

that before the present year is out nearly the whole will be honestly encashed.

But, while complete reform of the Customs service is thus impeded by anachronistic treaty difficulties, the Post Office, which is not so trammelled—its liberty of action being now recognised by the Convention of Berne, of which Egypt is one of the signatory Governments—has made rapid strides towards a European standard of organisation and efficiency. This, which is one of the youngest branches of the Egyptian administration, was worked as a private enterprise up to 1865, when it was purchased by the Government, with its direction, however, being continued in the hands of its old manager, Signor Muzzi, an Italian, subsequently promoted to the rank of Bey. Considerable improvements were introduced into the service in respect of safety and rapidity of communication, but financially it showed regular annual deficits, in the face of a steady increase in the number of letters and “groups” carried.* As part, therefore, of his new scheme of general administrative reform, the Khedive last year replaced Muzzi Bey by Mr. Caillard, an officer of great special ability and long experience in St. Martin’s-le-Grand, and, as in the case of Mr. Scrivenour at the Custom-house, gave him plenary powers to re-organise the service as he thought fit. Like his colleague in the Customs, the new director struck at the root of most of the old abuses, by dismissing nearly one-fourth of the whole *personnel* and replacing many of the remainder, while reducing also most of the other working expenses by nearly

* Sealed parcels of money in bulk, which were the only means of remittance to or from the interior till the recent opening of money-order offices for comparatively small sums. Large amounts, for the purchase of produce, and other commercial purposes, are still sent in the old way, the declared value of each group being stated in the postal invoice, on the presentation of which by the payee the parcel is delivered intact.

50 per cent. In Europe such sweeping surgery would have seriously crippled the department, but here it had the opposite effect. It had been the old Eastern story of many being employed to do badly the proper work of a few at the cost of nominally low pay, but of grave frauds on both the Government and the public. The result has already been a very positive improvement in the working of the service, and the conversion of the old deficit into a considerable surplus. The staff of the department, which now comprises in all about 380 persons, exclusive of 342 camel-drivers and couriers, for the desert service is still a very motley one, consisting chiefly of Italians, native Egyptians, and Syrians, with a sprinkling of French, Greeks, Austrians, and Russians. The new director-general is endeavouring as far as possible to replace these foreign elements by natives; but as yet his experience is that neither Arab, Copt, nor Turk, though in many instances possessed of great intellectual suppleness, can be safely trusted with positions of independent responsibility. Associated with Mr. Caillard, as his lieutenant, is another ex-official of our English Post Office, who has very efficiently helped in carrying out the reforms thus far effected. The department has agencies (post offices) in 67 towns and villages, 34 of which are in Lower and Middle Egypt, 6 in Upper Egypt, 15 in the Soudan, and 5 on the coasts of the Red Sea, besides 7 offices out of Egyptian territory in the Levant, to and from which it sends and receives mails by the Khedivieh steamers. At present there is at least one delivery daily between Alexandria and Cairo and all the principal towns and villages of Lower Egypt; while the chief places on the main line of railway receive and despatch three, four, or in some cases even five mails a day; the delivery of which is now hastened by the establish-

ment of post-office vans attached to almost every train. A house-to-house delivery, even in Alexandria or Cairo, is as yet impracticable owing to the irregular manner in which nearly all the older streets are built, and the absence of numbers on the houses in all but the new quarters. The delivery is consequently effected from the windows (*guichets*) of the Post Office, the correspondence being alphabetically sorted into pigeon-holes before being given out. The principal mercantile firms avail themselves of the private box system, which, on payment of a small annual fee, secures to them an earlier delivery and other facilities. Private boxes of this kind are now established in all the principal towns. The correspondence with the interior is chiefly commercial; what may be called "family letters" forming only a very inconsiderable part of the total number delivered—about 2,250,000 a year. For this reason the proportion of letters exchanged between the native population is very small as compared with that of any European country, and nothing like the postal development which is in steady progress in Europe can therefore be looked for in Egypt for many years to come. Here, however, as elsewhere, the spread of education will have its usual effect, and with increased facilities of communication private (family) correspondence will also increase. The rates of postage are of course high relatively to those of Europe, though still lower than the old charges in the United Kingdom before the great reform of Rowland Hill. At present no increase of correspondence could be expected from a reduction in the rate, which would therefore be a mere sacrifice of revenue without compensation to any interest. The heaviest part of the work of the service occurs during the winter months, when the grain, cotton, sugar and other trades

are at their height. During this season large sums of money are sent through the Post Office, chiefly from Alexandria, but also from Cairo, to the villages, in payment of produce bought for exportation. The aggregate amount thus remitted during an average season may be estimated at 10,000,000*l.*, the annual total being about 15,000,000*l.* As the cash thus sent into the villages at any given time is out of all proportion to that received from them, the money-order system is not adapted to this branch of the department's business, and many remittances are consequently still made in the old form of "groups," the insurance and transport charges on which, though moderate, form a large part of the postal revenue. It says much for the efficiency with which the service is controlled, that of the large amount thus annually transmitted—no inconsiderable part of which goes to the remote provinces of the Soudan—only an infinitesimal proportion fails to reach its consignees. The development of the international part of the service is hampered by the existence of the half-dozen or more foreign post offices which are still maintained, in pursuance of the old Capitulations practice, at Alexandria, Suez, and Port Saïd. Since the Berne Postal Union treaty came into operation, these foreign offices have wholly lost their *raison d'être*; and organised as the native service now is, they are sources rather of delay and confusion than of convenience, even to their respective national colonies. Their withdrawal is therefore as much desired by Europeans as by the native authorities, by whom they are not unreasonably regarded as offensive relics of a political situation that no longer exists.

For the purposes of provincial administration Egypt is divided into three great sections, called *El-Bahari*, *El-Vostani*, and *El-Saïd*—Lower, Middle, and Upper

Egypt—which, besides the eight *mohafzas*, or special city governorships already noticed, are further divided into the following fourteen *mudiries* or Prefectures:—(1) In Lower Egypt—Behéra, Gizeh, Galioubieh, Charkieh, Menoufieh, Garbieh, and Dahkalieh; (2) in Middle Egypt—Benisouef, the Fayoum, and Minieh; and (3) in Upper Egypt—Assiout, Girgheh, Kenneh-Cosseir, and Esneh.* These prefectures are sub-divided into departments, and these again into communes or cantons, each of which includes several villages. The respective heads of these divisions are called mudirs (whose rank is commonly that of a *moutamaïs*, or lowest class civil Pasha), *mâmours*, nazirs, and sheikhs-el-beled. Formerly the whole of the first class belonged to the old Turkish aristocracy, but they are now nearly all Arabs, as are also a majority of the three inferior grades; the exceptions being mostly Christians, to whose official employment their religion is in Egypt no bar, with a few Egyptian-born Turks as *mâmours* and nazirs. The sheikh-el-beled, or village headman, though virtually elected by his fellows, is formally appointed by the Government, to which he is personally accountable for the village taxes—in the collection of which he assists the saraffs or tax-gatherers—and for such *corvée* demands as may be made upon it. He is, in fact, the village magistrate and constable in one, whose authority comes most home to the experience of the Fellah, who may, but seldom does, appeal against his decisions to the communal council; so that as he apportions a tax, regulates the distribution of water from the neighbouring canals (his own land generally faring best in this respect), or selects men for forced labour

* Although Egypt proper is generally said to end at Assouan, the jurisdiction of the mudir of this province of Esneh extends to Wady-Halfa, 210 miles higher up into Nubia.

or the conscription, his fiat as a rule is uncomplainingly obeyed. He is, however, personally responsible for the shortcomings of his *administrés*, and not seldom pays on the soles of his feet for their fiscal or other default. His immediate superior, the nazir, acts as inspector of the group of villages within his commune, and reports to the *mâmour* of his department, who, till the recent reform appointing a Controller-General of Receipts, received the taxes from the saraffs, still ensures the repairs of the canals, sees that the men requisitioned by the Government are duly supplied, and was answerable for the whole to the mudir. Associated with these various functionaries are (1) five "Councils of Agriculture"—two in Lower and three in Middle and Upper Egypt—and (2) an "Administrative Council" for each canton of the fourteen provinces. The first consist each of a president and superintending engineer named by the Government, and of as many members as there are cantons in the province, chosen from among the village notables by the communal councils. Their function is to examine all plans submitted for the repair of existing public works or the execution of new ones, and, if approved, to assess on the various districts their shares in the necessary money and labour cost; and also to supervise and promote the improvement of agriculture within the area of their respective jurisdictions. The inferior communal councils are elected by the villagers from amongst themselves, chiefly to carry out in detail the measures decided on by the councils of agriculture, and to check abuses by the sheikhs-el-beled. Native tribunals administered by cadis or their naïbs, a sufficient but not numerous force of police, and an ample staff of subordinate engineers, who personally direct the making or repairs of public works—complete the machinery of an administration

which, notwithstanding much uninformed assertion to the contrary, is on the whole merciful and liberal. Great oppression was no doubt practised by the late Minister of Finance, not merely in the collection of the legitimate taxes, but in the exaction of large extra payments that never reached the Treasury. But under the reformed *régime* now in operation this is no longer possible, and the danger is rather the other way—that the historical perversity of the fellah will defeat all mild methods of tax-gathering, and the revenue suffer accordingly. For as it was under the Pharaohs, so is it still; the Egyptian ryot will swear by all the gods that he has not a piastre, and will gladly bear any amount of stick or *courbash* if only he can, in whole or in part, evade payment of the most equitable tax. Ismaïl Sadyk knew the limit of his endurance before disgorging, and by exceeding it when necessary got his revenue, and more. It may be doubted if the humaner arguments of Prince Hussein and Mr. Romaine will prove equally effective up to even the fair budget point. The *corvée* tax for other than the communal public works is still a grievance, but already before the fall of the Moufettish, whose vast estates were chiefly tilled by this kind of labour, it had been greatly reduced; and even on the Daira sugar and cotton farms the fellahs employed, though mostly collected by forced levies, are all now rationed and paid. It may be true that the individual labourer is cheated out of most of his wage, but the fault is that of his sheikh and the petty functionaries above him, not generally of the Daira nazir.

In 1866 the Khedive revived the defunct *Mejlis-Shora-el-Nush*, or Assembly of Delegates, one of the inchoate reforms projected by Mehemet Ali, but which had not met since his death. This germ of an Egyptian Parlia-

ment consists of village sheikhs and other provincial notables, elected by the communes, and assembles once a year to receive from the Privy Council a report on the administration during the twelvemonth. Its function is also to consider and advise on all proposed fiscal changes, new public works, and other matters of national concern that may be laid before it. It has, of course, no legislative power, but in practice its recommendations are received not merely with respect, but are often acted on by the Government. Thus, when it was a question last year of rescinding the law of the Moukabala, a special meeting of this body was convoked to advise the Privy Council on the subject, and on its vote being nearly unanimous against the repeal of the law, it was maintained, and is still in operation.*

Of the character of the native Egyptian official, high or low, but little need be said. With some notable exceptions, chiefly among the higher functionaries who have received a European education, it possesses in full share most of the usual Eastern defects—of apathy, dishonesty, disregard of truth, and general disposition to do as little work as possible for the largest possible sum of peculative gain. Nor in respect of these qualities is there much

* An anecdote which is still told in Cairo about the first meeting of this Arab Diet may be worth recording. When the newly-chosen delegates came together, the Minister of the Interior attempted to give them some rough notions of Parliamentary duty and organisation, and explained that they would be expected to frankly approve or disapprove the measures that should be laid before them. With that view, he invited such of them as were disposed to criticise the Government programme to range themselves on one side of the chamber, while those who were prepared to give it their full confidence in advance would sit opposite. "God forbid," was the general answer, "that any of them should think of questioning anything the Effendina (the Khedive) proposed;" and so the whole crowded to the Ministerial side, leaving the "Opposition" represented by empty benches. Since then, however, they have grown to be more independent, and now form a useful factor in Egyptian home politics.

to choose between Arab, Turk, or Copt; if there be a difference at all, it is in favour of the Moslem rather than of the Christian, who lacks the pride that often preserves the Islamite from a mean or dishonest act. As a whole, however, the officialism of Cairo compares favourably with that of Stamboul. In the former, the effect of the vigorous intelligence and direct personal rule of the sovereign is wholesomely felt through every branch of the administration, minimising abuses which are rampant at the Porte, where, from the Vizier of the day down to the lowest *kiatib*, personal aggrandisement is the first, if not the only, rule of duty and action to the whole. There are, no doubt, black sheep within cannon-shot of Abdeen; but since the fall of the late Moufettish their wool has assumed a distinctly lighter hue. In the provinces this salutary personal influence of the Khedive is of course less felt, and the mudir of Esneh, Wady-Halfa, or Dongola may with impunity commit abuses that are never heard of near Cairo, and which, unless reported by some incontinent traveller, are not likely to ever reach the ear of the all-feared Effendina,* who, when they do, seldom tempers justice with mercy to such offenders. As provincial misrule, however, chiefly consists in extorting extra taxes that never reach the Treasury, or unpaid labour for private farms owned by the mudir or his friends, the authority of the new Controller-General, exercised directly through his own agents, will largely operate to protect the fellah from both these forms of oppression; and, if so, his lot will be easier than that of Egyptian ryot ever was before.

Such is the present machinery of Egyptian administration; but, regularly organised as the whole may be, its

* "Great Lord," the native designation of his Highness.

parts form only so many wires all pulled by the governing hand of the Khedive, who, from behind his little gilded table, rules councils, ministers, and mudirs, as a colonel rules his regiment. The only checks on his otherwise absolute power are the foreign revenue controllers, and the international tribunals; the first of which operate most wholesomely as preventives of financial abuse, while the latter—though as yet incompletely—exert a still more salutary restraint, such as Egyptian sovereign never before acknowledged. It is due to his Highness to remember that these limitations of his prerogative are self-imposed, and the loyalty with which he has thus far respected both is full of good augury for further and larger reforms. In the meantime, whatever may still be its defects, this Government of Egypt stands out as the only one between the Danube and the Indus which has broken with the fanatical conservatism of Islam, and placed itself in frank *rapport* with Western civilisation. That it is so entirely personal is, of course, an element of weakness; but, apart from the fact that the heir-apparent is a Prince of liberal education, and of already approved administrative ability, a governing *staff* has been created, in whose hands the traditions of the present reign may be safely trusted to lose none of their force. The change in the succession put an end to the scramble for selfish aggrandisement during a single vicereignty, and substituted a dynastic interest in the welfare of the country, which is, perhaps, its best guarantee for good government in the future.