in his hands to settle each claim as it arose in consultation with the Egyptian Government. This was a condition of affairs which however temporarily satisfactory could not give as much confidence as a permanent settlement, and it does not appear to have appealed to officials themselves, further shaken as they were by the summary dismissals which the Government was already making. The Milner Mission had painted a rosy picture of the goodwill which an independent Egyptian Government would be sure to display towards the British officials, but it was already clear that in point of fact they would be working now in conditions entirely different from those for which they were recruited. Their prospects of promotion were almost completely destroyed, since it was only natural that an

unfettered Egyptian Government would fill vacancies with Egyptians. At the same time, their authority over their subordinates would be impaired, because these latter would inevitably go behind their backs to the elected representatives—a court of appeal which could hardly be expected to be impartial. And it was only too probable that the Government itself would tacitly allow, if it did not encourage, their life to be made intolerable until they were forced out of the service. The risks of the future—to which at the present was added the danger of a violent death—they would be prepared to face, but only if they were relieved of the anxiety of material ruin for themselves and their families.

The fact that the campaign of murderous attacks upon European officers continued with little abatement, and that the offenders invariably escaped unpunished cannot but have added to the general anxiety. On May 24 Bimbashi Cave, Inspector in the Cairo City Police, was murdered in broad daylight, and Colonel Pigott of the Army Pay Corps was attacked near the British Consulate in Cairo on July 15 and shot twice in the lungs. Martial law was still in force, but was apparently powerless to deal with these political crimes, and stern protests from home were equally ineffective in moving the Ministry of the Interior to effectual measures. On July 24 the Wafd made a false move in publishing a manifesto which directly counselled violence as a means of expressing Egyptians' sense of grievance against the Ministry, and its supporters the British. Lord Allenby at once ordered the arrest of the signatories to this manifesto, but the tale of lost British lives was by now a long one. How criminally inefficient had been the Egyptian Departments concerned was now disclosed. Abdel Rahman Fahmy—organiser of the Society of Venge-

ance which had conducted the murder campaign of 1920—was serving his sentence in a Cairo prison, and a prisoner released from the same place of detention informed the Commandant of the Cairo City Police that Abdel Rahman was receiving exceptionally favourable treatment, and was allowed to correspond and receive visitors as he pleased. In view of the state of affairs thus disclosed, it was not surprising that the Government's promise of more effective action did not bear speedy fruit. On August 13 Mr. Brown of the Ministry of Agriculture was attacked while driving to the station with his children. The coachman was killed, and Mr. Brown and his son wounded; the assailants escaped. The British Government again intervened, urging that some definite ultimatum with threat of retributive action should be made to the Egyptian Government, but Lord Allenby replied that "we have made considerable progress towards a "good understanding with Egypt, and are gaining "support of those whose opinions are really sound", and that the action suggested "would put sharp and "sudden check on progress of His Majesty's policy, and "might ruin any chance of coming to friendly under-"standing".[1] To the delusive hope of such an understanding everything—even the lives of British officials—was now to be sacrificed: it remained to be seen what real profit lay in "the support of those "whose opinions are really sound". Even with Zaghlul deported, and many of the Wafd leaders either imprisoned or under trial, such support was slow enough in coming, and meanwhile, by August 3, ninety-nine European officials had either applied for permission to retire or been dismissed.[2]

[1] F.O. Despatch: Lord Allenby to Lord Curzon, April 18, 1922.
[2] See p. 31 ante.

Meanwhile the Ministry of Sarwat Pasha was not free from domestic difficulties. King Fuad had never been on friendly terms with Sarwat Pasha, who was not the Prime Minister of his choice. The undoubted unpopularity of the Ministry, and the state of the provincial administration, provided him with ground of complaint, while he was fully justified in viewing with grave apprehension the activities of the Commission on the Constitution which was drawing up a democratic constitution based upon European precedent and having no relation at all to the existing state of Egypt. At the end of July he was showing his displeasure by refusing to summon meetings of the Council, and was clearly contemplating the dismissal of Sarwat. It would not have been difficult to justify such a step, but again sacrifices must be made to secure the support of "those whose "opinions are really sound", and the High Commissioner intervened to insist upon a *rapprochement* with Sarwat. This time it was the interests of Egypt that were sacrificed, for those critics were found to be undoubtedly right who pointed out that the Constitution would be unworkable, and would have to be altered by events of a revolutionary nature. Nor were his views in regard to the administration unfounded. Crime was very prevalent in the provinces, and Mudirs were showing an inclination to slacken their supervision and take things easy. In the Central offices favouritism and nepotism were more frequent and flagrant than the High Commissioner had anticipated. The Departments of Communications and Public Health were suffering more particularly the effects of the new régime—in the former there was slackness and inefficiency, in the latter a marked anti-English bias and a tendency to ignorant interfer-

ence with departmental routine. "The faults of ig-
"norance, vanity, moral cowardice and favouritism
"have been apparent, but I hope . . . that the forecasts
"of a rapidly developing chaos . . . will be falsified".
Such was Lord Allenby's summing up of the situation after seven months of the new régime at the end of September. As to the Ministry's unpopularity, this had long been beyond doubt: Sarwat Pasha and his colleagues belonged to a small group of politicians having but slender ties of any kind with the people at large. They did not possess the qualities which command popular favour, and their methods of administration tended to alienate the sympathies of their own party and of the Government officials. Adly Pasha, by reason of his dignity and probity, commanded a much greater following than any of the Ministers, and it was to Adly that they would have to adhere as a leader if they wished to gain any chance of power under a democratic constitution. Adly Pasha was in fact inaugurating a Liberal Constitutional Party against that day, and Sarwat at least was privy to his plan and supported it; but even such a coalition had little chance of success against Zaghlul with his "national" claims, and the popular veneration in which he was held.

At the moment, however, the business of all concerned was to secure the King's reluctant consent to the new Constitution, and over this business the imminence of responsible government was spreading a cloud of intrigue. First of all the King was resisting, by the many methods open to him, the inception of a Constitutional monarchy. Like all the other Egyptian protagonists he desired dominant power in his own hands, and the business of constitution-making

provided him with the means of playing for it. To the Residency he could justly arraign the new Constitution as entirely unsuitable, which it was; to Egypt he could attack it as betraying Egypt's right to the Sudan. Sarwat Pasha quite saw the reasonableness of the British contention that references to the Sudan would be entirely out of place in the Egyptian Constitution—on the other hand, if he acquiesced, he stood to be shot at by the Palace, by the Zaghlulists, and very likely, as he surmised, by his own political friends. Adly Pasha of course realised that references to the Sudan could not be justified, but he was fighting the Zaghlulists and could not afford to give them the right to call him a traitor to his country. Finally such courage as his party possessed was dissipated by the murder of two of its members in October. In the end he took action, which proved Sarwat right, and announced that if the Prime Minister met British wishes in the matter of the Sudan his party would no longer support him. Sarwat Pasha took the natural course at this point, and threw in his hand, resigning on November 29. Tewfik Nessim Pasha was summoned by the King to form a new Cabinet, and the Ministry in support of which we had made such sacrifices and upon which such reliance had been placed, disappeared and was replaced overnight. The situation remained profoundly obscure in the growing maze of intrigue, and the year 1922 ended without a Protectorate, without a Constitution, without an indemnity, and with martial law still in force. Two hundred European officials had been dismissed or claimed permission to retire, and Mr. Robson, professor of the Law School, had been shot and killed in broad daylight on the main road on December 27. Lord Allenby made yet another protest, and the

Egyptian Government delivered itself of yet another expression of regret.

The only person who had any cause to rejoice as the year 1923 opened was King Fuad. He had won a signal victory, discredited the rivals whom he feared, and secured a Prime Minister and a Ministry who could be counted upon to be on the whole subservient to his wishes. But no situation in Egyptian politics could be expected to last long, nor could any progress be expected in the evolution of British policy until the question of the Sudan had been removed out of the way. This could only be achieved if His Majesty's Government intervened to put a summary end to the present methods of intrigue. In early February such an intervention was carried out by Lord Allenby, who acquainted King Fuad with the serious displeasure of the British Government at the delays which were being caused in the introduction of constitutional government, and of their determination, unless he immediately withdrew his claim to be styled King of the Sudan, to review at once, and radically, their recent declarations of Egyptian policy. The King's brief moment of autocratic triumph ended with his acceptance of this ultimatum. He bowed to the inevitable and invited Adly Pasha to form a Ministry. The blow to the king's prestige was great, for the memory was fresh of his attempt to suppress Adly in order to placate Zaghlul. Curiously enough rumours that Adly was about to return to power were almost at once followed by an intensification of the outrages against Europeans. Bomb-throwing now took the place of shooting in the back, and a number of such cases were reported in a short space of time. Adly Pasha was only prepared to take office upon conditions which included the suspension

of martial law, and such suspension was of course rendered quite impossible by the outrages now occurring, so that all hope of securing a Moderate Cabinet thereby disappeared. The situation was thus drifting into a chaotic and dangerous state—it was in fact very nearly back to the conditions of a year previously when Lord Allenby had wrung from His Majesty's Government the Declaration of Independence which he had assured them[1] would be completely successful in restoring a situation otherwise irremediable. The Secretary of State was gravely apprehensive: outrages, in his view, were becoming intolerable: arrests of Wafd leaders were frequent: and no Egyptian Government was in being or appeared likely. To what could such a situation lead except to all the difficulties and dangers of a wide campaign of repression by the British authorities? What was the remedy? Yehia Pasha, Minister of Education in Tewfik Pasha's Government, was now called to the Premiership and accepted. The King clearly thought that Yehia Pasha might be expected to subserve his wishes, but Yehia Pasha was a dark horse, of whom very little was known, either to the public or the Residency. He took office on March 15, amid cautiously worded comments from the Press, and in an atmosphere not unhopeful. The most encouraging factor of all was that he was neither a prominent nor a party politician, so that he would be free from the difficulties of intrigue due to personal rancours. Not being regarded as a serious rival by any of the aspirants to power, he might be left free long enough to get a Constitution in being.

On March 24, with a suddenness which was startling, Zaghlul Pasha was unconditionally released. His

[1] F.O. Despatch: Lord Allenby to Lord Curzon, January 25, 1922.

medical attendant at Gibraltar, whither he had been removed from the Seychelles, thought he ought to undergo a cure in Europe, and the original intention was to exclude him from Egypt.

The release had been previously discussed in connection with the political situation, and it had been concluded that such a step could only be approved after martial law had been abolished. Actually at the moment of his return martial law was more active than ever: Alexandria and Cairo were for all practical purposes being administered by military authority, and many politicians of the Left were under restraint as a result of martial law ordinances: a heavy fine had been imposed on local subjects of the whole of Cairo, two Arabic newspapers had been suppressed, and a system of preventive arrests had been instituted. Zaghlul himself "did not complain of the climate of "Gibraltar", merely stating that he required "a change "of scene and congenial society". His health, therefore, can hardly have been the genuine reason for the sudden decision to enlarge him, especially as it was followed at once by the release of six members of the Wafd who had been arrested earlier in the month. Nor had the situation in regard to the outrages improved to any appreciable extent. We are left wondering why the decision was taken: was it yet another attempt on the part of the Residency to conjure away difficulties by concession? It was at any rate generally interpreted by the Egyptian Press as heralding a further profound change in British policy, and expectations were aroused which had in fact no justification.

On April 20 the Constitution was promulgated. It followed in regard to the Sudan the lines on which His Majesty's Government had insisted: it owed to

the intervention of the High Commissioner the absence of such reactionary provisions as the King's autocratic inclinations had desired to insert. Egyptian public opinion was on the whole grateful to Lord Allenby and approving of Yehia Pasha, although experienced opinion was inclined to be nervous of such a rapid advance in democracy in view of the actual state of political enlightenment among the masses. Still, things were definitely progressing towards the self-governing Utopia which Egyptians had been promised, and which we had convinced ourselves would do away with all our troubles. The next step was the relaxation of the more drastic provisions of martial law—punctuated by further bomb outrages. The Seychelles deportees were released in May along with other political suspects in Egypt, but it was not until July 5 that the necessary Indemnity law was finally promulgated and martial law abolished. Curiously enough the disappearance of martial law, the existence of which had been the Egyptian Nationalists' principal grievance, took place without any sign of popular enthusiasm, and was accorded no special reception even by the Press. The fact was that the attention and activities of all politically minded Egyptians were gradually being absorbed by the chances of the General Election which was expected to be held very shortly. Whether Zaghlul would return to Egypt for this event was still a matter of doubt, but it was quite certain that in his absence the Wafd chances of success would be very greatly reduced. Meanwhile the Prime Minister Yehia Pasha was proceeding with his task of clearing up the situation in preparation for a constitutional régime. It was of a piece with general Egyptian behaviour that he should have been bitterly attacked in the Press regarding

the Indemnity law, while the abolition of martial law was greeted almost with complete silence. The promulgation by the Government of certain restrictive ordinances designed to take the place of martial law and smooth over the transitional period did not add to the Ministry's popularity. But Yehia Pasha was not lacking in courage and proceeded forthwith to a settlement of the vexed question of European officials, their retirement, and compensation. The law finally passed upon this question did not secure to the officials the terms which His Majesty's Government had originally declared they would insist upon. It was accepted, however, because the existing state of affairs was intolerable, with retirements taking place haphazard; because the prospects of all officials were getting worse and worse, with the promotion of Egyptians to posts previously held by foreigners, and with the growth of a marked spirit of hostility among Egyptians towards their European colleagues; and because any settlement would certainly be far less favourable if it remained to be extracted from a Government responsible to elected representatives. The principle laid down in the law was that European permanent officials were granted the right, exercisable on or before October 31, 1923, of being retired on April 1, 1924, or of remaining on in service provisionally until April 1, 1927. The law was to be administered by a Committee consisting of equal numbers of Egyptian and foreign high officials; and retiring or dismissed officials were to be entitled to a definite compensation set out in detail in subsequent provisions of the law.

Yehia Pasha's term of office had indeed been prolific—an oasis in a barren desert of time. The Constitution, the Electoral law, the Indemnity law, the

abolition of martial law, were its larger fruits. The restrictive ordinances and the settlement of the question of European officials were less palatable; they did not conduce to his popularity, and fully counterbalanced the favour he might otherwise have won. The Pasha had indeed deserved the gratitude of his countrymen, but in the struggle for political power which now ensued his deserts were quite unnoticed. Out of the incidents of the past few months the King had undoubtedly emerged with a strengthened position. Although he had been forced to concede a more democratic Constitution than he himself desired, he had undoubtedly increased his personal influence, both by establishing a closer contact with the Zaghlulists, and by introducing his supporters into posts of administrative importance. The Zaghlulists, in the absence of their leader, lacked cohesion and direction. They had the programme which would inevitably appeal most strongly to an ignorant electorate—a programme of inflammatory catchwords—but for the moment they had not the strong personalities to make use of it. The moderate men—now formed into the Constitutional Liberal Party—under the leadership of Adly Pasha, were not in any better condition: they lacked the vigorous programme of the Zaghlulists, and they had no record of constructive work upon which to rely. Like all moderate parties in unenlightened countries, they were all leaders and no followers, supine rather than active, relying upon the hope that "everything would be all right on the night". The strongest figures in the situation were the King and Zaghlul Pasha: all now depended upon whether these two would come to an accommodation. If not, in the struggle which must ensue, who would emerge the victor?

From all this His Majesty's representative in Egypt was to hold himself aloof. Although the independence of Egypt had been established a year and a half before this, he had been compelled to intervene on several occasions in internal matters, and to continue the exercise of British direction and control. But now the Constitution was established, and he was looking forward to a period of release, when he could give Gallio's sentence to the contending parties, and drive them politely from the judgment seat. The hope was destined to disappointment, for although his power was perceptibly diminished, his responsibilities remained as great as ever. To the west the Italians in Cyrenaica were pressing for a settlement of the joint frontier, to the south the waters of the Nile were being jeopardised by Italian projects in Abyssinia: the question of the Capitulations, though temporarily in abeyance, was still alive: the defence of complex foreign and of wide Imperial interests still lay upon his shoulders. All these were matters which Egypt could never hope to bring single-handed to a favourable issue. We must work for her, and shield her without any assurance that she would not all the time be working against us. If the hopes which we had entertained of her reasonableness and goodwill were disappointed, our position would indeed be deplorable.

On September 17 Zaghlul Pasha landed at Alexandria, and received an enthusiastic but on the whole orderly welcome. The very same day he called upon the King, and had what was on both sides described as a satisfactory interview. At any rate the Pasha opened his public campaign in temperate tones—but not for long. The lessons of exile were soon forgotten, the evidences of his own power and popularity

mounted very soon to his head: and within a week or two, to the anger of the King and the delight of the extremists, he was vehemently attacking the Liberals, the Government, and the British, and putting forward the usual programme of comprehensive destruction. He was for rejecting the declaration of 1922 and revising the Constitution: all that had been accomplished by others was to be wiped out. He would begin again from the beginning and Egypt should owe nothing to anybody but Zaghlūl Pasha. "For the moment", he told a representative of the *Journal du Caire*, "we are only preoccupied with in-"dependence. It will be time enough to consider our "domestic policy when the fiction of our independence "is ended." The first step in the Elections was made on September 27 with the nomination of elector-delegates, and resulted in a sweeping success for the Wafd. The moderate politicians, as usual, entered the field too late, and with very little chance of overhauling the long lead which they had allowed the Wafd to establish. The Elections were not completed until January 1924, but even in so long a period the moderate parties recovered no ground, and in the event Zaghlul Pasha found himself with no less than a hundred and ninety reliable supporters in a Chamber of two hundred and fourteen members. The colossal triumph was due in some part to the vigour of the Wafd organisation as compared with the slackness of the Constitutional Liberals, but overwhelmingly to his own personal prestige. Zaghlul had excuse, therefore, for an increase in his personal vanity, but at any rate up to the Elections he had been acting with some restraint, appearing desirous of an understanding of some sort with England, and reserving his extreme violence for his hated rivals Adly and Sarwat Pashas,

and their followers. He was to some extent careful to differentiate between the Liberals and the existing Ministry of Yehia Pasha, and also not to say too much that might provoke the King. The High Commissioner had an interview with him in January, when the Elections were nearing conclusion, and found him upon the whole friendly. He was clearly desirous not to do anything that would embroil him formidably with the authority of England before he had time to reap his harvest of power. All his lessons were not entirely forgotten, but there was still no saying how he would react to the strong wine of administrative and popular control. There was little reason to suppose that his moderation would be proof against so heady a mixture, and the matter was very soon to be put to the test. On January 24 His Majesty accepted the resignation which Yehia Pasha had proffered as soon as the result of the Elections was beyond doubt. On the 27th the King requested Zaghlul Pasha to form a Government, and Zaghlul at a cordial interview accepted the responsibility.