

The New Situation in Egypt.

I.

Twenty-seven years ago I wrote a series of articles in the *Fortnightly Review*, then edited by Mr. John Morley, which were afterwards published under the title "The Future of Islam." They were written at a moment of acute crisis in Mahometan affairs, when an intellectual battle was being fought between the two great forces in Islam—on the one hand that of religious and political reform on a liberal basis, on the other that of fanaticism and reaction. I thought that if I could make Mr. Gladstone, who was then Prime Minister, and Mr. Morley and the Liberal party understand that a liberal and humanitarian movement existed among Mahometans they would certainly support it. At Constantinople it had been betrayed by the Sultan Abdul Hamid and was utterly prostrate, but it was alive still in Syria and Egypt, and it had risen in strength at Cairo in connection with the national movement of 1881. Its success or failure depended on how the battle in Egypt might go, and England's support to it or lack of support would most certainly decide the issue. The Reformers were looking confidently to the English Liberal party, and especially to Mr. Gladstone, as their natural allies—indeed, it seemed impossible it should be otherwise.

Unfortunately, however, for my pleading, there were financial interests in Egypt which primed all others at the Foreign Office and in the London press. Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Morley, and the Liberal party allowed themselves to be persuaded that the national movement was an intrigue, the constitutional demand a pretence, and the Reformers fanatics. They would not acknowledge the Constitution which the Reformers, with the help of the army, had won. A British fleet was sent to Alexandria to coerce them, and a British army to Ismailia. After a brief campaign the Nationalist army was defeated at Tel-el-Kebir and

10,000 Egyptian peasant recruits massacred ; Cairo was occupied ; the Constitution by a stroke of the pen was abrogated ; and a *régime* of absolute power, backed by British bayonets, was re-established. This betrayal of liberty by England sealed the fate of the Reform movement in Islam for a whole generation. At Cairo the Liberal Sheykhs and civilian leaders were arrested, imprisoned, and exiled ; a Sheykh el Islam of the most reactionary type was named to replace his predecessor, who had approved the Constitution, and the obscurantist faction in the Azhar has ever since reigned supreme. Nor was the effect confined to Egypt. From that moment the Sultan Abdul Hamid, with the field clear before him, was able so effectively to establish his religious authority on a reactionary basis that he maintained himself till the other day at Constantinople in more absolute authority than any Sultan or Caliph has wielded in the whole history of Islam. For all this England was responsible.

To-day we find the condition of Mahometan things very closely repeated, and a new opportunity given to the English Liberal party to repair the evil done in 1882. The forces of reform have again gathered strength in Turkey ; the Sultan has been obliged to submit to its dictation ; a Constitution has again been proclaimed. This time I rejoice to see that, instead of sending a fleet to coerce the Reformers, England has come forward at once as their chief supporter ; Sir Edward Grey has expressed his approval, the British Ambassador has taken part without reserve in the general rejoicings, and everywhere the resentment and distrust with which England has so long been regarded have disappeared in a new popularity—a wonderful transformation truly, showing what the sunshine of sympathy can do where the storm blasts of coercion have hopelessly failed. It almost seems as though those responsible for our Eastern policy had adopted as their own the concluding words, if I may be allowed to quote them, of my book already alluded to. "England," I said in summing up my plea for a liberal attitude towards Mahometan hopes, "should fulfil the trust she has accepted of developing, not

destroying, the existing elements of good in Asia. She cannot destroy Islam nor dissolve her own connection with her. Therefore, in God's name, let her take Islam by the hand and encourage her boldly in the path of virtue. This is the only worthy course and the only wise one—wiser and worthier, I venture to assert, than a whole century of crusade."

Such has been our prompt and praiseworthy attitude this summer at Constantinople. It does not do to look a gift-horse in the mouth or to inquire too closely into the motives of our diplomatic action there. They have probably not been quite unmixed. In common with the Young Turkish leaders, I am desirous to accept the sympathy shown to Liberal Islam as sincere. The crucial test of Sir Edward Grey's sincerity will, however, be the application of his new policy of reconciliation to Egypt. As an Egyptian Nationalist—and I am proud to count myself one—I think it, therefore, prudent to defer any unreserved expression of thanks until a clear pronouncement has been made of what our Government has made up its mind to do. Does Sir Edward Grey's prompt alliance with the Constitutionalists in Turkey mean that he is resolved to make his peace also with the Constitutionalists at Cairo? Is Egypt to be allowed to partake of the general feast of liberty Ottoman subjects are enjoying, or is she to be the one province of the Empire left hungry among such great rejoicing? There are rumours that Sir Edward Grey has been converted to the more generous view of the situation; that he has accepted the logic of events, the logic of his own recent diplomacy; that, in spite of Lord Cromer's *non possumus*, Egypt is to be promised a Constitution when Parliament meets in October. I trust it may be so for Egypt's sake and for England's; for should the *non possumus* be maintained, I know enough of Mahometan Liberal opinion to be able to warn those concerned that the reconciliation effected in Constantinople will not be of long duration. The solidarity between Turkish Constitutionalism and Egyptian Constitutionalism is too close for the one to be pitted against the other, nor will the Ottoman Empire under a reformed Government be a bit more willing to make

over Egypt permanently to English rule than was till yesterday the Sultan. Just at present the Young Turkish leaders are full of gratitude for past and future favours, and are unwilling to disoblige our diplomacy by bringing the question of Egypt prematurely forward. Kiamil Pasha, the new Grand Vizier, is under special obligations for English protection afforded him in past times, and many others of the exiled Reformers have taken political refuge under Lord Cromer's wing at Cairo, whose policy it was to shield them from the Sultan and so to extend his influence. This, however, will not count for much or count for long against the natural sympathy of political parties possessing common principles and imbued with common ideas, political and religious. Cairo is one of the great centres of Islamic thought, and will certainly not be abandoned as part and parcel of what Turkey, with all its Liberalism, must still continue to be—the one great Mahometan Empire. The solidarity is far too close. Fortunately, there are indications that Lord Cromer's paramount authority at the Foreign Office is at an end. Indeed, it would be strange if it were not so. Less than a year ago Lord Cromer was giving to the world, in his *Modern Egypt*, a view of Islam so insulting to its past history and so at variance with its present conditions that it hardly needed the events of the past six months to prove its unwisdom. Nearly everything Lord Cromer then said of modern Mahometan thought has been, since it was printed, disproved by the practical logic of events in Persia, in Egypt, and now in Turkey. There is, therefore, good hope that a declaration of some more reasonable policy may really be in store for us before the year is out.

What lines such a policy ought to pursue if it is to have the desired effect of reconciling Egyptian patriotism with English interests I propose to set forth presently. Suffice it for the moment to say that something more definite than vague expressions of sympathy will be needed to meet the situation, and a programme of constitutional reform wider than might have been propounded with some chance of popular acceptance a year ago. There is at

the present moment no party in native Egypt of the smallest numerical importance which does not insist on real self-government in some form or other. Opinions may differ as to the particular form, and also whether the Egyptians are to look to England, or to Constantinople, or to the Khedive, for its granting. But all are agreed in opposing the present government by an irresponsible foreign bureaucracy as one humiliating and unendurable; and until it is replaced by something which can give Egyptians a sense of their legitimate dignity as masters, not slaves, in their own country, the popular opposition will not abate. An immense impetus has been given to this feeling by the revolution in Turkey, and should the new *régime* succeed, as there is fair chance it will, in gifting the Empire with a reasonably good Government, it will become every year more difficult to preserve order and contentment in Egypt. Questions will inevitably arise, like that of Tabah, in which it will be found that the native army is in sympathy with the people, and trouble will then result. What, at any rate, is certain to happen, if Egypt is blankly disappointed now in her national hope, is that patriotism will take the form of clamour for a closer union with Turkey. This, in my view, is to be deprecated. But it will be difficult to prevent. Precedents are not wanting to show that it will be so—witness the insistence of the Ionian Islands, notwithstanding a beneficent English administration, for annexation with liberated Greece. It will be the case in Egypt, and the cry will be responded to by the whole Mahometan body.

I am able to speak on these points with some authority, as I am in close touch, and have been for many years, with the National and the Pan-Islamic movements, and I know what would satisfy and what would not satisfy native feeling at the present moment at Cairo. I can even, I think, propound a programme which would be acceptable to every important section of the native Egyptian community and compatible with English dignity. It is perhaps much to promise, but I will attempt it, if you will allow me.

II.

The great difficulty in any scheme of reconciliation and harmonious action between Egyptian patriotism and the English Government is the deep distrust entertained in every section of the educated native mind of England's political intentions. With the exception of here and there an individual who enjoys the rare confidence of that rarest of rare personages a liberal English official, nobody in native Egypt believes that England is in earnest about keeping her promises, or has any other policy but that of staying on indefinitely, waiting for an opportunity to make her occupation permanent. If injustice is done to our Foreign Office by this mistrust it is most certainly the Foreign Office's own fault. Lord Cromer's twenty years' policy of the "Veiled Protectorate" was an acknowledged make-believe, nor has a single word of disavowal been uttered since his resignation calculated to reassure public opinion. On the contrary, both Sir Edward Grey and Sir Eldon Gorst have declared publicly that nothing is changed in British policy, and that the Gorst *régime* is to be a faithful continuation of the Cromerian. Now, Lord Cromer's latest utterance is that it will take Egypt two or three generations to be fit for self-government, thus putting off her evacuation by the British garrison to sixty or seventy years hence—in other words, to the Greek Kalends.

It is therefore of prime importance, if confidence in English honesty is to be restored, that as a very first step a clear pronouncement should be made by Sir Edward Grey, repudiating the policy of indefinite occupation and declaring in quite unmistakable and binding terms England's determination not to stay in Egypt a day longer than is necessary to establish a state of things which shall permit her to leave behind her a strong, enlightened, and stable native Government. I vouch for it that, should such a declaration be made when Parliament meets in the autumn, to be followed by a corresponding passage in the King's Speech in February, the same miracle of reconciliation will be witnessed at Cairo as we have now before our eyes at Constantinople. Egyptian Nationalism, even of the

extremest kind, has no such hatred of England as to be irreconcilable, and England would at once recover her position in Egypt and become popular. On the other hand, if Sir Edward Grey maintains his silence or speaks in dubious phrases, it will be taken as a confession of England's equivocal intentions, and rightly so taken. Patriotic antagonism will not disarm.

I will suppose, however, that Sir Edward Grey decides on the liberal and straightforward course. The next question is to examine how the policy so announced could best be put into execution. My own opinion very strongly is that negotiations for eventual evacuation should be taken up from the point where they were dropped by Lord Salisbury in 1887. Such a course would have the advantage of being in accordance with that favourite doctrine of the Foreign Office, the "continuity of foreign policy," and so of disarming logical opposition by the Tories, and at the same time it would be the most legal and the most in accordance with public promises. Neither Mr. Balfour nor Lord Lansdowne could reasonably pretend that what their late great leader, who was neither a hasty, nor an emotional, nor otherwise than a sound Imperialist, politician, was ready to venture twenty and more years ago was now rash or premature. Still less could they pretend that the circumstances to-day were less favourable than then, or that Egypt was less suited for a restoration of her liberty than when Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was despatched to Constantinople upon his famous mission. I think I cannot do better, in connection with this point, than recall to public memory what those circumstances were, and what was the idea of the arrangement Sir Henry was sent to negotiate. I happen, through my connection with Lord Randolph Churchill, to have been very closely concerned with the initiation of the mission, and am therefore in a position to speak about it with some authority, and the whole affair, as far as it was publicly known, has faded so wholly from men's minds that it needs explanation.

The idea of Sir Henry Wolff's mission, as understood by those who initiated it in 1885, was to escape

from the deadlock into which things had drifted on the Nile due to the diplomatic mistakes of the past three years. It was considered, and rightly considered, that the only legal road of exit was through calling in the intervention of Egypt's suzerain, the Sultan, and that this was also the best means of meeting what was mainly a Mahometan difficulty. It was seen that our military occupation had no legal justification, and Lord Salisbury was desirous both of keeping the promises of evacuation made by his predecessors in office and of healing the quarrel with Islam, which was affecting Mahometan India in a sense unfavourable to British rule. England's credit in the East had sunk to the lowest point. The British army sent to relieve Gordon had failed of its object. Khartoum had fallen, and the whole of the Nile Valley was in a state of political and religious ferment. At Cairo the Khedive Tewfik, weak and unpopular, maintained his authority only by the support of British bayonets. There was danger of bankruptcy and danger of a revolution. The French and Russian Governments were actively opposing British policy, and it seemed not impossible that Europe might unite in imposing a *régime* in Egypt incompatible either with England's dignity or England's interests. The choice lay between undertaking responsibilities of finance and administration for which Lord Salisbury was not prepared, and evacuation under a joint guarantee entered into with the Sultan for the protection of Egypt's integrity. I was myself strongly in favour of this latter course, and having recently visited both India and Constantinople knew both what were the dangers and what the possibilities. I had ascertained that the Sultan, despotic and reactionary as he was at home, would not be unwilling to aid in re-establishing self-government in Egypt on liberal and progressive lines, if by so doing an early withdrawal of the British garrison could be secured. His plan, if he had had a free hand in the settlement, would have been to replace the unpopular Khedive Tewfik by another prince of the family of Mohammed Ali, Prince Halim, whose ideas were far more enlightened, and who could have worked well with the Constitutionalists, thus forming at Cairo a nucleus of popular native

government on a civilised basis in opposition to the wave of uncivilised sympathy with Mahdism. A reconciliation, I hoped, would by this means be effected with England, and the two Governments, Ottoman and English, would join in guaranteeing the integrity of Egypt from outside European ambitions.

Such were the general lines on which the Wolff mission was initiated. It failed for several reasons. Lord Salisbury, in the first place, could not bring himself to consent to the abandonment of Tewfik, who, whatever his failings as a ruler, had been a docile follower of the mistaken English policy. This made it impossible to withdraw the British garrison without replacing it by some other, which must of necessity have been an Ottoman garrison. Again, the conditions imposed by Lord Salisbury of re-occupation by England in certain eventualities gave the joint guarantee too much the appearance of a joint Protectorate not to rouse French opposition; and, lastly, the proper steps were not taken to conciliate the Pan-Islamic influences, then so powerful at Constantinople. Thus it happened that, though the mission was at first successful, when the Convention fixing a date of three years for the evacuation had been already agreed to between the Plenipotentiaries, the Governments of France and Russia intervened, and such pressure was put upon the Sultan, a pressure backed by those Pan-Islamic influences, that the Sultan was afraid to proceed, and at the last moment refused his signature of ratification to the treaty. Lord Salisbury then fell back on the alternative policy, Lord Cromer's, of indefinite British occupation and the "veiled Protectorate."

It will be seen from this brief recapitulation of the effort made, so nearly with success, by Lord Salisbury more than twenty years ago, to keep faith with the world and find an escape for England from a dangerous entanglement, how infinitely easier a like effort would be now under the far more favourable conditions of peace and prosperity in Egypt, of the *entente* with France, and, above all, of the establishment of a civilised and progressive *régime* at Constantinople. Such an arrangement is still open with Turkey. It

would be still the most prudent and honourable course in regard to the Egyptian difficulty, and should include as before, evacuation at a fixed date. My own belief is that the earlier the date named in a convention the less will be the difficulty, inasmuch as the granting of a long delay would be to court intrigues of all kinds, which are certain to be raised in supposed financial interests against a pledge of withdrawal. A period of three years would, at any rate, give ample time for preparation and for providing the necessary checks against a recurrence of arbitrary government and administrative confusion. What makes the situation so very simple compared with what it was in Lord Salisbury's time, or even a year ago, is that the events in Turkey have not only lessened the difficulty of treating with the Sultan, but have had the beneficent effect of placing all Mahometan sentiment once more on the Liberal and progressive lines which they occupied in Egypt in 1881. We may confidently say that they have rung the death-knell of obscurantism in Islam, and that the spectre, which so frightened Lord Cromer only yesterday, of a fanatical and reactionary Islam has been laid for ever. There is no longer any reasonable excuse for refusing a withdrawal on the score of possible religious feuds and Mahometan intolerance. Such excuses were unreal a year ago. To-day they are absurd. Neither can that other excuse of Lord Cromer's be adhered to, that the necessary constitutional checks on arbitrary native government would be refused by the Sultan.

III.

It may seem hardly worth while, until Sir Edward Grey or whoever else may officially stand with us for Foreign Affairs has announced his general policy, whether of ultimate Home Rule in Egypt or of continuous suppression, to attempt a sketch of what should be done as a preliminary to evacuation. Nevertheless I will attempt it.

Supposing such an evacuation policy to be resolved on, I will begin by saying that, however excellent in themselves such measures may be as have been semi-

officially hinted at—municipal reform, provincial self-government, and an extension of the privileges of the existing Legislative Council as a purely consultative body—they have no bearing whatever on the question how to establish a stable and progressive native Government at Cairo which shall not need British bayonets to support it. Institutions of this kind, without political power, would not help us on a single step, nor, however pompously announced, would they do anything towards satisfying national aspirations. With the spectacle of a really self-governing Turkey at his doors, no patriotic Egyptian would take them as a serious answer to his demands. The widespread political discontent in British India, notwithstanding its Councils and Municipalities, should teach us how little such small change of liberty would count for in Egypt. It would only be looked upon as a new manœuvre for prolonging alien rule. What is needed is something quite different from this—namely, a popular body with sufficient authority to serve as a constant check on arbitrary power, whether it be the power of Ministers appointed as now by the English Agency at Cairo or of a Khedive set free from English leading-strings. It is quite obvious to every educated Egyptian that if evacuation is to be, the Khedive's absolute power cannot safely be left without control. If it is no longer to be limited by English advice proffered at the sword's point, it must be made subject to some native form of authority—in other words, to a Constitution:

Taking this, therefore, as my basis, I will consider what, according to my knowledge of Egypt, should be the minimum granted of popular self-government and what the particular form it should take. I may begin by saying that I am not myself a fanatical democrat in any country, and I know that in the East especially an extreme democratic form of Constitution would be entirely out of place. It is not asked for, nor would it be workable. In all Eastern countries it is the educated class whose special function it is to control the ruler. Those who are uneducated do not expect power in any legal shape, nor would they know how to use it legally. It is therefore quite out

the question for Egypt, whose educated men are few, to propose a basis of suffrage for any Body exercising political control other than a very limited one and applied indirectly. As education is extended the electorate will also extend, and with it a wider distribution of power. An educational test should certainly be imposed, in addition to one of property. Neither, in my opinion, should the Chamber created, consist of more than from seventy to a hundred members. A larger number it would be difficult to provide for under present circumstances, and the number mentioned should suffice for all requirements of intelligent representation. It would be, perhaps, though wholly elective, rather a Chamber of Notables at first than a Parliament according to European models. Two features of it, however, are essential to its beneficial working—first, the Chamber must be so framed as to represent class interests fairly, and, secondly, it must have real power.

With regard to the first condition there should be little difficulty. Egypt is more fortunately situated than any other province of the Ottoman Empire in respect of class interests. The classes composing it are few. Nine-tenths of the population are Mahometans, mainly agriculturists. Less than a tenth are native Christians, also mainly agricultural, and the balance is made up of townspeople, of mixed origin, of the artisan class. There is hardly any purely industrial and no mining population. The Bedouin Arabs, living under their own laws, are outside the reckoning, as are the 100,000 Europeans, who, though resident in Egypt, are practically foreigners, with rights which they would not care to exchange for those of Egyptian citizenship. The problem, therefore, of a fair representation is a comparatively easy one. The Christian minority have not in reality interests opposed to those of the Mahometan majority. In any scheme of representation they would, of course, be absolutely on a par as voters with the Moslems, and, as they are more generally educated than these, their vote would be proportionately large. The Coptic body could not fail to obtain its fair share of power, due to its ability and influence. As to Lord Cromer's scheme of a

council of European foreigners, it is purely fanciful. The foreign colonists are a privileged class in Egypt, and do not ask better than to continue to enjoy their privileges. The "Capitulations" under which they live are doubtless an anomaly, but it is one that native Egypt has had to put up with for so many years that it has come to be accepted as an unavoidable evil. There is no present cry against the Capitulations, and it would be more prudent to leave them untouched in any scheme of immediate reform.

What is more important is to consider within what limits a Parliament or a Chamber of Notables, or by whatever name the new popular Assembly may be called, should exercise its controlling functions. As a mere legislative body, even with a right of voting, it would not be of much use for our purpose. Egypt, with its fixed code of laws resembling the Code Napoléon, has little occasion for new law-making, and an arbitrary ruler might go on his way unchecked for years without any legislative change being needed. What the Chamber will need is clearly the right to hold Ministers responsible. It must have power, by vote of censure, to dismiss a Ministry which has offended it, and it must not rest with the Khedive's sole choice to appoint another. Thus alone can the abuses of arbitrary power be prevented. It is, of course, the A B C of constitutional government, and its being granted or not will be the test of sincerity with those who frame the Constitution for Egypt. Without it, it will be useless to talk of withdrawing the British garrison. The abuses of former reigns might at any time be renewed, and confusion once more result. With such a constitutional power irrevocably granted, and a corresponding right of questioning Ministers as to their administrative acts, I see no reason to apprehend a return of illegalities. Public opinion is now strong in Egypt against all attempts on the part of authority to over-ride the law, and with a mouthpiece for the ventilation of abuses such as the Chamber would give, it would make itself heard and obeyed. The power of calling Ministers to account should include all departments and extend over the whole range of the administration.

Nevertheless, in deference to the peculiar international circumstances in which Egypt stands, it will doubtless be necessary for many years to come to leave the Department of Finance mainly under European direction. I have talked this matter over with more than one of the National leaders, including the late Mustafa Kamel Pasha, and I have always found them ready to acquiesce on this point. Not that the finance of the last twenty years is regarded by them with unreserved approval, but that they acknowledge the international obligations of Egypt in connection with her public debt and are conscious that these cannot be touched. In the Constitution of 1882 it was laid down that while the whole of the Budget could be discussed by the Chamber, only that half of it which did not affect the payment of the interest of the debt was subject to its vote. The distinction was a fair one, but the insistence on voting even that half led to English intervention, and it is probable that the right to vote any part of the Budget would now be waived even by extreme Nationalists for a term of years till an arrangement could be come to with the Powers. What, however, they would not forego would be the right of interpellation and discussion and the disclosure of all financial details. This could not but be a great public advantage. Egyptian ideas of finance, it must be explained, are far more closely economical than those of our English financiers. They have no sympathy with the forward school, whose doctrine it is, not to save money, but to spend capital on what are called "productive works." They would rather have seen Lord Cromer pay off half the public debt, and so work for the speedy release of Egypt from its financial bondage, than undertake the conquest of the Soudan and build the Assouan dam. In any case there is little danger of an insistence on more rather than on less expenditure. The only increase of the Budget popularly asked is for education. The action of the Chambers would certainly not be in favour of extravagance. In the Public Works Department also the need of European direction, while at the same time of native supervision, is strongly felt. All the other departments could only

gain by being made completely subject through the head of the Government to the Chamber.

These are the points I consider essential in any scheme of constitutional reform preparatory to evacuation. They are the minimum of what patriotic Egypt is asking. Other preparatory measures would be those connected with the officering of the native army, the government of the Soudan, and the garrisoning of the Suez Canal. All are important, but they need not here be discussed. My present inquiry concerns Egypt's internal *régime* only, and my object is to show that a way of reconciliation between England and Egyptian patriotism is not only possible, but that it could be accomplished with less difficulty than is commonly imagined, while being to England's real interest as well as to her honour. What is in the mind of Downing-street about it I do not affect to know. Only I am quite certain that for a quarter of a century there has not been so great need of statesmanship as now in regard not only to the Egyptian question but also to that greater one of Islam and all Asia of which Egypt is an essential part. That Asia is awake and politically self-conscious and desperately in earnest for self-government cannot any longer be denied. The alternative to a Home Rule policy is a policy of Imperial coercion, which is hateful to contemplate and cannot succeed. The vast millions of Asiatics denied their aspirations under British rule must in the end break the strength to coerce them of the British Empire. My advice, instead of this, is a frank policy of political sympathy and help. It is the only possible issue for England out of the entanglement in which she lies. It is the only honourable issue. If she refuses to take it she will share the fate of all other empires—nations which, in the past, have ruled their fellow-nations for their own aggrandisement, and which have maintained themselves by violence awhile and then by violence have perished.



Our Position in Egypt.

(*Leading Article from THE MANCHESTER GUARDIAN,
25th Sept., 1908.*)

"We print this morning the last of the articles in which Mr. Blunt has been discussing how the recent changes in Turkey have affected our position in Egypt. On this subject Mr. Blunt is a prophet come to judgment, for he is one of the very few Englishmen of distinction who through all the disgrace and decay of Abdul Hamid's Sultanate have still kept their faith in the future Liberal regeneration of the East. It is not necessary to remind our readers of Mr. Blunt's views on the rebellion of Arabi, which led to our occupation of Egypt; it is sufficient to note how very like it was to the military revolt of the Young Turks, and how impossible it is to go on applying two wholly different standards to Nationalism in Turkey and in Egypt. It is easy to draw distinctions between East and West, and to argue that what is good for the one is not necessarily good for the other. But we cannot subdivide the Mahometan East. The same movement that has stirred Turkey is stirring in Egypt too, and in Persia and even in Mahometan India, and we may not vary our sympathies with the variations of latitude and longitude. This, then, is the "new situation" with which Mr. Blunt deals. He assumes, and rightly, that the time has come to shake out the old formulæ which we have used all these years to persuade ourselves that there was no Egyptian question. Some of these are obviously out of date. It used to be said, for example, that Egypt could not work Liberal institutions. But if Turkey, which has not enjoyed the advantages of our political education, is going to try with our full approval and sympathy, how can we refuse a similar opportunity to Egypt, which we have at least had the opportunity of training for nearly a generation? Another stock argument was that the reform movement in Egypt was insecure because it meant the revival of Turkish influence, which was against reform. But Turkey now is to Egypt the pattern not of an obsolete tyranny but of the new movement which is stirring the East.

If the Nationalist movement in Turkey deserves our sympathy, the presumption is that the Egyptian movement deserves it too. From that conclusion we see no conceivable way of escape.

The Young Turks are Nationalists even before they are reformers; they have instituted reforms not simply for their own sake but because their continued denial is a standing menace to the independence and integrity of Turkey. The case of Egypt is different, because here the need of reforms has been made the excuse for the denial of her rights as a nation. In Turkey reforms are necessary to the successful assertion of national rights; in Egypt the vindication of national rights is necessary to the reforms. If, then, we mean to conciliate Egypt, we must begin by conciliating the feeling of Nationalism. That is why Mr. Blunt puts the question of evacuation in the very fore-front. In the article which we published yesterday he made two suggestions. The first was that Sir Edward Grey should repudiate at an early date the policy of indefinite occupation, and should declare England's determination not to stay in Egypt a day longer than is necessary to establish an enlightened and stable native Government. His second suggestion was that we should re-open the negotiations for evacuation with Turkey at the point at which they were dropped by Lord Salisbury in 1887. The first suggestion is comparatively easy, because it only asks us to pledge ourselves anew to what we are already deeply pledged; the second is much more difficult. It is quite true that some of the circumstances are much more favourable now than they were in 1887, when Lord Salisbury sent Sir H. Drummond Wolff to negotiate the terms of evacuation with Egypt's suzerain, Turkey. Not only is Egypt prosperous, but we have an understanding with France, and a progressive Government has been established at Constantinople. But there were special reasons which made the idea of these negotiations acceptable to Lord Salisbury. The Egyptian occupation was the work of the last Liberal Government, which had come into power largely as the result of Gladstone's agitation against Disraeli's pro-Turkish policy; in 1887

Lord Salisbury had not yet come to the conclusion that Turkey was the wrong horse, and the evacuation of Egypt still presented itself to his mind as a natural continuation of Disraeli's Balkan policy. The Liberal point of view, it is true, has changed too. It is no longer an axiom of Liberal policy in the Near East, as it once was, that Mahometanism is incapable of political reform; on the contrary, Sir E. Grey has greatly strengthened our position in Turkey by his frank, ungrudging sympathy with the Turkish reform movement. But even so it is still harder for a Liberal Government than it was for a Conservative Government in 1887 or 1878 to hand back a province to Turkey; and for two reasons. The first is that it is still uncertain how much recognition is to be given in the future organisation of Turkey to the principle of local autonomy, and it might be unwise to prejudice this principle in the case of Egypt by any arrangements for joint occupation such as Lord Salisbury, for example, contemplated. The second reason is that the reform movement in Turkey is still in its honeymoon, and while we may most heartily wish it success, it might still be unwise to act as though it could not be a failure. But these difficulties, we admit, might be temporary merely or removable by arrangement. A Convention signed on 22nd May, 1887, by Sir H. Drummond Wolff and the Turkish Foreign Minister, but never ratified, proposed to give Egypt territorial immunity, and to invite the Powers to guarantee the inviolability of Egyptian territory. The Ottoman Government, however, promised to occupy Egypt "if there were reasons to fear an invasion from without, or if order and security in the interior were disturbed"; and the British Government also reserved the right to send troops to Egypt under the same circumstances. It might be possible to arrange a Convention on some such lines which would give adequate guarantees for the neutrality of Egypt and for the safety of the Suez Canal, while leaving no opening for interference in her domestic affairs; and if so, one set of difficulties would be removed. Time might also remove the element of doubt about the performance and success of the reform

movement in Turkey, and so dispose of the remaining difficulty.

Passing by this question about the means for carrying into execution our pledges to evacuate, we reach the subject of the further question that Mr. Blunt discusses to-day—namely, what are the immediately necessary political reforms? Mr. Edward Dicey, in the current *Nineteenth Century*, suggests the grant of “limited self-governing powers to certain municipalities.” Mr. Blunt—very reasonably, we think—retorts that no Egyptian would take such a change as a serious answer to his demands. He asks for a popularly elected Chamber with the right to hold Ministers responsible. The precise form of the Parliamentary franchise by comparison is of secondary importance; what is essential is that there should be adequate Parliamentary check on the power of the Khedive and on the policy of his Ministers. He believes that the Department of Finance might for some years be left under European direction, but even here Parliament ought to have full right of interpellation and discussion. The principle of these reforms is to arm the Egyptians with Parliamentary weapons by which they may direct the national policy and protect the progress that has already been made against incompetent or corrupt administration. And, in general, this is the principle which governs the programme of the Young Turkish reformers. “To all men of ordinary intelligence,” writes Mr. Edward Dicey, “it must seem obvious that the experiment now being tried in Turkey is apparently conducted under far less favourable conditions than would be the case if it were to be carried out in Egypt.” But the same alternative which drove the Sultan into reform presents itself to us too. The Sultan conceded reform because coercion had broken down. For us too the alternative to a Home Rule policy in Egypt must ultimately be a policy of Imperial coercion, hateful to contemplate, as Mr. Blunt truly says, and certain in the long run to fail.

