

CHAPTER VI

THE DREADFUL AFTERMATH

THE time was now come when those who had been preparing the Egyptian soil since 1919 might expect to reap the harvest. The constitution was in active being. An Egyptian ministry responsible to no authority but that of the elected representatives of the people had taken over the administration of the country. If the seed had been well sown, the tree of self-government would in its due season bring forth the fruit of goodwill and good sense, and all would be ready for the festival of harvest—the settlement upon an amicable and reasonable basis of the matters reserved under the Declaration of 1922. Almost at the same time that Zaghlul Pasha was taking up the Premiership in Egypt, Mr. MacDonald was taking office in London as the head of the first Labour Government. The evidences, so frequent and so outspoken, of sympathy with Egyptian nationalist aspirations which had been given by the Labour Party could not but encourage Zaghlul to hope that he would get more favourable treatment from the new Government, and that English policy would undergo a marked change. He must have been fortified in this view by Mr. MacDonald's first intervention in Egyptian affairs. There were still suffering punishment in Egypt about 150 persons who had been convicted,

under the martial law régime, of murder, attempted murder, and bomb outrages. Zaghul asked that all those who had not been convicted of crimes against foreigners might be released. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald brushed aside Zaghul Pas̄a's cautious, if unexpected reservation, and promptly replied that all might be released without exception, provided that no danger to public security would result. Subsequently, at the opening of the Egyptian Parliament on March 15, a cordial telegram from the Prime Minister of England was read out, which conveyed hearty good wishes to the "newest of Parliaments". "I believe that Egypt and Great Britain will be tied "by a strong band of friendship, our desire being to "see this bond made stronger on a permanent basis. "For this purpose the Government of His Majesty "the King is ready now, and at any time, to negotiate "with the Egyptian Government". Against this may be set the terms of King Fuad's speech: "You have "before you one of the most grave and delicate tasks "upon which the future of Egypt depends, the task "of realising her complete independence in the true "meaning of the word. . . . My Government is ready "to enter into negotiations, free of all restrictions, with "the British Government, so as to realise our national "aspirations with regard to Egypt and the Sudan." On our side an unreserved and general acceptance of negotiation: on the Egyptian side a rigidly defined statement of their position, a repudiation of all previous negotiations, and a willingness to confer, carefully qualified by a reassertion of nationalist claims, which in regard to the Sudan was particularly brazen. It was a thoroughly bad beginning from our point of view. To display so speedy a desire to bargain was to weaken our position by showing a lack of firmness in

our policy and claims—a mistake which Egypt was careful not to make. Even if we had found it wise to declare our willingness, it was obviously a tactical error to accept the Egyptian proposal before we knew its terms, yet this was what in effect we did.

The situation which at once developed showed the gravity of our error. The attitude which we had adopted had no relation at all to the facts. The new Egyptian Ministry opened without delay a hostile campaign. It decided first of all to refuse to pay to retiring European officials the indemnities due under the Law 28 passed in the previous year. On March 10 Zaghul Pasha was informing the Residency that he proposed to modify this law and that he did not believe that the British Government would insist upon its strict application. From telegrams of expansive benevolence Mr. MacDonald was at once compelled to turn to grave warnings, the effect of which was of course weakened by his previous attitude. At the same time the Egyptian Ministry had lost no time in attacking British officials even at the expense of efficient administration. The railway administration had deteriorated to a point at which urgent reform was necessary. One British General Manager had already been retired; and his successor, finding that the Minister and his Under-Secretary either ignored or overruled his recommendations for reform, felt that his only course was to resign in his turn. At the same time the Ministry were busily arranging for the retirement in the course of the next three years of practically the whole European staff of the railways, although it was open to the gravest doubt whether Egyptians could be found with sufficient experience and capacity to replace them.

All these symptoms, combined with the references

in the King's Speech to the Sudan, made the British Government much more nervous than they had declared themselves to be in regard to negotiations, and Mr. MacDonald was anxious that, before inviting him to London, the High Commissioner should endeavour to find out how far Zaghul was prepared to go and upon what lines. It was quite clear, indeed, that if Zaghul Pasha was going to adhere to his repeated public asseverations, there could not be the least use in negotiation. But it was equally clear to Lord Allenby that the time for approaching Zaghul in these terms was past: he pointed out that hopes had been built in Egypt upon the advent of a Labour Government to office and that Zaghul was determined to present his case to them in person. He therefore refused even to consider the idea that Zaghul would not be reasonably prepared to compromise.¹ Mr. MacDonald wisely replied: "Until I have some indication that his [Zaghul's] aspirations do not conflict too hopelessly with our irreducible requirements regarding the Sudan and the defence of the Canal in particular, I would be unwilling to ask him to undertake negotiations in London".² The High Commissioner still thought that the step which had been taken could not be retraced. "Zaghul now seems well disposed and inclined to believe in our good faith, but of necessity our relations with him, although good, are still somewhat unstable, and largely depend on our doing nothing calculated to shake his confidence. . . . I do not by any means regard breakdown of negotiations as inevitable, and I hold strongly to the view that the course I propose offers best possible chances of success."³ The most tender consideration

¹ F.O. Despatch: Viscount Allenby to Mr. MacDonald, March 31, 1924.

² F.O. Despatch: Mr. MacDonald to Viscount Allenby, April 3, 1924.

³ F.O. Despatch: Viscount Allenby to Mr. MacDonald, April 6, 1924.

was still to be shown for Zaghlul, who, by surely the quaintest of mental processes, was now represented to be our only hope in Egypt. He must be coaxed to negotiate by every possible means; to that end Lord Allenby proposed that he should be authorised to tell Zaghlul that if Zaghlul agreed to an offensive and defensive alliance, by which Egypt would become a belligerent in the event of Great Britain finding herself at war, then His Majesty's Government would be willing to discuss the withdrawal of British troops from Cairo and Alexandria, would drop their claim to protect foreigners and minorities, would give Egypt a more effective participation in the administration of the Sudan, and would consider the abolition of the offices of Judicial and Financial Advisers.¹

Nothing, however, that could be done was likely to prevent the abject failure of the projected negotiations. The Egyptian loves bargaining, he approaches it with the glint of confidence in his eyes, watches his opponent with rapt attention, and, like the natural poker player, has an uncanny instinct in detecting from the slightest movement or expression the innermost thoughts of his adversary. The Englishman, on the other hand, dislikes bargaining and is hampered by the feeling that he is not much good at it. He is half beaten before he starts; his only chance is to make up his mind from the beginning what he wants, and to stick to it with the utmost firmness. His pertinacity may win, where his subtilty will fail: he must at all costs evince no eagerness. These being the rules of the game, we had from the very commencement been displaying a deplorable eagerness to come to terms: we had constantly been stating our irreducible minimum and immediately departing from it. Our

¹ Viscount Allenby to Mr. MacDonald, April 16, 1924.

one hope of making the 1922 Declaration a successful policy was to entrench ourselves firmly upon it, and wait with all the patience and calmness in the world for the Egyptians to make the first move. Particularly was this true at the moment when Zaghul, at the head of an extremist party, had just swept the Egyptian board: at such a time it was essential that he should be given no encouragement to "play politics", but should be left to tackle his administrative responsibilities. By his success or failure in dealing with those problems his true merit would be exposed to his countrymen: and for us would be acquired valuable information as to the capacity of Egypt to settle down into a reasonable common-sense frame of mind.

The conflict of opinion which was now becoming apparent between Cairo and Whitehall was inevitably resolved in favour of the High Commissioner's view. Not only were there strong arguments to support his proposition that the implications of Labour's declared policy could not be shirked, but Mr. MacDonald himself was now too far committed to negotiation. At any rate Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, at the beginning of April, sent a personal invitation to Zaghul Pasha to discuss matters with him in London towards the end of June or beginning of July, although he informed the High Commissioner at the same time that he must not discuss concessions with the Pasha, and "must on no account initiate proposals".¹

On April 18 Corporal Ryan of the Royal Air Force was murdered at Heliopolis; Egyptian opinion was clearly horrified by this renewal of political outrages, and as one of the murderers was caught red-handed, it was to be hoped that punishment would follow

¹ F.O. Despatch: Mr. MacDonald to Viscount Allenby, April 14, 1924.

swiftly upon the crime. That a further series of these brutal and senseless murders should break out was a consummation that could hardly be wished for by any party in Egyptian politics: and although there was some anxiety felt in regard to the state of public order, it was generally hoped and thought that Corporal Ryan's murder was merely a long-delayed result of an inflammation which was now subsiding. It could not unfortunately be concluded, however, that hostility to the British was also on the wane. Hard upon the retirement of Mr. Verschoyle, the British General Manager of the Railways, and the attempted attack upon the indemnities of European officials, came a decision of the Cabinet to amalgamate the Budgets of the Financial and Judicial Advisers with the Budgets of their respective Ministries; a first step towards the abolition of these officers' power of effective intervention. Not one of these incidents seems to have shaken Lord Allenby's faith in the success of negotiations with Zaghul: throughout the end of April and the beginning of May he was constantly telegraphing to the Prime Minister London in reassuring reports of Zaghul's good intentions and varied suggestions for calming the Pasha's over-sensitive reactions to rumours of the British Government's attitude.¹ "I realise how irksome he is, and it is quite possible he is hoping to manœuvre His Majesty's Government into taking their stand less firmly on the Declaration, but I trust it may be possible to make some statement which may suffice to reassure him."² All this backing and filling on the part of Zaghul was of course designed to produce if possible some recession on the part of England from the 1922 De-

¹ F.O. Despatch: Viscount Allenby to Mr. MacDonald, May 3, 1924.

² F.O. Despatch: Viscount Allenby to Mr. MacDonald, May 23, 1924.

claration. If we were so anxious for negotiation as we had shown ourselves, perhaps by holding off, he might have induced us, in our eagerness, to make some move to his advantage. Mr. MacDonald was, however, fortunately alive to the possibilities, and he told the High Commissioner in dignified and impressive language quite definitely that for the present he had had enough. "The position of Great Britain in Egypt, whatever Egyptians may try to make out, is juridically and internationally perfectly legal. Egypt was *de jure* and *de facto* a British protectorate. For reasons of their own and of their own motion His Majesty's Government modified that status and granted a measure of independence. His Majesty's Government alone were able or had the right to do this, and Egyptian independence, so far as it exists, is the direct consequence of action of His Majesty's Government. . . . The chief advantage of negotiating with Zaghul lies in the probability that an agreement accepted by him would be endorsed by Egypt. . . . Unless this question can be answered in the affirmative, the advantages of negotiating with Zaghul are largely discounted. If, however, an affirmative reply can be given, the obvious inference is that Zaghul is exaggerating his difficulties with the double object (a) of contracting something, which in the event of failure of negotiations, he could represent as an admission that without Egyptian recognition the Declaration of 1922 is ineffective, (b) of making His Majesty's Government appear as the party who are striving at all costs to promote the negotiations in order to legalise an otherwise untenable position."¹

This was a very refreshing though tardy recognition of the facts, and a lucid appreciation of the

¹ F.O. Despatch: Mr. MacDonald to Viscount Allenby, May 30, 1924.

real meaning of Zaghul's manœuvres. It was of course quite useless, as the Prime Minister was already suspecting, to negotiate with him, but unfortunately the invitation had already been received and accepted.

Meanwhile another dangerous situation had arisen as the result of the uncertainty to which our policy of hurried negotiation had given rise. On May 8 the Governor-General of the Sudan reported to the High Commissioner that a considerable increase in Egyptian propaganda was taking place in that country, which was having its effect in the larger towns of the north, and uttered a warning that definite steps might have to be taken to counteract these subversive activities. His warning was soon justified. In the middle of June there was rioting at Omdurman as a direct result of political demonstration organised by Egyptian agitators. Although the situation was now becoming grave, the Egyptian Government proceeded to demonstrate their entire lack of any sense of responsibility by telegraphing at this point ridiculous protests to London and Khartoum against what they were pleased to call the attempts of British officials to foment an artificial separatist movement in the Sudan. A firm statement on June 25 in the House of Lords that the British Government had no intention "to abandon the Sudan in any sense whatever" came as usual too late: the atmosphere remained violently disturbed in Omdurman and Khartoum, and demonstrations continued to take place, although Lord Allenby was able to furnish evidence to London which left little doubt that the Watanist and Zaghulist parties were providing both inspiration and financial support. At the beginning of August there was a more serious development, when the cadets of

the military school at Khartoum paraded the town and threatened to resist their disarmament; while at the same time the Egyptian railway battalion at Atbara got out of hand and order had to be restored by rifle-fire from the Arab mounted infantry. Having done nothing to discourage but having actively connived at Egyptian subversive activities in the Sudan, Zaghul's Government now took a further step and published a communique which allowed the inference to be drawn that the firing at Atbara had been carried out by British troops. They then adopted a very grave tone with the British Government and shook their heads over the serious effect this might have in Egypt.

Truly, the record of their hostility, unreason, and irresponsibility was becoming more than any civilised government could endure. In addition to the grave infringements of the *status quo*, and their flagrant disregard of engagements entered into by their country, which have already been described, the Council of Ministers was now proposing to strike out of the Budget the annual subvention of the army of occupation upon which the Egyptian Government had decided in 1907, and to discontinue the service of the Ottoman Loans secured upon the Egyptian tribute. On June 25 the Egyptian Government did actually default in regard to the former payment. On June 26 the Senate passed a Resolution protesting against the statement of Sudanese policy made in the House of Lords, and Zaghul made an interesting admission in the Chamber of Deputies when he said that this statement showed that, contrary to expectation, the attitude of the British had not been modified by the advent of a Labour Government. He followed this up by talking of the futility of negotiation,

and then made one of his spectacular resignations. It was a poor bluff, which he employed on subsequent occasions also, solely intended to improve his personal position among the less acute of his followers. His administration had done nothing of real internal value, having been chiefly preoccupied with finding posts for its political supporters: the Legislature too, apart from its heated excursions into external politics, had done nothing but vote to its members a salary of £500 per annum on account of the high cost of living. With such a record behind him, and undeterred by an attempt—apparently Watanist—to murder him, Zaghlul left for England on July 25 for the purpose of negotiating an amicable and reasonable agreement with the British Government. The negotiations which took place with Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in London were as utterly farcical as might have been expected. They did not commence until September 25, for Zaghlul Pasha proceeded first to Paris, from which point of vantage there ensued another series of skirmishing letters between himself and Mr. MacDonald, at one point of which the Egyptian representative called off negotiations finally. After this finesse the parties met and indulged in a certain amount of ineffective recrimination upon the minor incidents of recent history. "Discussion of a preliminary nature" had taken place. At the next meeting Zaghlul stated his wants: withdrawal of the British Army from Egypt and of the Financial and Judicial Advisers; disappearance of every vestige of British control, and that His Majesty's Government should drop their claim to protect foreigners, minorities, and the Suez Canal. That, he said, was all he could think of for the moment in regard to Egypt. "A further conversation" had taken place. On October 3 Zaghlul

reiterated his wants in greater detail. British troops could protect the Suez Canal from Palestine, but he would not hear of their being on Egyptian soil upon any terms, and he could not understand how Great Britain could claim any right to protect the Canal. "Conversations were concluded. Zaghlul Pasha is returning shortly to Egypt in view of the inclement weather."

The whole affair had indeed degenerated into farce. But such grotesque antics were not to occupy the stage for long; the grim figure of tragedy was already approaching from the wings. For the moment, however, Zaghlul Pasha was free to continue his heedless posturing. He returned to Cairo at the end of October, and on November 15 staged a trial of strength with King Fuad. He forced His Majesty's surrender by resignation accompanied by serious and avowed preparations for disorderly demonstrations against His Majesty's throne and person. He gained his immediate object but did his cause much harm by this ill-judged action. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald's Government had left office at the end of October and had been succeeded by a Conservative Ministry, with Mr. Austen Chamberlain at the Foreign Office. Mr. MacDonald had been considering, with the support of the High Commissioner, the making of a representation to the Egyptian Government upon the subject of their repeated infringements of the *status quo*, and Mr. Austen Chamberlain forthwith continued the discussion with Cairo as to the form such a representation should take. All the while such infringements were increasing: the last being Zaghlul's refusal on November 18 to allow the post of Judicial Adviser to continue, or to renew the contract of the incumbent, Sir M. Amos.

On the following day occurred a crime so senseless and so directly arising out of the persistent behaviour of the Egyptian Government that it could not fail violently to affect the minds of those in authority. Soon after midday on November 19 Sir Lee Stack, Sirdar of the Egyptian Army and Governor-General of the Sudan, was driving away from the Ministry of War in Cairo. As his car was drawing near the Ministry of Education, several persons dressed as effendis attacked it with revolvers, mortally wounding Sir Lee Stack, escaping afterwards in motor-cars which were waiting for them. The Sirdar was taken to the Residency, where he died the following night. The crime was not an isolated one; it was rather the dramatic culmination of the campaign of hatred of Great Britain which had been fomented by Egyptian politicians for so long. That campaign Zaghul Pasha had often incited when in opposition: and finally, when he had assumed responsibility for the government of Egypt, he had done nothing officially to discourage it. It must be remembered that his Government had, ever since its inception, been making the question of the Sudan the burning political question of the moment, and Sir Lee Stack was Governor-General of the Sudan. Zaghul Pasha had himself declared in public speeches that the presence of a British Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army was an insult to the independence of Egypt, and Sir Lee Stack was Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army. The crime was as nearly as possible directly attributable to the incitement of the Prime Minister of Egypt, who, not content with such incitement, had been filling high administrative posts with men from among his supporters who were strongly suspected of complicity

in previous murderous assaults upon Englishmen. It was only natural that with his colleague and countryman dying in his house, with the remembrance of all that Egypt owed to Englishmen fresh in his mind, this dreadful evidence of the utterly irresponsible wilfulness of an independent Egypt should act with violence upon Lord Allenby's mind. He proposed at once that Egypt should be taught a stern lesson. "The spirit of indiscipline and hatred which the Egyptian Government have incited by public speeches and through the activities of their Wafd cannot but be regarded as contributory to the crime." He proposed to demand an apology, the punishment of the assailants, the payment of half a million pounds as indemnity, and that the Egyptian Government should agree to an unlimited increase of the area in the Sudan to be irrigated under the Gezira scheme, and to meet the wishes of Great Britain in regard to the future employment of European officials. Such was his immediate reaction, but the Secretary of State was not at once convinced of the wisdom of all these demands. He pointed out that, in addition to a full apology and the punishment of the guilty, what the British Government required were measures by the Egyptian Government that would ensure the cessation of these dastardly outrages. Indemnity he regarded as unnecessary and unimportant, but he was of the opinion that the removal of Egyptian units and Egyptian officers from the Sudan should be demanded. Before, however, these conflicting views could be reconciled, Lord Allenby had anticipated the sanction of the Cabinet and presented his demands to the Egyptian Government. His motive was the fear that Zaghul might have time to make another resignation—this time effective—before he was

brought to book and responsibility fastened upon him, The communication, unauthorised by the British Government, presented by the High Commissioner to the Prime Minister of Egypt, ran as follows: "The Governor-General of the Sudan and Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, who was also a distinguished officer of the British Army, has been brutally murdered in Cairo. His Majesty's Government consider that this murder, which holds up Egypt as at present governed to the contempt of civilised peoples, is the natural outcome of a campaign of hostility to British rights and British subjects in Egypt and Sudan, founded upon a heedless ingratitude for benefits conferred by Great Britain, not discouraged by Your Excellency's Government and fomented by organisations in close contact with that Government. Your Excellency was warned by His Majesty's Government little more than a month ago of the consequences of failing to stop this campaign more particularly as far as it concerned the Sudan. It has not been stopped. The Egyptian Government have now allowed the Governor-General of the Sudan to be murdered, and have proved that they are incapable or unwilling to protect foreign lives. His Majesty's Government therefore require that the Egyptian Government shall

"(1) Present ample apology for the crime.

"(2) Prosecute enquiry into the authorship of the crime with the utmost energy and without respect of persons, and bring the criminals, whoever they are, and whatever their age, to condign punishment.

"(3) Henceforth forbid and vigorously suppress all popular political demonstrations.

- “(4) Pay forthwith to His Majesty’s Government
“a fine of £500,000.
- “(5) Order within 24 hours the withdrawal from
“the Sudan of all Egyptian officers, and the
“purely Egyptian units of the Sudan army
“with such resulting changes as shall be
“hereafter specified.
- “(6) Notify the competent Department that the
“Sudan Government will increase the area
“to be irrigated at Gezira from 300,000 fed-
“dans to an unlimited figure as need may
“arise.
- “(7) Withdraw all opposition in the respects here-
“after specified to the wishes of His Majesty’s
“Government concerning the protection of
“foreign interests in Egypt.

“Failing immediate compliance with these demands,
“His Majesty’s Government will at once take appro-
“priate action to safeguard their interests in Egypt
“and the Sudan.”

A second immediately following communication set out the specific requirements to which reference had been made. The Sudanese units of the Egyptian Army to be made into a Sudan defence force, owing allegiance to the Sudan Government alone: rules relating to the service, discipline, and retirement of foreign officials still employed by the Egyptian Government and financial conditions governing pensions of foreign officials already retired to be revised in accordance with the wishes of His Majesty’s Government. The posts of Financial and Judicial Advisers and the European Department of the Interior to be maintained with status and powers intact pending the conclusion of an agreement between the two Govern-

ments on the question of the protection of foreign interests. These two communications were handed to the Prime Minister at 5 P.M. on November 23, and meanwhile the Cabinet in London were deliberating upon the terms of an ultimatum which had in fact already been delivered. Their decision, by this time valueless, was telegraphed the same evening to Cairo and contained the following requirements:

- (1) Apology.
- (2) Punishment.
- (3) In order that the rights reserved to His Majesty's Government under the Declaration of February 28, 1922, shall be secured, and that the peaceful development and the welfare of the inhabitants of the Sudan shall in future be protected from subversive activities of Egyptian origin, all Egyptian officers and units to be withdrawn from Sudan.
- (4) Remaining units to be constituted into a Sudan defence force under the Governor-General.
- (5) Annual payment of £1 million by Egypt in respect of the services rendered by the Sudan defence force.
- (6) Undertaking to appoint as Governor-General the nominee of His Majesty's Government.
- (7) Agreement to such extension of Gezira irrigation as may be considered possible without detriment to Egypt by a technical commission containing a member appointed by the Egyptian Government.
- (8) The maintenance of the posts of Financial and Judicial Advisers and preservation of their powers and privileges as existing on March 1, 1922: also respect for the status and present

attributes of the European Department of the Interior and for the recommendations of the Director-General.

This note which the Cabinet decided upon omitted the indemnity as well as the question of service and retirement of foreign officials. It considerably softened the Gezira demand, and made the remaining demands much more logical and coherent. Lord Allenby explained the precipitancy of his action upon three grounds: (1) of Zaghul's impending resignation; (2) because Egyptian opinion was prepared for severe measures at the moment, but was likely very rapidly to become less so as the first shock of the murder passed off; (3) because the foreign colonies were very much excited and were being increasingly worked up by the foreign Press, and there was reason to fear from them hostile demonstrations against Egyptians and against His Majesty's Government. The delay would, as a matter of fact, have been one in any case rather of hours than of days, but the High Commissioner was indeed the only person who could accurately estimate the degree of urgency. The courage and capacity for swift decision which he displayed were beyond praise: and these are qualities which are apt to be undervalued by those in the safe and sequestered atmosphere of Whitehall, who have never experienced the heat and burden of Egyptian conditions, or felt the strain of desperate issues encountered daily face to face. In regard to the difference between his terms and the Cabinet's, Lord Allenby held the opinion that the infliction of an indemnity and the increase of the Gezira irrigation in the Sudan were essential, in order to bring home to Egyptians at large the gravity of the crime and the fact that the

British Government still possessed both the power and the will to strike effectively in a just cause. The fact might, it is true, very easily have been lost sight of in the events of the last few years, and it was good that Egypt should be vividly reminded of it. But in regard to the method employed the question was on a more doubtful footing. As the Secretary of State had pointed out, what Great Britain required was an effective assurance that the activities that had caused the crime should cease. Neither the indemnity nor the attempt to force agreement in regard to Gezira would contribute in any way to this end: and both therefore would have the appearance, if not in Egypt, to the world at large, of an unnecessary assertion of dominant power. Moreover, any punitive action in regard to Gezira would certainly hit those people—the fellaheen—upon whom no responsibility, direct or indirect, for the crime could justly be fastened; whose interests, moreover, it was our foremost duty to regard, and whose support was essential to our case. Swift punishment of the offenders and a full apology were essential: of that there was no doubt. For the rest the crux of the whole problem was the Sudan, and Egypt's attitude and behaviour towards it. That Egyptian troops and disaffected officials should be withdrawn from that country was a step which was fully justified by the circumstances of the crime, and was, moreover, urgently demanded in the interests of the Sudan itself: and it was perfectly proper that the Egyptian Government should be compelled to signify its recognition of the Sudan condominium, and of its instrument, the Anglo-Egyptian agreement of 1887 under penalty of such actions as England might think fit to take there. The Sudan cry was in truth insincere and false, an inven-

tion of political agitation, which had no real meaning and was producing terrible results. No Egyptian who could make a living in Egypt or elsewhere had any desire to go to the Sudan, or any interest in the fate of the Sudanese: their one concern was the assurance of their water supply, as to which they had no real misgivings. The Sudanese for their part hated the Egyptians and had no desire to be affiliated to them. The Sudanese schoolboy who was asked to compose an essay on railways voiced a national opinion when he wrote tersely: "Railways are accursed of God: they "allow the Egyptians to come to our country".

For good or for ill, however, Lord Allenby's ultimatum went forth; and all that remained was to await the Egyptian reply. This was received the next day and followed the lines that might have been anticipated. It expressed without reserve a full measure of horror at the crime, but no symptom of any realisation that the Government shared responsibility for the commission of such a crime upon Egyptian soil. Apology, punishment, and indemnity it would agree to: but it lightly declared that it would not accept any other of the suggestions made for protecting the peace and welfare of the Sudan and the security of foreign lives in Egypt. The High Commissioner acted with promptitude upon receipt of this childishly irresponsible reply, and informed the Egyptian Government that instructions were being issued at once for the withdrawal of Egyptian officers and units from the Sudan and giving full liberty to the Sudan Government to increase the area to be irrigated at Gezira. He also proposed for the consideration of His Majesty's Government the seizure of the tobacco customs, and an imposing naval and military display, coupled with the rupture of diplo-

matic relations. He further suggested that hostages should be taken and that they should be shot if the murders continued. It is somewhat difficult to understand the purport of the last two of these proposals. The seizure of the customs, which was in fact carried out—again without authorisation from England—did at least provide a visible proof of determination and at the same time a source of revenue which could be employed in satisfaction of the requirement relating to officials. But the rupture of diplomatic relations would be ineffective unless we were prepared to follow it by a declaration of war, and a declaration of war could obviously not be contemplated. We had in fact landed ourselves as a result of our policy in a position that was weak to the verge of bankruptcy, and the fact was clearly demonstrated by the suggestion in regard to hostages. That was a counsel of wild despair; if we could not prevent the killing of innocent Europeans, except by the killing of innocent Egyptians, we had indeed reached the last stage of powerless ineptitude. Had we in fact still the power to control the situation? Let us suppose that the Egyptian Government had remained in office and maintained its refusal to accept our demands. In such a case what step could we have taken to enforce them? We already had an army in occupation of Egypt, and we could have reinforced that army and taken over the administration of the country, rescinding the Declaration of Independence. Did the Government of Great Britain seriously contemplate such a step? And, if not, what other effective action was possible? The dilemma was novel and unpleasant, and we were lucky to be saved from it by Zaghul's resignation. Fortunately for us at this crisis his courage deserted him. He was harassed by fears for his personal safety

and was anticipating arrest and even condign punishment. On the 24th his resignation became definite and Ahmed Ziwar Pasha was invited to form a Ministry in his place.

For the moment, therefore, our difficulties were eased. The further troubles in the Sudan will be described elsewhere. In Egypt the question now to be decided was what policy to pursue in relation to the new *Cabinet d'affaires* which had succeeded Zaghul Pasha. The situation was temporarily quiet enough, with most of the schoolboys—Zaghul's army—on strike, but none of our important demands had as yet been accepted and the customs were still in our occupation.

Both the High Commissioner and the Secretary of State appear to have breathed a sigh of relief at the turn affairs had taken at Zaghul's resignation, and to have welcomed the event as a heaven-sent opportunity to extricate themselves from a thoroughly unpleasant situation. They agreed that much might be expected from the new Ministry and that they must adopt towards it an attitude characterised by benevolent goodwill. Ziwar Pasha was accordingly informed that the Customs would be evacuated, if his Government would agree: (1) to maintain the autonomy of the Financial and Judicial Advisers in respect of their budgets; (2) to accept the Financial Adviser's advice in respect of cases of substantial difference of opinion as to conditions of retirement or service of any foreign officials; (3) to pay foreign pensions at favourable rate of exchange; (4) to accept certain other changes operating generally to the material advantage of European officials. These conditions were a substantial recession from the original demands and were accepted without much difficulty,

and the Customs were accordingly evacuated on December 2.

But the rest of our demands were still awaiting settlement. Very little was being done in regard to the investigation of the crime. The only arrests so far made had been carried out by the British military authority—Nekrashi Bey, Makram Obeid, and Abdel Rahman Fahmy, of whom it was reported that they had sworn an oath that they would continue the murder of Europeans, were by these means confined in the Citadel. The Prime Minister had actually refused to arrest them himself, but afterwards agreed to take them over, and also to make a number of other preventive arrests. All this, however, was getting no nearer to punishment of the murderers of the Sirdar, and had it not been for the presence and the detective ability of the British police officers, it is very unlikely that the murderers would have been brought to justice. As to the Sudan, the withdrawal of Egyptian officers and units was carried to a successful conclusion, but the Gezira demand was gradually and inevitably transformed into a proposal to settle the water question by means of a Commission presided over by a neutral chairman, and having an Egyptian representative as one of its members. The Water Commission was presided over by Mr. Carter Cremers, and should have reported on June 30, but owing to Mr. Cremers's illness in the spring it had to adjourn its labours until the autumn without submitting a report.

The question of the appointment of a Sirdar of the Egyptian Army ended in a manner curiously humiliating to us. The independence of Egypt had made it essential to separate the two posts of Governor-General of the Sudan and Sirdar, which had hitherto

been held by one officer. The Sudan defence force had now been constituted and it was accordingly essential to decide who should be appointed to the Sirdarship of the Egyptian Army. Lord Allenby thought¹ that an Egyptian Sirdar should be appointed, on the ground that such a step would accord with the 1922 policy, and that no objectionable developments were seriously likely to result. It is hardly necessary to point out that such a proposal conflicted fundamentally with the 1922 Declaration. Finally it was decided to leave the appointment in abeyance. The murder of Sir Lee Stack had thus, if it had not yet secured an Egyptian Sirdar, at least, done away with a British Sirdar very successfully.

As to foreign officials, the conditions laid down by the British Government and accepted by the Egyptian Government had the effect of providing them with a new opportunity to fix, if they wished, the date of their retirement, and thereafter to re-engage upon a contract basis in the service of the Egyptian Government. The matter was entirely one for officials themselves to decide in their own interests. The result was cataclysmic, and would have sadly surprised the prophets of the Milner Mission. Out of a total of 1051 officials 740 took the opportunity thus presented to them. Whereas under previous arrangements 134 officials were due to retire in 1925, that year would now see the retirement of 793: and whereas 832 officials had originally opted to remain until 1927, now only 171 would remain until that date. Five years from the inauguration of the new policy would see the end of the European officials, if steps were not taken to prevent this consummation.

¹ F.O. Despatch: Lord Allenby to Mr. Austen Chamberlain, February 12, 1925.

The story of the investigation into the crime is thrilling enough to satisfy even the modern taste, and in its police stages was brought by British efforts to an 'extremely successful conclusion. Its hero is a former Egyptian student who in 1915 had been induced by agitators, of whom he was the dupe, to attempt the life of King Hussein. For ten years he worked out his resulting sentence in the stone quarries of Tura, and refused to say a word which could implicate his tutors in crime. But his thoughts were always of revenge, and when at last he was released under the amnesty of 1923 he had had an unforgettable lesson. While he had run the risk and suffered the penalty, the men whose tool he had been had taken no risk and undergone no suffering but had reaped all the reward. He came out of prison knowing full well who was responsible for his sufferings and determined upon revenge. By a stroke of genius the police got into touch with him and managed by patient handling to win his confidence. His plan was to win the confidence of the murder gang, and to pose as burning to avenge upon the British the hardships of his sentence. But time could not be lost: a very daring plan was therefore decided upon in order to secure a confession from one of the gang. For this purpose the weakest member of the gang was selected; the idea being to frighten him into deciding to run away, to catch him in the act and secure a confession from his panic. Very wisely it was decided that the way to frighten him was to arrest two of his comrades, of whom it was known that they were ring-leaders. All went smoothly: the frightened conspirator, whose nerves were played upon by the police, decided to bolt for Cyrenaica and was neatly scooped up in the desert. At that point his terror was too

much for him and he gave vent to a long and detailed confession as a result of which it was possible to put on trial eight of those concerned in the murder, seven of whom were sentenced to death on June 7, 1925. Better still, evidence of substance was at last secured against the two members of the Wafd, Ahmed Maher and Nekrashi, whom Zaghul had honoured in spite of their complicity.

The seven murderers of Sir Lee Stack were executed in August 1925, and at that date the fate of our ultimatum to Egypt stood as follows: Of the seven demands we had made upon her the first and the fourth relating to an apology and a fine alone had been complied with, and they were from any point the least important: the fifth relating to the withdrawal of Egyptian units from the Sudan had been refused and subsequently carried out by us: the demand in regard to irrigation at Gezira had been so transformed that it ceased to have any relevance to the questions of reparation or punishment: the demand for the suppression of political demonstrations had, with the change of government, lost its intended meaning: and the demands made with a view to the protection of foreign interests had been in some important respects substantially modified, and in other respects had resulted in a sudden and serious diminution in the number of foreign officials employed. There remained only the demand for punishment of the murderers; seven of them had, owing to brilliant detective work by the British police, no longer hampered by the departments of government concerned, been arrested and executed. But a miscarriage of Egyptian justice did, as we shall see, result in the escape of one of those who most deserved that an exemplary penalty should be exacted from him.

Meanwhile cold-blooded murder had succeeded in securing one of the principal objects of our enemies—the post of Sirdar of the Egyptian Army was no longer to be filled by a British officer. As far as Egypt was concerned, once again she had been allowed to escape the consequences of her folly and her crime. Once again she had been allowed to believe that our anger was but sound and fury, and could be provoked with impunity, and once again the heart of Pharaoh was hardened.