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THE POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY OF EGYPT.

BY

LIEUT.-GENERAL C. P. STONE.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

I esteemed it a very great honor that, almost as soon as I touched the shores of my native land, after an absence of thirteen years in Egypt, I received an invitation from our Society to speak this evening on that country.

The invitation was accepted with thankfulness. But here, at the outset, appears before me one of those striking contrasts which exist between the East and the West.

Mr. President, in Egypt I was one of your colleagues. I was there president of a Geographical Society, and presided over many of its public meetings. Yet never, in one of its meetings, did I see before me in the audience a lady of the land. There, no orator ever had such cause of inspiration, or nervousness, as the case may be. Here, honored as this meeting is by the presence of so many of our countrywomen, how different it is !

But our American ladies must not think that, because their Egyptian sisters have not the privilege of attending the public meetings of a scientific society, they possess no rights special to them. Oh, no ! they also have rights and privileges, some of which our countrywomen do not possess.

Here, in New York, suppose one of the so-called "lords of creation" entering his house. As he passes the door of his wife's reception-room, he hears within the clink of china and silvery sounds of feminine laughter. Aha !

Madame has lady friends with her! and straightway he stalks unannounced into the sacred presence. It is his right to enter his wife's reception-room; and no matter what nice bit of gossip, what pretty little feminine secrets may be under discussion, he must be received by all with smiles, as if of welcome.

But not so in the East. There, suppose one of these same so-called lords of creation entering his house. The silent servants bow low as he makes his way towards *his* wife's reception-room. As he approaches the heavy curtain which closes the entrance to what in his language is called "the abode of bliss," *he* hears echoes of silvery laughter: *he* hears the clink of china. Aha! his wife and daughters are taking coffee! he will join them. The aroma of his best tobacco comes past the curtain to his nostrils. Aha! the ladies have their chibouks and cigarettes! He will join them in that, too. The sound of music comes to him, and the clack of castanets. Aha! the ladies have the musicians and the dancers before them. Good! he will enjoy these with them. He steps nearer the curtain to raise it and enter; but a sight meets his eye which brings him instantly to a standstill, and then turns him away. Three or four, or, perhaps, a dozen pairs of tiny outside slippers lie before the curtain. That is all; but that is quite enough to arrest his course. He knows by this simple sign that his wife and daughters are entertaining lady visitors, and he may not enter until they shall have departed. All the rest of his establishment is at his disposal—*salaamalek*, billiard-room, garden, and all; but until that little coterie shall be pleased to break up, and the tiny slippers shall retire, his "abode of bliss" is closed to him.

So much for contrasts.

Do not think, Mr. President, from the title of this address, "The Political Geography of Egypt," that I intend to impose on the Society a long, dry story of dozens of dynasties of old Pharaohs—of what Rameses did, or Seti did not do, in changing the political conditions of Northeastern Africa. All this has been told a thousand times by men far more able than I; and in the rich library of our Society all this may be found. But I have thought that I might presume to occupy an hour of your time in a discussion of the changes which have taken place in that ancient country during the short space of time in which the Government of the United States has existed in this, our own beloved country.

To begin, then, at the time when Washington was first elected President of the United States. Egypt was then, as now, *nominally* a possession of the Ottoman Sultan. *Really* it was ruled by a few Mameluke Beys, who apportioned out among themselves the rich lands, the villages and the populations of the country, and worked them all mercilessly to keep up their respective little courts and maintain that splendid cavalry whose exploits are known to the whole military world.

In 1798 a great figure appeared on the scene. Napoleon Bonaparte, member of the Institute of France, General-in-Chief of the expedition to Egypt, landed at Abousir, a little to the westward of Alexandria, with 40,000 men, veterans of his Army of Italy.

In a few days he had occupied Alexandria. In a few weeks he had met and overthrown the united forces of the Mameluke Beys, and had occupied "Cairo the Victorious." In a few months every vestige of Mameluke power had disappeared, and Egypt in its length and breadth acknowledged the sway of the French Republic.

I need not weary you with any words on the work of Napoleon in Egypt. It is set forth in that magnificent work, *La Description de l'Egypte*, prepared by the most brilliant corps of *savants* ever sent forth by any government, and forming the most beautiful of the great soldier's monuments.

In the first year of the present century disinterested England joined her forces, naval and military, to those of Turkey in a campaign against the French in Egypt, and the isolated remnant of the French army was forced to evacuate the country, leaving it in the hands of the Sultan's officials.

The extent of Egyptian territory which, during the first few years of the nineteenth century, was *de facto* under Turkish rule, extended from El Arisch on the east to a little beyond Alexandria on the west, and from the sea coast on the north to near the first cataract on the south; and this territory paid an uncertain revenue to the Sublime Porte of about £4,000 per annum.

Then appeared on the scene a second great figure, Mehemet Aly, the founder of the present dynasty, which dynasty has wrought such changes in the political geography of Northeastern Africa as have been rarely seen on any continent in the same space of time.

When Mehemet Aly, in 1805, seized upon the Viceroyalty of Egypt he could rule more or less completely over a narrow strip of country along the Nile of about nine degrees of latitude in length, and of an average width of about four degrees of longitude.

Seventy years later his fourth successor, his grandson, the Khédive Ismail, ruled absolutely over a territory of thirty degrees of latitude—from Damietta on the north to

near Urundogani on the south, and from Cape Guardafui on the east to the frontiers of Wadai on the west. And Egypt paid regularly to the Sublime Porte a tribute of nearly four millions of dollars! The Egypt of the old Pharaohs was all under his sway.

Let us pass in review rapidly the changes as they occurred.

Hardly had Mehemet Aly seated himself as Viceroy of Egypt when he energetically pushed toward the south to assert his power as far as the first cataract, between which point and Cairo the Mameluke Beys recommenced their disastrous rule. While he was actively engaged in this operation disinterested England again moved upon Egypt, this time (1807) sending a force of five thousand soldiers to overthrow the new Viceroy and replace him by the Mameluke Elfy Bey.

British history does not enlarge upon the Summer campaign of 1807 in Egypt, but the Egyptian and some French histories do. Suffice it here to state, that the genius and energy of Mehemet Aly foiled and completely defeated the combination of British, Mameluke and Bedouin troops, and left him in full possession of all Egypt proper, that is, from the Mediterranean coast to the northern limit of Nubia.

Fully impressed with the importance to the ruler of Egypt of the possession of the great back country on the south, the great Viceroy persistently employed his forces in that direction; and in 1817 he had conquered all Nubia, Kordofan and Senaar; ruling on the Nile from latitude about 32° to latitude 12°.

Before his death, which occurred in 1848, his power was recognized south on the White Nile, to latitude 5° N., and he had personally commanded an expedition up the Blue

Nile to Fazoughu, where he established his advanced post in that direction.

The immediate successors of Mehemet Aly, his son Ibrahim, his grandson Abbas and his son Saïd during their reigns, did not add to Egyptian territory on the south ; but under the latter two the Egyptian power was made firmer among the tribes along the Abyssinian frontier.

During the reign of Saïd Pacha, Captain Speke made his discovery of Lake Victoria, the great reservoir of the White Nile, and clearly indicated the position and extent of Lake Albert. Later, Sir Samuel Baker, acting on the indications of Speke, visited and described Lake Albert.

These discoveries of the headwaters of the great Egyptian river, were of vast importance to Egypt ; and their importance was fully appreciated by Ismail, the successor of Saïd, who came to the throne in January, 1863. From the day of his accession he fostered the Soudan, and in 1869 he gave to Sir Samuel Baker the command of a large force and almost unlimited means, and sent him to occupy and organize government in the region between Gondokoro and the equator.

The history of Sir Samuel Baker's expedition as Pacha and Governor, and its results, are well known to the Society. The advanced military posts of Egypt were, in 1873, when Baker Pacha returned, in Unyoro between lakes Albert and Victoria ; and Gondokoro was the capital of the Egyptian "Provinces of the Equator."

In this same year of 1873, the Bahr-el-Gazall country was occupied as an Egyptian military province with its capital at Shekka.

In 1873 took place, also, the occupation of the port of Beberah on the Gulf of Aden, and within three years it

became a civilized centre, with lighthouse, post-office, hospital and warehouses, while the Khédive's flag was planted and maintained beyond Cape Guardafui, down to Ras Hafoun on the Indian ocean.

The occupation of the Province of the Bahr-el-Gazall resulted in the conquest of the Empire of Darfour in the following manner :

The Emperor Ibrahim of Darfour, who derived a large revenue from the traffic in slaves that he captured in Dar Fertit and the Bahr-el-Gazall country and sent in caravans to Egypt, Tripoli and Tunis, was, in 1873, warned by the Khédive Ismaïl that those countries, having come under his rule, must henceforth not be entered by the troops of Darfour for the purpose of capturing slaves—and was informed that the Egyptian commander at Shekka had received orders to prevent slave raids in those regions. At the same time that this warning was given, a small body of regular troops, armed with Remington muskets, was sent there to enforce the warning, and the bands of native and half-breed slave-catchers in the territory, whose occupation was also taken from them by the prohibition of the slave trade, were, to the number of several thousands, taken into the Governor's service and allotted pay and rations to recompense them for their abandonment of occupation.

The Emperor Ibrahim, neglecting the warning, sent a strong force into the Bahr-el-Gazall country, and finding the garrison of Shekka in its way, this force attacked the place. The result was a disastrous defeat of Ibrahim's troops.

He was again warned by the Khédive, and informed that, should he repeat his raids, the southern province of Darfour (Dara) would be occupied and annexed to Egypt as a matter of security for the future.

Despising this warning, Ibrahim sent his Grand Vizir, at the head of ten thousand men, to attack Shekka again. The result was defeat and the occupation of Dara.

Again he was warned and informed that should he molest the Khédive's forces in Dara his whole country would be occupied—and as he despised this warning and attacked Dara, his country was, in 1874, completely occupied, he himself falling killed in the last battle which occurred.

This conquest of Darfour added an empire of territory to the great back country of Egypt, and several millions of subjects to the Khédive. It was also the most deadly blow to the interior slave trade in Africa that had ever been struck.

Before the campaign was fairly over, a large corps of staff officers were on their way thither, well supplied with good instruments, and in 1874-5-6 the whole territory of Darfour was well reconnoitered and mapped.

Darfour had previously been visited by only two Europeans. The first was an English traveller, Browne, who, in 1793, managed to gain entrance into the country, from which foreigners were jealously excluded. Once within the country he found it impossible either to travel in the interior or to return to Egypt. He remained there a prisoner in his house during two years and was then fortunate enough to obtain, by petitions and bribes, permission to return to Cairo.

It was from his descriptions of what he had heard in Darfour that European geographers had made up the best maps they could of that country.

Their accuracy may be estimated from the fact that his placing of Kobbé, the capital, on the map was about *one hundred and sixty miles* incorrect in longitude.

The second European who entered Darfour was a French oculist, Dr. Cuni, who was invited thither to exercise his profession in the palace. He found it easy to enter Darfour for this purpose, but he was never permitted to leave, and died there after a prolonged forced residence in the capital.

The Egyptian conquest so changed the country that in 1876 the postal service throughout the country was well performed, and a European traveller could pass everywhere in the land in perfect safety and with considerable comfort, as comfort is understood in the interior of Africa. The telegraph then connected Darfour with Cairo and the rest of the world.

In 1874 Colonel Gordon was invested with the command of the Provinces of the Equator, with his headquarters at Gondokoro, and between his operations and those of the Governor of the Province of Bahr-el-Gazall, the Egyptian flag was carried (1876) down near to the equator on the White Nile, and to include the country of the Niam-Niam on the west of the White Nile, while steamers plied on the Nile and on Lake Albert to keep up communications with and transport supplies for the military posts in Unyoro.

In 1875, the King of Harrar interfering with the caravans coming from the interior to the new port of Berberah on the gulf of Aden, it became necessary to deal with him as with the Emperor of Darfour; and by a rapid campaign conducted by Raouf-Pacha, the ancient kingdom of Harrar was conquered and permanently occupied.

Thus, in a few short years, the Khédive Ismaïl, carrying out the policy of his wise and far-seeing grandfather, added to the map of Egypt territories sufficient for three empires and populations amounting to probably ten or twelve millions.

His conquests were all advantageous to geographical science, for where his troops went, went also the compass and chain, the theodolite and sextant, the telescope and chronometer in the hands of intelligent staff and engineer officers, and maps of hitherto unexplored countries went forth to the world. In remote and hitherto inaccessible regions, or regions which had before been accessible only with great difficulty and danger, such as near the frontiers of Wadai and the countries of the Niam-Niam, Somali and Gallas, were thenceforward to be found hospitable, civilized military posts, where geographical travellers were always welcomed and aided, giving them the great advantage of bases of operations a thousand or fifteen hundred miles from the Mediterranean.

His conquests were all to the advantage of civilization, for wherever his power was established there were established schools and hospitals and facilities for the great civilizer, commerce.

His first endeavor after his troops had occupied a new region was always to improve the material condition of its people. His second endeavor was to improve their moral condition by education.

Mr. President, the great development of Egypt which took place during the past twelve years I saw, and an infinitesimal part of it I was. It was a most fascinating service. Now this is not precisely the place for the discussion of political subjects ; but I feel that should I, under present circumstances, fail to speak somewhat of the ex-Khédive Ismaïl I might be supposed to have joined the great army of the ungrateful, and I would not like to have that supposed of me.

Ismaïl Pacha mounted the throne of Egypt on the 18th

of January, 1863. He was then, by inheritance and good management of his large patrimony, one of the wealthiest princes in the world. He found his country, on his accession to power, producing a revenue of about £4,000,000, and with a small debt. He found the Suez canal in the process of construction, but the company being in great financial difficulty the progress was slow and unsatisfactory. He found that concessions had been made by his good-natured and easy-going predecessor to the Canal Company, some of which were very oppressive to his people (obliging them to work on call for the company, at low wages), and some of which (such as rights to acquisition of lands and rights of colonization with exemption from payments of customs duties) were dangerous to the existence of his government. He found the system of public instruction, so carefully organized by Mehemet Aly, neglected, disorganized and nearly destroyed.

He found a short line of railway running through Lower Egypt and connecting the Mediterranean at Alexandria with the Red sea at Suez ; but the port of Alexandria open to storms and the port of Suez fit only for the requirements of trade as trade existed in the time of Cleopatra.

He found the country producing sufficient of grain and cotton to supply the wants of the population in bread and to export from three to four millions of pounds sterling per annum.

He found Egypt in possession of only two ports on the Red sea, Suez and Cosire.

He found his country so bound by the treaties between the Christian Powers and the Ottoman Empire that some seventeen different codes of laws in half as many different languages were applied to his people in their dealings with

foreigners living in the country. He found Europeans of every nationality urging improvements in every branch of industry, and each urging that the means of such improvements be purchased in his country.

Endowed with high intelligence, well educated in Europe, appreciating the immense material advantages which his country would derive from the introduction of Western science and its results, princely and grand in his ideas, Ismail Pacha devoted himself and all his resources to the advancement of his country.

When, in 1879, he was driven from his throne and his country, not by his own people, but by a combination of European governments, using as a pretext the claims of European bondholders, he had accomplished, among many other great things, the following :

1st. He had delivered his country from servitude to the Suez Canal Company by the payment of many millions of pounds in buying back the dangerous concessions made to the company by his predecessor, and, in so doing, had given to the company the means of continuing and completing that grand work, so useful to all the world excepting only Egypt.

2d. He had so increased the prosperity of Egypt that she produced enough to feed her own people, and yet export more than seventy millions of dollars worth in a year—nearly four times as much as she could export when he came to the throne. The revenues also had increased and more than doubled.

3d. He had covered Lower Egypt with a network of railways and canals which facilitated the transportation of crops and merchandise, secured irrigation and brought a net revenue of three or four millions of dollars a year to his government.

4th. He had gained for himself and his successors the title and rights of Khédive (Tributary King), in place of those of viceroy, held by his predecessors.

5th. He had gained for Egypt the jurisdiction of the whole African coast of the Red sea and gulf of Aden.

6th. He had extended the electric telegraph over all Egypt and over a large portion of the Soudan ; and had perfected the postal service and connected it with the Postal Union of the world.

7th. With vast outlay he had bridged the Nile, given to Alexandria harbor improvements of immense importance, and created an admirable artificial harbor with docks, and dry dock at Suez.

8th. He had restored Darfour, the Bahr-el-Gazall country, the Niam-Niam country, Northern Unyoro, Harrar and the Somali country to the dominion of Egypt, and by scientific conquest had given to the world geographical knowledge of greater importance than any other sovereign of his time.

9th. He secured to his country one code of laws and one class of tribunals by which should be adjudicated all questions arising between his subjects and those of Christian Powers and questions arising between subjects of different powers, residing in Egypt ; instead of having each nation's consul the judge in all cases in which his countrymen might be defendant.

All these things, and many more, he accomplished during his reign from 1863 to 1879. His enemies who drove him, against the will of his own people, from his throne, have had the opportunity to write the history of his reign in European languages for the moment, and to create public opinion in the Western world to justify the infamous

treatment he received from the governments of Europe. It is meet that here, before the American Geographical Society, a word should now be spoken for one who has done so much for geographical science as did the Khédive Ismaïl.

In the not distant future, when those sovereigns of Europe who, false to their own order, aided in driving him from the throne of Egypt (for the benefit of speculators and the carrying out of England's selfish policy) shall have passed away, history will, I believe, calmly record his good and great deeds, as well as his mistakes, and, when telling of what Egypt was under his rule and what she became under Western rule, will establish his fame as one of the great rulers of the nineteenth century.