Preface

To some readers what follows may sound like an old-fashioned book about old-fashioned people, the kind today we patronizingly refer to as the ancien régime. It may seem so because it talks about people and events and does not pretend to express theories or even consciously to apply them, although like most of my generation I am influenced by the ideas of Marx, Mannheim, Eliade, Erikson, et alii. I started this work partly as a tribute to my parents and to their friends whom I love and respect, but who may never speak to me again, for much that I write about them is not laudatory, and many of their heroes are stripped bare. And while Egyptians, like all other people, love to gossip about their friends, they do not relish washing their dirty linen in public. One hopes that they may see behind my criticism of their generation and their actions my respect and admiration for their efforts, such as they were, right or wrong, successful or otherwise, and I appeal to them to realize that our generation is only a continuation of theirs and that our failures and successes are only an extension of theirs. This book is written partly in an effort to explain to this and succeeding generations that each era has its glorious moments as well as its abysmal failures, and that posterity should judge a generation in the light of its times as well as in the light of history. No man is absolutely hero or knave, and no man is entirely master of a situation, above all a political one. Lastly, it is written because I wanted to understand what happened and why. Curiosity may have caused the cat’s demise, but where would all historians be without it? If I have not understood the situation entirely, my hope is that those who know better will speak up, so that subsequent works about this period may throw more light on it.

By natural inclination this book would have concentrated on the social history of the period. But, alas, some of the political information concerning 1922-1936 is unknown to Western readers, and it is lopsided to write a social history where the political aspects are shrouded.
For that reason I ask the reader's indulgence for recounting the rise and fall of cabinets as though that were the sum of a country's history, but the cause and effect of such changes in themselves mirror the ruling elite with its alliances and alignment and reveal its attitude toward society, and vice versa. Nonetheless some of the chapters of the book are concerned with giving a picture of Egyptian society economically, socially, and intellectually, with showing how the political activities of the time impinged on the facets of the society, and with how society reacted to the politics of the age. Thus Chapter I is an introduction to the society, mores, and psychology of the Egyptian, while Chapter VII is a brief synopsis of the economy intended neither to be detailed nor complete and supplied simply to accentuate certain economic facets of that society. Chapter VIII is an equally brief introduction to the major intellectual ideas of that time, showing the different paths that the intellectuals, or the society that shaped them, had mapped out for the country.

I want to point out that any general reference in this book to Egyptians includes both Copts and Muslims who share the same characteristics and traits that make up the Sons of the Nile.

Much of the material for this book was obtained orally from the men who were involved in the period or from their wives and children. A great deal of the background has, of course, been absorbed through conversations with my uncle Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid (Pasha) and with my father Muhammad Said Lutfi al-Sayyid (Pasha). I spent many happy hours talking to Dr. Bahi Eddine Barakat (Pasha), the former Regent of Egypt, and laying my problems and questions at his feet. In 1971 he allowed me access to the memoirs of his father Fathallah Pasha Barakat. It is my regret that he died before he was able to see this work.

The Barakat memoirs are gathered in forty-seven notebooks, most of them written in the author's hand; when he was stricken with trachoma his secretary wrote them at his direction. The occasional gaps in the notebooks occurred when he was too busy as a cabinet minister to make entries. Frequently the memoirs are out of chronological order; for example, in 1935 he recounts an event that occurred in 1931, or if a subject comes up during a conversation with a friend he comments on something relevant that occurred the month before. Adding to the confusion is the fact that he did not number the notebooks except for recording the year and month of the entries. The volumes were numbered after his death, and some volumes have duplicate numbering, for example, two volumes are numbered volume 6, one pertaining
to one year and the other to a period two years later, there are two volumes 16, and volumes 15-17 are followed by volumes 5-9. In spite of these minor difficulties, the memoirs, which cover the years 1922 to 1934—from the year of Fathallah's exile to the Seychelles with Zaghlul to the year of his death—are most informative. Only two volumes of this collection have ever been consulted by a scholar, and I am exceedingly grateful to have had the privilege of examining them in their entirety.

Other people have been most generous in giving me information concerning the period and the personalities involved: among them are H. E. Mahmud Muhammad Mahmud (Pasha), H. E. Sharif Sabri (Pasha), H. E. I. Tharwat, and Mmes. Husain Haikal (Pasha) and Makram Ubaid (Pasha). To all I am deeply grateful. I am also indebted to the late Hidiya Hanim Barakat for her vivid accounts, especially of when she smuggled revolutionary literature in shopping bags in 1919 and organized the women of Cairo in protest demonstrations. I owe a great deal to my mother Atiya Hanim Rashwan for her eyewitness accounts of the 1919 uprising and her tales of the times.

In England I had long talks about the Percy Loraine period with Gordon Waterfield, who gave of his time and vast knowledge as generously as he has always done. Sir Laurence Grafftey-Smith, whose anecdotes are a sheer delight and whose comments on the personalities concerned are invaluable, also gave generously of his time, and I am grateful to him and to Lady Grafftey-Smith for a lovely day at their house.

I am deeply grateful to Albert Hourani for his unfailing kindness in reading the manuscript and for his comments, to Rifaat Abul-Haj for his pertinent observations, and to Malcolm Kerr. I am also grateful to my husband who, with his customary patience, put up with the birth pangs of the book and sustained me not only with affection but with valid criticism. My warm thanks go to my research assistant Doha Sleiman for his help with some of the research. I am particularly indebted to my many colleagues at the Gustave E. von Grunebaum Center for Near Eastern Studies at UCLA, especially Speros Vryonis Jr., the then director, for his encouragement; Teresa Joseph, their editor, who has done a masterly job of editing the manuscript; and Evelyn Oder and Elahei Badkoubei who typed the manuscript.

I am indebted to the American Research Center in Egypt for the grant to conduct research there in 1971, and to the Social Science Research Council whose generosity helped me to carry out research in England in 1972. I am grateful to St. Antony's College at Oxford for
permission to consult their collection of private papers, and to the Public Records Office in London for permission to consult theirs. I would like to have consulted the Egyptian archives in Cairo for the years 1922 and 1923 (the rest of the period under discussion comes under the fifty-year rule), but I was unable to do so since in 1971 the archives were still closed. On a trip to Egypt in 1975 for research on another subject, after the manuscript was in the editor's hands, I was allowed to consult the Saad Zaghlul papers and I have incorporated that material into the book. I am most grateful to His Excellency the Under-Secretary of State for Cultural Affairs, Dr. Sheniti, for his permission to use these materials, to Jubran Jubran, the Director of the National Archives in Egypt, and to the employees of the archives, especially Sawsan Abd al-Ghani, Hashim Abd al-Azim, and Ibrahim Fathallah Ahmad for their kindness.