

**A FEW WORDS ON THE
ANGLO-EGYPTIAN
SETTLEMENT**



Photo by Geo.

The Author.

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ANGLO-EGYPTIAN
SETTLEMENT

By

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Twenty-three years Khedive of Egypt

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To the memory of my lamented
friend Benjamin L. Mosely, the pioneer
of the struggle begun in 1906 for the attainment
of cordial relations between Britain and Egypt.

In this movement he was close associate
of my friend the Rt. Hon. J. M. Robertson late
Member of the British Parliament and an old
and sincere supporter of Egyptian Constitutional
freedom.

Alfred Hilmi.

PREFACE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

I SHOULD indeed be without heed either for my human obligations or for my duties as a prince if I could follow without deep interest the evolution of a land which I love and whose interests and traditions I have for more than twenty years defended. Patriotism alone would have sufficed to make clear to me my path, even if my loyalism had not first revealed it to me. I have followed with sympathetic interest the efforts of Egyptians for the independence of their country, and the establishment of a sound régime founded on national sovereignty.

I am deeply interested in Egyptian matters, and I contemplate with anxiety the struggle carried on by Egypt's inhabitants for the conquest of their liberties.

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Never at any time have I spared myself for the good of the country; I have spared neither counsel nor sincere thought in the course of the discussions between Egyptian negotiators and the British Government. I have always hoped that the efforts of them all might be crowned with success, being desirous to see the Fatherland finally set free from the sorrowful situation which it has endured since 1882.

There is no need for me to dwell upon the history of the years between 1882 and 1892. Owing to the death of my father I was called upon to assume the heavy duties of State, and to ascend the throne at the age of eighteen. Leaving school, completely devoid of experience to prepare me to shoulder such a heavy burden, I was almost overwhelmed by a task of such difficulty and complexity. Of course I was aware that the country was under military occupation by a foreign army, but in my first

month I realised that the civil administration of the country was penetrated by the British with the object of supplanting the Egyptian Executive and Government. This fact impressed itself vividly upon my mind. This is not the occasion to relate in detail all the events which followed this impression. The sole thing I wish to recall here is that the interference of the British authorities in Egypt was the cause of the discord which arose between them and me. I well recall my first official visit to England; I then made contact with personages holding high positions in Great Britain and in English society.

I found myself in a world differing totally from that which continually surrounded me at Cairo. I made great efforts to get into closer contact with the Executive of the Government at London, but I felt my endeavours were frustrated by some indefinable influence at work. I realise now

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that I might profitably have made it a practice to visit London every year, but that was made impossible. The British authorities in Egypt had every interest in putting obstacles in the way and preventing any closer contact between me and London; and every winter brought me so many incidents that my presence in London was made very difficult.

I have followed with much interest the negotiations in Egypt during the decade 1919-1929—negotiations which have had their primary cause in the uprising of the Egyptian people at the end of the War, and which have ended in various conventions for the adjustment of conflicting claims in reply to criticisms. These have had one common similarity in diversity, inasmuch as they all more or less failed to satisfy the aspirations of the Egyptians. But I consider that great progress has been made toward the attainment of this end. I allude

to the coming to power of a British Government determined on the solution of this question by the employment of peaceful means and just dealing. My position is this: A settlement such as is proposed to-day in the projected treaty may be accepted as a basis for the future relations of the two countries, and time and experience will furnish opportunities to remedy all the defects hitherto disclosed in preceding conventions. No treaty ever yet made between nations was perfect. All are the product of human intelligence, which is necessarily fallible. Only the passage of Time, that great enlightener, can reveal defects which must be remedied to keep pace with the perpetual change in human affairs.

Immediately I learned the principal lines of the proposed settlement, as set out in the Anglo-Egyptian White-book of August 1929, I made a declaration in the pages of

the *Manchester Guardian*, in which my position was clearly stated.

In that declaration I made 'an appeal to the Egyptians to forget their divisions in face of an opportunity so serious and so fraught with the future well-being of Egypt and the assurance of the liberty of her people. It was in full consciousness of this that I reminded Egyptian politicians that Mohammed Mahmoud Pasha had been one of their number from the beginning of the struggle, and that this moment was certainly a very ill-chosen one in which to reproach him for past conduct, however reprehensible that conduct might seem to certain critics. I pointed out that fairness and justice to political opponents was a duty incumbent on all, and that before passing sentence one must be sure that it is passed on the one really responsible. Is it not a truism that in the world of politics the originator and the executor of a policy are

very rarely found united in one and the same individual?

“Mahmoud Pasha is a person with whom we refuse to have any dealings.” Such is the cry of many Egyptian politicians at this critical time. I reply that if during my twenty-three years of politics in Egypt I had refused to make use of a man’s service solely on the ground that he had committed faults and mistakes in the past, I should never have been able to work with anyone at all. *Humanum est errare*. As proof of the defectiveness of the Egyptian Constitution I will cite the case of the late Prime Minister, Mustapha Nahas Pasha. I know him well, and appreciate him as a sincere Egyptian patriot. But, when he came to power, I fully anticipated that his régime would be one of very short duration, and so the event proved. Let us bear in mind the circumstances of his dismissal, and the text of the letter which dismissed him from

power. It is unjust to consider anyone responsible for an event which neither he nor anyone else can be presumed to have desired. Let us dismiss the discussion of that in face of more vital issues. That which Mohammed Mahmoud has obtained for us to-day is vastly more important than the futile discussion of dead controversies. Let us face facts. Parliament is suppressed, but it is an inherent indisputable right belonging to the Egyptian nation that it shall be restored whenever they decide that it *must* be restored. Every Egyptian must be convinced that his primary duty is to defend the Constitution, and only by national union will his legitimate patriotic desires be obtained. But the proposed treaty with Britain is in another case; for if at this moment, when such weighty matters are in the balance, the internecine discords of Egyptian politicians are allowed to prevail, with the result that the projected treaty is

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compromised or abandoned, then it may well be that such an opportunity may be lost beyond recovery. Such is my message to the Egyptian people.

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