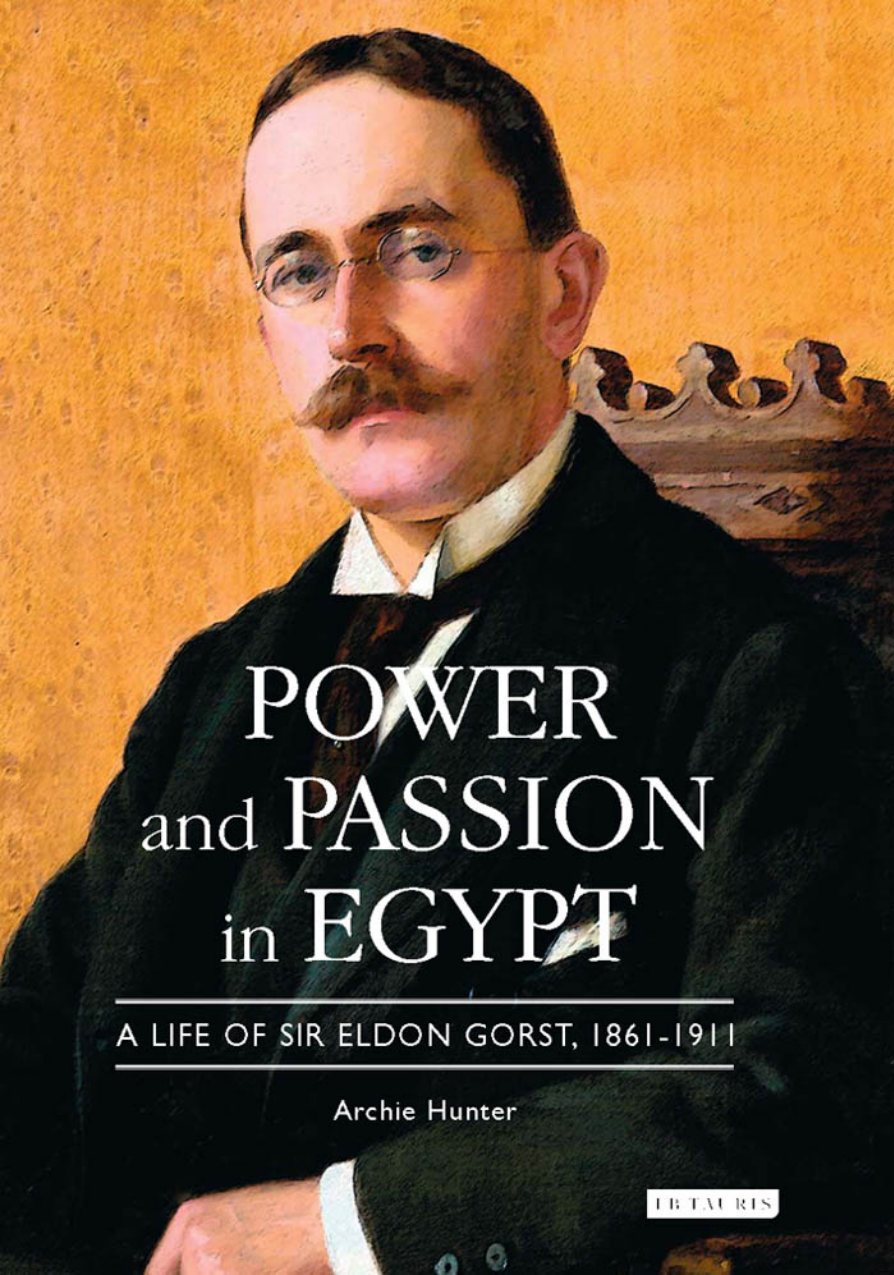
POWER
and PASSION
in EGYPT
A LIFE OF SIR ELDON GORST, 1861-1911
Archie Hunter
I.B.TAURIS

# POWER AND PASSION IN EGYPT

*For Paul and Karen*

*By the same author:*

Kitchener's Sword-Arm: The Life and Campaigns
of General Sir Archibald Hunter

A Life of Sir John Gorst: Disraeli's Awkward Disciple

Wellington's Scapegoat: The Tragedy
of Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Bevan

# POWER AND PASSION IN EGYPT

## A LIFE OF SIR ELDON GORST 1861–1911

ARCHIE HUNTER

I.B. TAURIS
LONDON · NEW YORK

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# CONTENTS

# ILLUSTRATIONS

# PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the time of King Edward VII's Coronation in 1902, the great British public suddenly found that there were two Sir John Eldon Gorsts to contend with. Ever since, and not entirely surprisingly, the two men have often been confused. One was John Gorst, the Conservative politician and social reformer who, aged 72, was just stepping down after a long stint as Minister of Education, and the other was his son, aged 41, a member of the Diplomatic Service and a fast-rising star in the Egyptian Administration. It is the younger Gorst, known as Jack, who is the subject of this book.

In the 30 years prior to the First World War, three British proconsuls were effectively the rulers of Egypt: Cromer, Kitchener and Gorst. The first two were household names and are still well remembered. For many, however, Jack Gorst has been a rather shadowy figure, his tenure of office of just four years being sandwiched between the two titans. Although Robert Tignor and Peter Mansfield had chapters on Gorst in books on British rule in Egypt written some 35 years ago, Gorst has tended to be neglected by historians, despite the availability for research of his diaries and remarkable autobiographical notes. But in 1977 Peter Mellini published in the USA, as a contribution to the Hoover Institution's programme of African colonial studies, a revealing and timely biography of Gorst entitled *Sir Eldon Gorst: The Overshadowed Proconsul*. Since then, more information about Gorst, notably about his private life, has emerged. My aim in this book is to bring

Gorst, who was my great uncle, to the attention of the general public on this side of the Atlantic, as well as to academics and students of history, at a time when the affairs of the Middle East continue to preoccupy the world.

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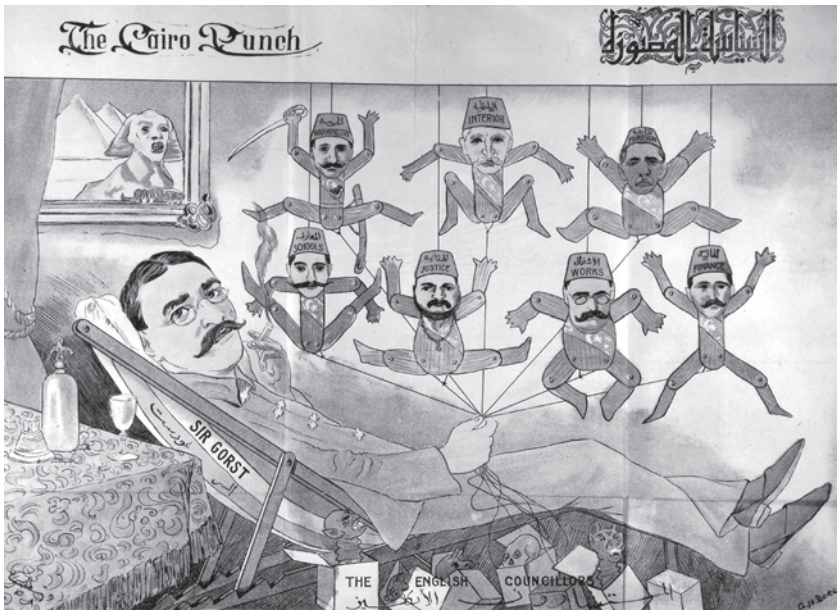


*1. Eldon Gorst and His Toys: Gorst is depicted as the puppet-master controlling the Egyptian Cabinet.*

CHAPTER

# 1

# CHILDHOOD

The task of removing a family from Auckland to the heart of the Waikato country [80 miles away], now accomplished by railway in a few hours, was then a work of difficulty: there were chairs and tables, pots and pans, to be bought for the house, and stores to last as long as possible in the remote bush. An honest Scotchman with a wife and a little girl of twelve, who had come out on the *Red Jacket* [a famous clipper], agreed to go as servants. A young lady, engaged to be married to a captain in the army, begged to come with us as company for my wife Mary; and Mr. Marsden Clarke, the clerk and interpreter, was to live with us till his own house was ready. Having got our baggage and servants packed off … we turned our attention to the removal of my infant son Jack, which proved a very arduous business, occupying a whole week … We were favoured with beautiful weather …

The first day's journey was very easy and pleasant, as we drove along a good road in a dog-cart, and the second in a spring cart through the Hunua forest was not so very bad. The soldiers were getting on well with the road; in some places it was shaky and rough, but the more

> Jack was shaken, the more the little fellow seemed to enjoy himself. But when we got upon the river, all his good humour evaporated; he could not bear the canoe, and did nothing but cry ... Whether it was the heat, or the sand-flies and mosquitoes, which covered his fair skin with spots and hillocks, or the exceeding slowness of the canoe's progress, for some reason he roared and cried all the way; only in the tent at night did he sleep in peace. From Taupiri [the mission station] we went on horseback; Marsden Clarke carried the baby on a bundle of blankets strapped to the pommel of his saddle; this gave the little boy the most amazing satisfaction; he alternated between fits of laughter and sound slumber ... [1]

The 'arduous' journey being described was one being made in January 1862 by the Gorst family. They were a family of three: John, Mary and their son Jack, born on 25 June in a suburb of Auckland the previous year and the subject of this book. The reason for the journey, made in deeply troubled times in New Zealand and not very long before the outbreak of the first Maori War, was simple enough. John Gorst was going to serve, first as a magistrate and then as a civil commissioner, in the distant Waikato country, the centre of disaffection against the colonial government and settlers. But Gorst's mission, one specially devised for him by Governor Grey, was unsuccessful and ended in humiliating failure. Within 15 months, militant Maori leaders had violently seized the printing press and type being used by Gorst to produce a newspaper in Maori, had threatened his life and had finally expelled him from the Waikato with a fierce lack of ceremony.

The only other glimpses we have of Jack in New Zealand also come from his father's pen. Once we see him a giggling baby charging around, in the living-room of the Gorsts' house in the Waikato bush, on the shoulders of the intrepid George Selwyn, then Bishop of New Zealand and Melanesia and later the founder of a Cambridge college. Next, not quite two years old, he was gamely 'clasping the angry [Maori] men by the legs' and trying to intervene during the seizure of the press. Finally he was described at play on Kawau Island near Auckland, the Governor's private domain, run – conservation-style – as a kind of zoo. This time he was feeding by hand an enormous kangaroo!

Towards the end of 1863 the disenchanted John Gorst, having served Grey for some months more in Auckland and believing that war would not solve the government's dispute with the Maoris, finally left New Zealand with his family to return to England. Thus Jack would have, unhappily, no memories of the country of his birth.

The Gorsts had their origins in Lancashire and Cheshire. Jack's father, John Eldon Gorst, came from a family well-established in Preston and prominent there in the law. His father, Edward Chaddock Gorst, was a solicitor and deputy clerk of the Peace, and his grandfather, Robert, had also practised law. His uncle (Thomas Mee Gorst) was a barrister who had inherited property under the will of the distantly related Robert Lowndes, on condition he changed his name to Lowndes, which he did to the financial advantage of the Gorst family. John Gorst's background was then a comfortable one, and his family were also strong supporters of the Anglican Church, being benefactors to several churches in Preston.

The young Gorst was clever and independently minded. At Preston Grammar School he had two claims to fame: he was head boy, and he was editor of the school magazine, a position he was obliged to vacate when the school authorities suppressed the magazine for 'some obnoxious articles ... written in a mocking spirit' which it contained (rather unfairly, perhaps, for these articles proceeded from the pen of John's father who presumably did not 'own up' to them!). Fortunately, this episode did not prevent John from acquiring a place at St John's College, Cambridge. There he soon found himself involved in the Cambridge Union debating society, rising in time to become its President and displaying what would become his passionate life-long interest: politics. He did well too in his final examinations, becoming Third Wrangler in the Mathematics Tripos. He had hoped to be First, and the disconsolate Gorst may have been either consoled or amused by his coach remarking: 'I never knew a man take so high a mathematics degree who knew so little mathematics as you'! As a mark of his academic achievement, John was elected to a Fellowship of his College.

Casting around for a career to follow, Gorst rejected for the moment the Bar and politics, and decided to try his luck in the antipodes as a lay missionary under the wing of Bishop Selwyn, also a St John's man. But things did not quite work out as expected. First, on the long voyage out to New Zealand on the *Red Jacket*, during which for some tense hours John Gorst and some other public-spirited passengers helped the captain to quell a mutiny, John became romantically involved with Mary Moore. He proposed and was accepted. And then in Auckland he did not find missionary work was quite to his liking. Instead he was attracted by the political and administrative problems facing the government in its relations with the Maori people whom he came to admire. The work he undertook for the Governor ended badly as we have noted. Back in England, having first written a book sympathetic to the Maori cause, he was called to the Bar and began to practise as a barrister before he was soon lured away by

politics, so beginning, as these pages will from time to time show, a long and sometimes erratic political career. His influence on his elder son Jack was to be, at least in the early days, considerable.

Jack's mother, the enchanting Mary, was gentle and loving and her children would be totally devoted to her. She came from an Anglo-Irish family, the daughter of Lorenzo Moore, one of whose forebears had been MP for Dublin University in the 1820s. Moore was a colourful character, a bit of a firebrand at times. He had joined the East India Company at the age of 18 and had taken to soldiering, rising to become a major in the 5th Madras Light Cavalry. Rashly he had produced some literature critical of the Company's anti-Christian policy, which his Commanding Officer ordered to be burned. Whereupon Moore, presumably disgruntled, went home with his wife and children, took a degree at Cambridge and became a parson. A restless man, he was unsatisfied with his subsequent life as a clergyman in the country and decided to emigrate to New Zealand. En route, while in Australia, he married his daughter to John Gorst.[2]

On returning home, the Gorsts took a villa at Tooting, between six and seven miles from the Inner Temple, now the scene of John's work. Jack's first memories were therefore of life in the London suburbs. The family moved in 1868 to better quarters in Kensington and Jack went to a day school in the neighbourhood. Presently his father thought his growing family might benefit from the bracing air of the Channel coast, and so rented a house at Worthing for some months. At another day school there, Jack was profoundly miserable. He was to write in his autobiographical notes that he

> was a good deal bullied by the other boys who were mostly bigger than I was. They used to wait for me after school hours and catch me as I was going home. I used to make all sorts of detours to try and avoid them, climbing over walls and returning across country to keep out of their way. On one occasion when I was being rather more badly treated than usual I appealed to a passer-by for assistance, and I still remember to my shame and discomfiture when he told me not to tell tales out of school and left me to the tender mercies of my persecutors.

Back in London, Jack was sent in the autumn of 1869 to Kensington Grammar School and spent nearly two years at this establishment before being struck down by a serious illness which would last some four years. The onset and course of this cruel malady is best told in his own words. At the age of ten he was

> attacked by an abscess in the pelvis. The doctors were at first rather mystified as to where the seat of the evil was, and for nearly a year I lay on my back under the impression that it was a spinal complaint … It was then discovered that [the abscess] originated in the pelvic bone. Several operations were performed with a view to cutting away the diseased bone, but all without success.

Worse was in store for the unhappy child, for the doctors at length decided that the only thing to do was

> to burn away [the abscess] with acid. For 2½ years from 11 to 13½ I suffered tortures (or so it seemed to me) daily. Every morning at 10 a.m. the acid was applied and I lay in pain till 4 or 5 in the afternoon. It was a dreadful time and I was not a patient invalid. There were times when I used to lie cursing and swearing for an hour or so at a time. My poor mother must have had a melancholy time of it, and I have no doubt I was as offensive and odious as it is possible to be.[3]

It is small wonder that, as Jack commented, his illness overshadowed many years of his life and had a 'permanent influence on my physical and moral development'. For his mother his ordeal must have been unremitting. In addition to Jack's illness, she had a growing family to cope with: Constance, also born in New Zealand; Violet, born in 1865 though she would not live to see her eighth birthday; Hylda, the author's grandmother, born in 1867, to be followed by Harold born in the following year; Edith born in 1871 and Eva three years later; her youngest child Gwendolen was not born until 1876.

Eventually, Jack persuaded his parents to abandon the inhuman acid treatment he was undergoing. The remedy, he told them, was worse than the disease. Even though the treatment was discontinued, it would be some two years before Jack had put his illness behind him.

CHAPTER

# 2

# ETON AND CAMBRIDGE

John and Mary now decided to send Jack to Eton. John's elder brother Edward, a life-long bachelor who had inherited land and was well off, had been to Rugby and must have favoured boarding schools, having offered to pay Jack's school fees. This was an offer John was glad to accept. Eton was a little more expensive than other boarding schools, and the fees had just gone up to £91 a year plus £8 for 'instruction and charges' (about £4,500 today). Certainly, the school was one for the rich. Many fathers of boys had substantial estates, were clergymen, officers in the services or barristers; very few were from the business world. Most Old Etonians would follow the careers of their fathers.[1] Jack was therefore entering a closed and privileged community.

A metal brace was made to protect Jack's back and, in January 1875, Mary took her son down to his new school. 'Seldom,' Jack wrote, 'was a boy less fit to be plunged into the little world of 900 boys of all sizes and ages …' As he went on to say, his long isolation from other boys of his age had taken its toll, for being away from his peers

> had made me very reserved, very sensitive and very old for my age. I did not understand boys' ways and it took me nearly two years before I learnt to get on with them … I was first looked upon as an unsociable and unsympathetic outsider.[2]

Although he had had a tutor at home for some years during his illness, it is hardly surprising that Jack was by his own admission very backward in his lessons when he reached Eton. As a result, he was placed in the lower-middle division of the Fourth form. But, a quick learner, he finished his first term as top of the class and obtained a 'double remove' into a much higher form. In fact, behind his small and weedy frame – Jack would never grow to be more than five foot five inches tall – he was blessed with a formidable intelligence, although this would take some years to develop. As a young man, Lord Vansittart, head of the Foreign Office in 1930, knew Jack well; he later wrote in his memoirs that Jack Gorst had 'the most powerful brain that I have encountered in the public service or in politics'.[3]

The curriculum at Eton, as in other major schools at the time, was based on the classics and mathematics. Other subjects, like French, were available sometimes as extras. Only in the Sixth form, taught by the headmaster, were boys able to read widely. Jack's tutor was the Revd J. Merriott, who was not, in Jack's critical view, 'a very intelligent or intellectual man for a school master', nor apparently was he, unlike most of his colleagues, an Old Etonian. He was unpopular with the boys, Jack describing him as 'a brute', given to bullying the more stupid of his pupils, though Jack had no cause to complain. Later on at school Jack had private lessons in mathematics – probably as a result of pressure from his father who could have been looking ahead to his son's future university career at Cambridge – from a Johnny Locke, described by Jack as a 'tiny little man with a huge bald head like a billiard ball'. Jack was never an easy person to please and he commented that Locke did not do much for him in his studies. Nevertheless, his progress earned 'me the unenviable reputation of being a "sap"', clearly a term of reproach. Very clever boys are often unpopular with their classmates.

Jack was due to go to Evans's House – Eton being divided into 'college' for scholars and boarding houses for the others; the latter each contained some 40 boys – but there was no room for him there for his first two terms. So he had to spend this time in the small waiting house run by Harry Tarver, a kindly and artistic man who was half French. Tarver, Jack felt, was 'wholly unsuited to manage boys'. He had married much below him, had gone bankrupt several times and reminded Jack of Harold Skimpole in *Bleak House* (a rather pathetic character who had no idea of time or of money and was generally regarded as a child). Not without some sympathy Jack wrote

> under these circumstances there was of course little or no discipline among us. To this day I feel compunction at the tricks we used to play on this poor weak-minded, gentle, inoffensive gentleman.

*2. Eldon Gorst as a boy.*

> Occasionally we used to go too far even for him with the result that we were 'complained of' – a euphemistic term for being sent up to be swished. This happened twice to me, but owing to my complaint it was considered I could not be punished in that way, and I was given a long 'poem' instead.[4]

'Swishing' and 'flogging' were seemingly interchangeable terms. Another punishment for bad behaviour was writing out lines. Tutors could also summon boys to appear before them at a time the boys would otherwise be free for games or social activity. For his second term at Tarver's, Jack was made Captain of the house, though this does not seem to have stopped him from being involved in ragging the unfortunate master.

After the summer holidays, Jack at last went to Evans's House, which belonged to the retired college drawing master William Evans, who had run his House successfully since 1839. The House was regarded as one of the best in the school, with the boys, unusually for those days, being encouraged to take responsibility. Yet Evans was by Jack's time largely inactive as a result of some mysterious accident, initially treated by laudanum (opium) and then by alcohol.[5] After Evans' death halfway through Jack's time at Eton, the house was managed by Evans' remarkably able daughter Jane Evans,

supported by her brother, the then drawing master, and a matron. There were also three maids to look after the boys' rooms, whose names Jack typically enough remembered were Harriet, Kate and Martha, all three being 'thoroughly unappetizing so as to be, like Caesar's wife, quite above suspicion'. He had an astonishing memory for names and other minutiae of life (we later learn for instance that, with his unusual powers of recall and concentration, he could recite the exact order in which the 52 cards were played in a hand of bridge). The house was not of course particularly comfortable. The boys ate lunch and supper in the house dining-room, but breakfast and tea (usually a slice of bread and butter) in their rather cramped rooms. There were then no bathrooms but points for washing. In one room all muddled up together were the boiler, gas rings for cooking and racks for holding football boots.[6]

Miss Evans, a woman who by reputation was wise about boys and had insight into their characters, did not, Jack said, like him much. We do not know why this was precisely so but he 'had several unpleasant rows [with her] ... sufficient to say I generally managed to extricate myself from these various scrapes without undergoing any very terrible punishments.' Maybe Jack answered back or gave the impression of being too clever: these were faults which were during his life recognised by contemporaries, although they tended to relate to his dealings with men rather than women.

Games and sport were always to be important for Jack despite his unpromising physique. It must therefore have been frustrating for him at Eton not to be able to play games for two years after his arrival there. But at the age of 16, as a small piece of bone came away from the pelvis area, the abscess healed and the terrible problem with which he had been afflicted was a thing of the past. Soon he was swimming and rowing, chiefly devoting himself to sculling rather than rowing in eights. Indeed, according to College records, he reached the 'ante final of Junior sculling in 1879' (not, curiously, mentioned by him when writing about Eton). At football he was proudly able to relate that in the autumn of 1878 at the age of 17 he 'succeeded to my great joy in getting my house-colours, the first of all who obtained them that season'. These colours must have provided a boost to his confidence.

As he became older he began to evince a steely determination in his approach to life, be it at work or play. Jack was not exactly a braggart but at the same time he would not hide his light under a bushel. On the other hand, ready to give credit where it was due, he generously admitted that whatever academic success he achieved at school he owed to his father who with 'well-timed severity kept me up to the mark'. In company with most boys he owned that he disliked work and was only made to exert himself

by the fear of his father's displeasure when he went home in the holidays. John Gorst never apparently said much, but when he was not pleased, he treated his son in 'a cold and distant manner which had far more effect on me than anything else could have done'. At least his father must have been gratified that Jack generally came top of his class, went on to take a divinity prize and was 'honourably mentioned' in the examination for the Tomlin scholarship, a mathematical prize. When he left Eton, he had reached the giddy heights of being in what was called 'the first hundred', that is the senior boys of the school. These were allowed to select their own extra study such as political economy, German or chemistry – unfortunately, we don't know what Jack chose. Nevertheless, looking back at his school days, Jack reflected in his usual critical vein that he had not learnt much that was useful while at Eton and was not disposed to praise the teaching there. Almost as a concession he was, however, ready to acknowledge that public school life was character-forming, and prevented him from becoming a 'prig'.

In what he wrote about Eton, Jack devoted quite a bit of space to his friends. It was almost as it he were admitting to his early difficulties in getting on with his peer group but then wished to emphasise, to himself or to an ultimate reader, that he overcame the problem and made many friends. He actually mentions by name some 14 boys. One was George Curzon, an exact contemporary (no comment on him). Another was a certain G.A. Baird, who had a chequered career on the turf before, Jack tells us, dying miserably, and alone, in America. In mentioning Baird, Jack showed a sense of compassion; for instance he thought it 'rather a stern measure' that Baird had been 'swished' for running away from Eton (several times) and then sent away from the school.

His best friend was Guy Oswald Smith, who was the same age as Jack but lower down in the school. In the house they used to 'mess' together for breakfast and tea. He compared with some perception Guy's appearance and character with his own:

> It would be difficult to find two people more entirely different. He was tall, fair and good-looking. I short, darkish and ugly. He was of a quiet, peaceable retiring disposition; I, rather, energetic, and much more sensitive and warm-hearted. He was liked by his masters; I was disliked by mine, in spite of their recognising that I did them credit.[7]

What are we to make of Jack's time at Eton? Certainly, it was not academically especially distinguished, although it held out promise, and some may have spotted his potential. He was not unhappy there, or he

would have said so. He was not popular with his masters, housemistress and, at least early on, with his peer group, something that does not quite square with what he describes as his 'warm-hearted' nature. But he did overcome a health problem and to an extent a personality disorder, with which he was burdened on arrival at the school, and in so doing showed resilience and resolution, as well as an ability to look after himself, that would stand him in good stead.

While Jack has left us with quite a good idea about how he fared at Eton, his writing is far less explicit about the three years he spent at Trinity College, Cambridge. Just 18, he left Eton at the end of the summer term 1879, whereupon he made a tour abroad with his father before going up to university in October that year. During this time, John coached his son in mathematics so that he would be well prepared to embark on the Honours degree course in that subject. John had obviously set his heart on Jack following in his footsteps, though as things turned out, Jack, good brain that he had, was not to have the academic success that his father had had. Jack on the other hand would be more skilful, perhaps more street-wise, in achieving his career goals than his father ever was. For John, despite his brilliance and although he served as a minister in Lord Salisbury's governments for no fewer than 13 and a half years, would never to his chagrin rise to Cabinet rank.

Jack, quickly falling on his feet, was given good rooms at Trinity in the Great Court between the chapel and the Master's Lodge, which he was able to retain during the whole time he was in college. He was rather dismissive of his college tutor, describing him as an 'uninteresting and not very learned man with snobbish proclivities'. He had private tuition from the most fashionable instructor of the day, Edward Routh by name. But this paragon, Jack tells us, 'never took the slightest interest in my studies'. In his third year, he placed himself under the direction of J.J. Thomson, whom he described as 'a very clever young man' and under him made great progress ultimately obtaining in 1882 the place of 21st Wrangler in his final examinations. While in 1880 he obtained a first class in the examination, in 1882, due to a change in the regulations, he somewhat ruefully admits to only getting a second class. Thomson, educated at Manchester and Cambridge Universities, was indeed a notable scholar, becoming famous as a professor of physics at Cambridge and carrying out pioneering work on the atom.[8]

Jack found the mathematics course 'very severe', having, once again it might even be said, started 'very far behind all my contemporaries in mathematical knowledge. I could only keep up with them by constant

application and keeping the brain at a very high tension.' His subject was of no direct practical use to him in his subsequent career, he wrote, but was of the 'greatest possible service in enabling me to grasp clearly and easily any subject' he had to then take up. It was, moreover, invaluable in forming an instrument for success in his chosen career. But he could not resist adding that he left Cambridge 'entirely ignorant of all branches of knowledge which could be of any practical use in real life'. Well, this was not a very profound remark, and he could hardly have it both ways. Perhaps many graduates leaving behind them the cloistered calm of the university campus might say much the same thing.

While Jack makes no mention of sport at Cambridge we know from Trinity College records that he joined the Trinity Boat Club though without being a very active member. Also he was in his second year elected to Trinity's Magpie and Stump, an irreverent debating society (still in existence), though he resigned from it for an unknown reason the following May.[9] His father had been a great debater in his day at the University Union Society but there is no evidence that Jack entered into the spirit of the Magpie and Stump, nor for instance whether he attended the society or spoke to the motion debated at the time: 'This House prefers an English sense of humour to an American.'

There was one activity which really caught Jack's attention: acting. He joined the Amateur Dramatic Club (ADC) of the University and took part in many performances. For instance, he played Crabtree in Sheridan's *School for Scandal* in November 1881, Mrs Dangle in the same author's farce, *The Critic*, and took many other minor parts. Jack was always to enjoy acting and played a leading role in amateur dramatics when he lived and worked in Cairo. Acting was in the Gorst family and his siblings, Harold and Hylda, both enjoyed dressing up and acting the fool often with a nice degree of levity. All of them had talent, and passed their prowess down to some of their descendants. While Jack tells us of his various Eton friends he does not compile a similar list of Cambridge friends. But he would see a good deal after he went down of Vincent Corbett and Hubert Vaux of Harrowden both of whom were at Trinity with him.

CHAPTER

# 3

# CHOOSING A CAREER

When he came down from Cambridge in the early summer of 1882, Jack planned to enter the home civil service. At the same time, he began eating his dinners at the Inner Temple, which he had joined the year before. Although he was called to the Bar in June 1884, he was never really attracted by the law as a profession despite its being the traditional family business. With his sharp analytical mind, industriousness and attention to detail he would surely have prospered as a barrister.

Jack's education was not quite complete and, to help him too with his proposed career in the civil service, he now went off to Europe to learn first German and later French. The rest of the summer months that year were spent with a German family mainly in Munich before he returned home to London that winter to live with his parents in their house in St George's Square and to begin a course of study with the well-known crammers, Scoones, in preparation for the civil service exams. Continuing his programme to acquire a knowledge of languages, he went the following summer to Etretat on the Channel coast and then to Paris, a city he liked and would come to know well in future years. All set for his exams he now, rather uncharacteristically, changed his mind about the civil service, being sidetracked, temporarily as it turned out, by the world of politics. The reason for this was not difficult to find. There can be little doubt it was due to his father's growing prominence in the House of Commons as a radical Tory.

John Gorst, who had had a short spell as a Conservative MP for Cambridge in the 1860s, sprung to notice in party circles when Disraeli summoned him to reorganise the Conservative party machine, and appointed him as its principal agent to do this. With flair and efficiency, John set up what would become known as Conservative Central Office, and, in due course and as the result of hard work, he could undoubtedly claim some credit for Disraeli's election victory over Gladstone in 1874. Although he had difficulty in finding a seat, John was able at length to get back into the Commons and to begin to make his presence felt there. But it was in the early 1880s when Gladstone had returned to power that the name of John Gorst became well known to the public at large. With three other Conservative members – Lord Randolph Churchill, Arthur Balfour, the future Prime Minister, and Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, then an ex-member of the Diplomatic Service – he became part of a maverick Tory ginger group nicknamed 'the Fourth Party'.

The official Tory opposition under Sir Stafford Northcote was regarded as weak and ineffective, so for some years the Fourth Party, with Lord Randolph as its chief and John Gorst as its legal brain and driving force, took the lead in making life difficult for Gladstone and his government. The Churchill-Gorst axis was a somewhat radical one in the eyes of many conventional Tories, for they sought to develop a concept known as Tory democracy, which was supposed to embrace Disraelian principles, including those of social reform.

Lord Randolph and John Gorst, though not Balfour, now had further rather ambitious plans to promote the interests of the Conservative party as they perceived these to be. They decided in 1883 to mount with their friends and supporters a bid the following year for the control of the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations (National Union for short).[1] This was an organisation of constituency associations which John had helped to found in 1867. Its object was to bring together the various associations and working men's clubs and to promote the wooing of the newly enfranchised urban voter. While the National Union had prospered, it had not over 16 years attained any important governing role in party affairs. The conspirators, for this is what Churchill and Gorst were, aimed to change all this at the National Union's annual conference in October1884. In fact they were setting out to challenge the leadership of the party.

It was in the spring of that year that Churchill, anxious to build up his influence in the National Union, suddenly offered the post of its honorary secretary to Jack Gorst. At the age of 22, the young man had been to an

extent exhilarated by his father's apparent political success and was, it must be presumed, in broad sympathy with his views, so it is no surprise that he accepted the offer made, even though this was against his father's advice. John Gorst, ever the paradoxical man, strongly urged his son 'to take example from his career of the risks and dangers of a political career for a man without powerful friends or money'.[2] He recognised that his son had talent and application, but was not convinced that politics was in the circumstances the field in which he would shine. 'The rather extravagant hopes,' Jack wrote, 'I built on my new position were soon shattered.'

Churchill was a mercurial figure, but not an enduring one. Although the Fourth Party obtained a signal victory that autumn in securing the election of a majority of its supporters to the Council of the National Union, Churchill proceeded at once to throw away his hard-won gains, even though it seemed for a moment at least as if the leadership of the party (his real goal) was almost within his grasp. For Churchill, supported by Wolff but not taking Gorst into his confidence, and for reasons that are still argued about, came to a sudden accommodation with the co-leader of the Conservative party, Lord Salisbury, in which the principles of Tory democracy had no place. That winter, Lord Randolph, after refusing the chairmanship of the National Union, abruptly departed for India on grounds of health, leaving John Gorst and others of his supporters confounded.

That of course was effectively the end of the Fourth Party and, also, left Jack in the doldrums, for the National Union now no longer had the bright future conceived for it by Churchill and his father. While he continued to work on for a time as secretary, writing among other things political pamphlets, he grew more and more discontented over his prospects during the first months of 1885. Now he saw how right his father had been when warning him of 'the ingratitude and fickleness of party chiefs'.

Sensibly, Jack began to look around for another career, discussing the matter with some of his friends and his father, with whom he remained on good terms. Vaux, now a diplomat, suggested he should try the Diplomatic Service. Jack liked the idea, and resolved to go for it.

The Diplomatic Service was a small body of men who staffed the British embassies and missions abroad in contrast to those who served in the separate Foreign Office at home. Entry was by competitive examination. To enter the competition a candidate had to find a sponsor and then be nominated by the Foreign Secretary. The position and standing of a candidate's parents was also an important factor in deciding suitability. Most of the candidates would come from the major public schools and would probably have gone to Oxford or Cambridge.[3] Lord Edmond

*3. Eldon Gorst as a young man.*

Fitzmaurice, a political friend of John Gorst's, became a sponsor and, in due course, Jack was placed on the list of candidates. The first hurdle then for entry into this citadel of privilege was safely cleared.

Almost at once, after Jack had made his decision about the Diplomatic Service, Lord Randolph Churchill, refreshed from his travels, sent for him and offered to take him as one of his private secretaries. For a time Jack was in a quandary about what to do. Obviously Lord Randolph was trying to make some amends for the unsatisfactory position in which Jack had found himself after the events of the previous year. Many young men would have considered such an offer flattering and advantageous. But Jack, showing sound judgement, kept his feet on the ground. After a few days' reflection, he decided to decline the offer. His short experience of politicians had formed in him 'a wholesome distrust of politics as a profession' and, in particular and with some prescience, he had spotted Churchill's lack of stability. He did not consider Churchill had in him 'a capacity for solid success; he was, therefore, not a safe man to attach oneself to.'[4] Showing some skill in what was perhaps an awkward situation and not wishing to offend Churchill, Jack proposed that he should help Lord Randolph without payment while he was preparing for his examination for the Diplomatic Service. This was

accepted, and accordingly Jack began working in April for Churchill as his second private secretary, having resigned from the National Union, which gave him £50 as a kind of leaving present. His new job, just a morning one, consisted mainly in answering letters and obtaining material for speeches.

In June of that year, Gladstone was defeated in a vote in the Commons and Lord Salisbury formed a minority government, with Lord Randolph Churchill becoming Secretary of State for India with a seat in the Cabinet. John Gorst, never a popular figure in the Conservative party, was for the moment left out in the cold. At this juncture Jack was of considerable use to his father in keeping him *au courant* with the efforts being made by Churchill to promote John Gorst's interests and to obtain for him a post in the government. At first Salisbury, not an admirer of Gorst senior, wished to buy him off with the unimportant post of Judge-Advocate-General, but John stuck out for becoming a Law Officer, and eventually, a bit against the odds, was appointed Solicitor-General.

During that summer, things began to look up for Jack. He moved to the India Office where, now on an official salary (it was quite a handsome one being paid at the rate of £150 a year), he continued to work for Churchill. Then he went in July on a legal mission to Naples, earning a fee of £50, connected with the affairs of Prince Ibrahim, one of the sons of Ismail, ex-Khedive of Egypt, and with whose grandson, Khedive Abbas Hilmi II, he would work closely 20 years later.

All this time he had still been able to work for his exams for the Diplomatic Service which he took on 6 October, coming top of them. There was no hanging about in those days and, on 31 October, he began work at the Foreign Office in London, where he would stay for just a year before moving abroad. Jack found himself posted to the Eastern department, one of four geographical departments (there were another five administrative ones) under Thomas Sanderson who would rise one day to be head of the Foreign Office. Although the dress of the clerks was formal, morning coat being *de rigueur*, the atmosphere was rather informal, no 'Misters' or 'Sirs' being allowed, while the pace of work was leisurely and the content mainly clerical: recording telegrams, filing papers and so on. The staff would arrive in the late morning and leave in the early evening so that the working day was not by our standards a long one.

Jack, a highly sociable man, kept up at this time with various friends from Eton and Cambridge, for instance Oswald Smith, Hubert Vaux and Vincent Corbett. Someone remembered how he, with 'the brilliance of his conversation and the pungency of his wit', was once the life and soul of a house party in East Anglia.[5] He enjoyed too the society of attractive and

intelligent women, some of whom he liked to count among his friends, even if his relationship with them was only platonic. But above all he was seeing a lot of 'R.W.' – we never learn her full name but believe she was German – whom he had first met at Weimar. She had now come to London to launch herself on a career as a professional pianist, though she was too sensitive, in Jack's view, to succeed in the rough and tumble of life. He fell in love with her and wrote:

> Her musical talents, the one art which has the power of taking me out of myself, her charming and sympathetic though essentially weak nature exercised a powerful effect on my daily life ... Had I at this time been in an independent position there is no doubt I should have married her ... and on a calm review of the whole circumstance after a lapse of years I should have made a fatal mistake and regretted it all my life.[6]

Indeed so seriously did Jack consider marrying R.W. that he contemplated trying to get a transfer into the newly formed Legal department of the Foreign Office, and so remain in London. But nothing came of this. Jack felt that he had survived his encounter with R.W. after 'passing through the burning noon-tide' (his words) without bitterness on his part, but there was to be a melancholy postscript to his long friendship with her when a year or two later he received from R.W. 'a very unfriendly letter', which Jack, on his own admission a sensitive soul, found distressing. At any rate he was now quite cured of his former feeling for her and the episode had taught him a 'very wholesome lesson by which I have not failed to profit'. And so R.W., who ultimately married a German army officer, is not heard of again.

Jack's first year as a diplomat, learning something about how the Foreign Office worked and how it depended on the diplomats abroad for information and the execution of its policy, may not have been a demanding one. Nevertheless, he did not let the grass grow under his feet. Within less than two months he passed an exam on international law which qualified him for an allowance of £100 p.a. as soon as he became a Third Secretary (this would happen in two years time). In those days a recruit to the Diplomatic Service needed a private income, because he was not paid until he became a Third Secretary.[7] In Gorst's case it is believed his uncle paid him an allowance.

For a fleeting moment there was a resonance from his father's political career. In that curious year of 1886, when there were no fewer than three

successive governments at Westminster – Gladstone's third administration lasted a bare six months – it looked as if John Gorst would not this time round be given a post by Lord Salisbury. There was indeed a chance that, to get this awkward man away from Westminster, he would be sent off to the Cape as Governor there. Had this happened, Jack tells us, he would have gone with his father as his private secretary. Also at about this time Jack was apparently keen to become private secretary to Lord Cross, just appointed by Salisbury as Secretary of State for India – his experience at the India Office with Churchill would presumably have been in his favour.

However, neither of these possible moves came to anything. Instead, Gorst senior had to content himself with becoming, under Cross, whom he despised, Under-Secretary of State for India, a post which would not prove to stretch his abilities. As for Gorst junior, he was promoted in the autumn to Attaché and went off in November to Cairo on a posting to the British Agency there, having in fairly typical fashion let the authorities know that this was the post he desired above any other. Jack was now to be independent and on his own, something he wanted, for he was glad, in his own words, no longer to be 'clinging to other peoples' coat tails'.

CHAPTER

# 4

# EGYPT

## INSOLVENCY AND OCCUPATION

Cairo, when Jack Gorst arrived there in November 1886, was a growing cosmopolitan city of upwards of 400,000 people, out of Egypt's total population of over 7,500,000.[1] A quarter of those who lived in Cairo were not Egyptian. Besides a large number of Levantines, there were some 25,000 Europeans living there, especially French, Italians, British and Greeks. The city too was host in the winter season to an influx of tourists, not just from Western Europe but from North America as well, who came in search of a warm climate and to see the famous sites, and who had on hand the services of Thomas Cook, the travel agents, already established in Egypt for a quarter of a century. Besides the tourist attractions of the Nile Valley to the south there were also to the north, acting similarly as a magnet, Jerusalem and the Holy Land.

At that time, Cairo was a remarkable mixture of the old and new. The city had been founded by the Arabs on the banks of the Nile in AD 641, not far from the site of Memphis, capital of Egypt for over 15 centuries. Some of Cairo's mosques were built before the Norman conquest of England, and the University of El Azhar was founded nearly three centuries before the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Indeed the old city was 'still a labyrinth of dark, dirty, intricate lanes and alleys, in many of which two donkeys can hardly pass abreast and whose toppling storeys so nearly meet as to shut out all but the narrowest streak of sky'.[2] But in the mid 1860s,

under Khedive Ismail, a rapid expansion and modernisation of the city had begun. Ismail was a ruler who spared no expense in his endeavours to bring material improvements to Egypt and its capital, and, as we shall see, his often rash extravagances led him to the brink of financial ruin.

In the new Ismailiya quarter of Cairo, the Khedive's Minister of Public Works, as part of a master plan for the city, laid out wide tree-lined avenues bordered with European-style houses, villas and parks. Property developers seized the chances offered and modern hotels and apartments sprung up on prime sites. For entertainment, Ismail built an elaborate rococo opera house in wood and plaster. The opening performance given before the Empress Eugenie was Verdi's *Rigoletto*. A theatre was also constructed in which touring companies from France gave performances throughout the winter season. Clubs such as the Turf (nothing to do with racing) and the Khedivial, the latter modelled on the best of London clubs complete with salons, a dining room, a library and a billiard room, sprung up. In company with these developments, cafés, department stores, booksellers, confectioners, dressmakers, florists, gunsmiths and livery stables all began to make an appearance, while the main streets were paved, and lit by gas lighting. The Khedive did not forget to improve his own Abdin Palace, which was replaced by an enormous horseshoe-shaped structure.[3] By the end of the century, the principal hotels were giving a ball once a week. As each hotel held its ball on a different day of the week, it was possible to go to a dance six times a week.[4] No wonder Cairo was fast becoming known to Europeans for the dizzying pace of its social life for both the expatriate community and visitors.

French influence was evident all over Egypt. Ismail himself had much admired France and her culture, his tastes coming to be shared by the Egyptian upper classes with, for instance, the fashions from Paris being copied by young and better-off Egyptians. The French language was spoken at the Khedive's court and by government officials, while criminal and civil codes based on French law was used in certain courts. Streets and buildings bore testimony to Gallic influence, and elsewhere French engineers were prominent in the development of the country, notably in the construction of the Suez Canal. As Gorst would have noticed, however, British rather than French influence was discernible with regard to sporting facilities for Europeans. Around the club on Gezira Island a race course was laid out, as were polo grounds, a golf course and tennis courts. Somewhere room was also found for a cricket ground.

Egypt's second city, Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great, saw developments similar to Cairo's, though not quite on the same scale. A great

seaport, and once home to Pharos, the 450-foot lighthouse and one of the Seven Wonders of the World, it had been a Greek and Jewish cultural centre. Although he would live and work mainly in Cairo, Gorst would come to know this city well, and it was always said to have more of a European feel than Cairo. Of course, as we shall see in these pages, Gorst's work periodically took him to other towns in lower Egypt as well as southwards along the Nile into upper Egypt and even into the Sudan beyond. Occasionally he made expeditions to remote places, almost always to acquaint himself with the administration of and conditions in the country.

In his autobiographical notes, which run to some 20,000 words, there is no mention by Gorst at all of why or how the British came to be in Egypt and running the country. This is not necessarily a significant omission as Gorst was not in the habit in his notes of posing rhetorical questions, or examining historical matters. Certainly though, if we are to understand Gorst's career in its context and what he hoped to achieve when he became responsible for governing Egypt in 1907, we need to examine the sequence of historical events – with which Gorst was thoroughly familiar – leading up to the British military occupation in September 1882.

The status of the British presence in Egypt from 1882 onwards was something of an enigma. Egypt was still part of the Ottoman domains, so there was without doubt no legal basis for the occupation. Nor was there any desire that autumn on the part of the British to annex Egypt, or to declare the country a protectorate. Furthermore, the occupation was hardly a planned one, for Gladstone, the Prime Minister, did not espouse imperial adventures, nor did he relish acquiring new territory. No wonder then he envisaged that the British would stay in Egypt no longer than was necessary to put the country back on its feet.

European influence was first seriously felt in Egypt, for centuries a vassal state paying tribute to the Sultan of the Ottoman Empire, at the time of its invasion by Napoleon in 1798. But the French military occupation was a short-lived one. Within some years of the departure of the French, Muhammad Ali, an Albanian soldier, suppressed ruthlessly the previous rulers, the Mamluks, and established by force his rule over Egypt as Viceroy of the Sultan. As a first priority Muhammad Ali, an autocrat, built up an army, trained by French officers, as a tool to expand his dominions abroad; this included annexing parts of the Sudan and even occupying for a time the Morea in Greece and Crete. He was keen to modernise his country and turned during his long reign to the French for help in fields such as medicine and agriculture.[5] The reigns of the three viceroys who followed him were undistinguished by any significant material progress. Said Pasha, one of

Muhammad Ali's sons, liked Europeans, however, especially the French, and in 1854 he granted Ferdinand de Lesseps, a Frenchman, a concession to dig the Suez Canal, a huge enterprise taking 15 years to complete.

A turning point in the affairs of Egypt was reached when Ismail, grandson of Muhammad Ali, came to the throne in 1863. Ismail had the vision and drive lacked by his immediate predecessors. He has been described as an ugly man of great charm. His conversation – he usually spoke French – was intelligent and genial. Shrewd in many matters and intensely ambitious, he was determined to modernise his country fully and to do this he turned to Europe for finance and technical help.

There is no doubting Ismail's economic achievements: for example, he expanded the railway system from 275 to 1185 miles, built new harbour installations, erected 5,000 miles of telegraph, dug 8,400 miles of irrigation canals, reclaimed a million acres of desert and made Egypt into one of the greatest cotton producers in the world. In his 16-year reign, exports rose from £4,454,000 to £13,810,000.[6] He did not neglect education: as Khedive, a title granted to him by the Sultan in 1867, he increased dramatically the number of elementary schools and founded schools for lawyers, administrators, engineers and teachers. At the beginning of 1876, *The Times* commented that Egypt was 'a marvellous instance of progress. She has advanced as much in seventy years as many other countries have done in five hundred.'[7]

In terms of external relations, Ismail undoubtedly helped to promote Egyptian independence from Turkey. But internally there was no political advance to match the country's economic progress for, like his grandfather, Ismail was an autocrat, who did not wish to share power. True he set up a consultative Assembly of Notables of 75 members, but this proved to be something of a cipher and had little impact during his reign.

*The Times* had spoken in a sense prematurely in bestowing its praise. To fund his huge works programmes, and without properly considering the consequences, Ismail raised a series of loans, whose rates of interest grew progressively higher. As a result, unable to pay his European creditors, he found himself in deep financial trouble with his country brought to the verge of bankruptcy.

Because he was so short of revenue, Ismail promulgated in 1871 the Muqabala Law, a disastrous financial measure. Under it, landlords were invited to pay in advance six times the annual land tax in return for a perpetual reduction of one half of the tax. At first, the provisions of the law were not made mandatory. When they were, the law became very unpopular. The Finance Minister, Ismail Sadik, its architect with a

reputation for being harsh on taxpayers, then mysteriously disappeared, and was thought to have been murdered. The worsening financial situation was temporarily relieved when Ismail sold his 176,602 shares in the Suez Canal Company to the British government for £4 million, Disraeli's dramatic coup making Britain the largest shareholder in the Company. But by 1876 the Egyptian national debt had increased from £3,293,000 in 1863 to about £94,110,000 (if a figure for the floating debt of £26,000,000 is included).[8] Annual interest payments amounted to the huge sum of nearly £5,700,000.

At this point, Ismail turned for help to the British government, which sent out Stephen Cave, Paymaster-General, to investigate Egypt's finances. He reported back in 1876, often critically, with swipes at 'dishonesty' and 'peculation' in the government machine and at the muddled accounts. Yet he stated also that Egypt was 'well able to bear the charge of the whole of her indebtedness at a reasonable rate of interest ... but she could not go on renewing floating debts at 25%, and raising fresh loans at 12 or 13%'.[9]

The Khedive, fearing the effect of the publication of the report, suspended the payment of interest on the loans. As a result of this – and on French advice – he set up the *Caisse de la Dette Publique* (*Caisse* for short) to receive moneys handed over by the Egyptian government for payment to the European shareholders, a powerful body with many French among them. The *Caisse* consisted at first of a French, an Austrian and an Italian commissioner; in the following year a British commissioner was appointed. This was Evelyn Baring, the able scion of the banking family who was still a serving officer in the Royal Artillery, and who had just spent five successful years as private secretary to his cousin Lord Northbrook, Viceroy of India. Baring (later to be Lord Cromer) has an important part to play in Jack Gorst's story. He was an immensely able man with a special aptitude for financial matters, and was to serve the interests of his country in Egypt for many years with conspicuous success.

It was not long before the arrangements made for the operation of the *Caisse* were deemed unsatisfactory by the leading Powers in Egypt possessing Capitulatory privileges (see p. 33). A further financial inquiry was launched this time by a joint Anglo-French mission to Cairo led by the influential George Goschen, later to be Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Edmond Joubert, representing French financial interests including those of the bondholders. As a result of this inquiry two Controllers-General were appointed at the end of 1876, one British to supervise the revenue collection and the other French to supervise expenditure. The system these two officials operated became known as the Dual Control.

Although the European powers had become very closely involved in the supervision of Egypt's finances, major underlying difficulties persisted. For one thing, some 60 per cent of the country's revenue went on servicing the national debt. It was eventually considered by the *Caisse*, with Baring, supported by his French colleague, playing a prominent part in the decision that a full international committee of inquiry should be appointed to look generally into the financial condition of the country including the finances of the Khedive himself. Ismail, at first reluctant to approve this course, finally agreed to it in April 1878. All four commissioners of the *Caisse* and both Controllers-General served on the commission which made very wide-ranging recommendations. Besides proposing a number of financial reforms, the commission concluded that the principle of ministerial responsibility should be adopted and that the Khedive should have a civil list. After hesitating, Ismail finally yielded and, in August 1878, authorised Nubar Pasha, an Armenian Christian, to form a ministry, which would include, in a new departure, two Europeans, Sir Rivers Wilson as Minister of Finance and M. de Blignières as Minister of Public Works. Riaz Pasha, who, though of Jewish extraction, was a pious Muslim, and was Minister of the Interior.

But things did not turn out well, unsurprising in view of Ismail's strong personality. Tensions arose between the Khedive and Nubar, and a bizarre situation developed with Ismail virtually working to overthrow his own government. Matters came to a head as a result of unrest among disaffected army officers, no fewer than 2,500 of which had been placed on half-pay as part of an economy drive,[10] and who were all in Cairo. In February 1879, officers armed with swords stopped and mobbed Nubar and Wilson as they were driving to their offices. The two ministers were dragged from their carriages, subjected to rough treatment and shut away in the nearby Ministry of Finance. The Khedive had to intervene personally to have his ministers released, telling the rioters that their just demands would be satisfied. He then came to realise that the incident afforded him a good opportunity to rid himself of a ministry he disliked. Nubar consequently resigned, and Ismail's son Tawfiq Pasha, aged 27, was accepted as a compromise Premier.

By this time, various groups were actively agitating in the political affairs of Egypt: the army, the intelligentsia consisting of landowners, newspaper editors and *ulema* (divines), and members of the Assembly of Notables, the last named sometimes known as the 'constitutionalists'.[11] In April 1879, a new crisis arose when Ismail, siding with the constitutionalists, refused to sign a declaration of bankruptcy, as advised to by Wilson, who maintained

there were insufficient funds to pay the country's creditors. After issuing dire warnings about Egypt's finances, the members of the commission of inquiry resigned *en bloc*. Sharif Pasha, an easy-going French-educated Turk, was now called upon by the Khedive to form a kind of national ministry. Sharif tried to reassure European creditors but to no avail. As far as the Powers were concerned, Ismail had shot his bolt, and in June 1879 they accordingly brought overwhelming pressure on the Porte (as the Turkish government was known) to depose him in favour of Tawfiq. And at the end of June, Ismail sailed away from Alexandria on his yacht into exile after collecting his crown jewels and £3 million in cash.

The political scene over the next three years was dominated by the rise in influence of the army. This was not to the liking of Tawfiq, a decent man who had, however, none of his father's charisma and who is often regarded as weak, partly on the grounds that he was willing to cooperate with the British. His new Premier, Riaz, was also willing to work within the system of European control over the country's finances, and in 1880 his ministry passed the complex Law of Liquidation dealing with the division of revenue surpluses between the *Caisse* and the government. Respected but not liked, Riaz was regarded as honest and courageous – he had stood up to Ismail – and as a man who did not intrigue. He has been described by the historian Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid as 'obstinate, retrograde and bigoted' yet, she acknowledged, he was one of Egypt's first social reformers.[12]

Earlier, Baring, who had become prominent in Egypt as a commissioner but was disenchanted with Ismail, had resigned from the *Caisse* but had then been persuaded by Lord Salisbury, Foreign Secretary, to return to Egypt as British Controller-General of Finance. But Baring was soon on the move again leaving Egypt to become finance member of the Viceroy's Council in India. In *Modern Egypt*, he tells how, en route to India in 1880, he had warned Riaz in Cairo that any grievances the army had should be remedied. Riaz said no danger from the army existed.[13]

Riaz was wrong – the army was in a militant mood. Under Ismail, most of the top army posts were held by non-Egyptian-born officers, such as Turks and Circassians, Now the reactionary Minister of War, Osman Rifqi, was accused by disaffected officers of discriminating against the native-born Egyptian officers. The lead was taken by the articulate Colonel Ahmed Urabi, whose father was a small-time Egyptian farmer, and a petition was organised for the removal of Rifqi. The Council of Ministers stepped in quickly, arresting Urabi and two other colonels and, at the end of January 1881, it had the three men court-martialled. Warned of what was afoot, the colonels' troops stormed the Ministry of War, arrested the judges and

*4. Riaz Pasha, Premier of Egypt, 1879–1882, 1888–1891 and 1893–1894.*

freed their commanding officers. The government meekly climbed down and dismissed Rifqi. As for Urabi he found himself a national hero.

The following September, the army intervened in politics again, this time more seriously. Urabi, now seeing himself as a nationalist leader, organised a demonstration by 2,500 troops in the square beside the Khedive's Abdin Palace in order to confront Tawfiq with a new set of tough demands. They were: to dismiss Riaz's government; to convoke a parliament; and to increase the size of the army. Face to face with Urabi, Tawfiq was supported on one side by Sir Auckland Colvin (he had replaced Baring on the *Caisse*), an intrepid British public servant with long experience in India, and on the other by the army's chief of staff Brigadier-General C.P. Stone, an American (Ismail had in the 1860s recruited some 50 US officers into the Egyptian army). Nevertheless, Tawfiq gave way to the army's demand for a new government, and appointed Sharif as Premier. Urabi, in the meanwhile, took it upon himself to summon members of the Assembly of Notables to Cairo.

These events in Egypt caused anxiety to the British and French governments, and indeed in Constantinople. The Porte's response was to send two commissioners to Egypt, but the Sultan was typically careful to back both the Khedive and Urabi. If, on the other hand, troops had to be sent to Egypt, then the British wanted them to be Turkish. At the same time, they decided to counter the Ottoman move by ordering a cruiser to sail to Alexandria, as did the French. Not long before France had occupied

Tunisia, and so was opposed to Turkish intervention in Egypt in case this resulted in a Pan-Islamic movement affecting their new possession.

By December, the situation had quietened down with the withdrawal of the commissioners and cruisers while Tawfiq and Sharif had reached some kind of *modus vivendi* with the Premier reinstating the system of Dual Control of finances. Urabi's influence, however, continued to grow and he was duly appointed Deputy Minister for War. At this moment, acting with the British, the French Premier Gambetta, a founder of France's Third Republic, delivered in January 1882 a Joint Note to the French and British Consul-Generals in Egypt setting out the policy of the two Powers of supporting the Khedive against 'difficulties of various kinds which might interfere with the course of public affairs in Egypt'. Unfortunately, when its contents became known, this Note had a destabilising effect, the reverse of what was intended. Urabi's movement resented it because they wanted national independence and the removal of the Khedive while Sharif felt the Note undermined his position, especially with the power of the army looming over him.

Events moved rapidly. Tawfiq conceded another demand by the army for a change of government, the pro-Urabi Barudi becoming Premier with Urabi himself as War Minister. In February, a new Organic law drafted by the nationalists defined the power of the legislature, which Urabi saw as an ally against the Khedive. Urabi, in the driving seat, brought forward reforms strengthening his position in the army at the expense of non-Egyptian-born officers, some of whom were indicted for plotting to kill him. In these uncertain times, a rift emerged between Tawfiq and Barudi, who twice resigned in May, only to be reinstated on each occasion by the Khedive.

Fearing a final takeover by the army, the British and French saw their financial interests in jeopardy and, telling the Khedive they wished to guarantee his safety, despatched a combined fleet to Egyptian waters. The two Powers, further, demanded the resignation of Barudi's government and the exiling of Urabi. The latter, apprehensive of his position, issued a statement that the Powers planned to occupy Egypt. Moreover he blamed this on the Khedive, whom he described as 'a public enemy and traitor',[14] He threatened to storm the Khedive's palace if the Assembly of Notables did not support him, whereupon Tawfiq moved to Alexandria to be nearer the allied fleet. The Sultan, again feeling he had to respond, sent a commissioner, Dervish Pasha, who had a reputation for being a strong man, to make supportive overtures to Tawfiq, but could not resist tasking another envoy to negotiate in Cairo secretly with Urabi.

Inter-communal relations had deteriorated in Alexandria, and on 11 June there was a riot in which several hundred people were killed, including about 50 Europeans (mostly, it is believed, Maltese). The British Consul was badly wounded in the head. At the time, the British thought the riots had been instigated by the army, but it was later accepted they had arisen spontaneously after a street brawl.[15] Also Lord Granville, the British Foreign Secretary, and other members of the Cabinet were now worried about the security of the Suez Canal.

The events in Egypt caused the Powers to call a conference in Constantinople. Turkey was asked to come but did not attend. In his opening speech, Lord Dufferin, the British Ambassador to the Porte, who in 1884 would become Viceroy of India, said, 'In the last few months absolute anarchy has reigned in Egypt.' It may have seemed like this to the Powers, but the historians Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid and Mansfield consider this to have been an exaggeration, pointing out that the mass of the Egyptian people supported Urabi and that the machinery of administration and justice was working smoothly.[16] The conference achieved nothing, while its appeal to the Ottomans to send a force to Egypt for three months was ignored.

The rest of the story leading to the British entry into Cairo is easily told, as events hastened to their climax. In July, Admiral Seymour sent a series of ultimatums to the Egyptians requesting them to dismantle fortifications being erected in Alexandria harbour for apparent use against the British fleet, and threatened a bombardment. On hearing this, the French Admiral, lacking support from Paris, withdrew his ships. In this way, Anglo-French military collaboration ended, and a long period of French hostility towards British action in Egypt began.

On 11 July, his ultimatum disregarded, Seymour opened a bombardment aimed at reducing the harbour's fortifications. This was achieved, and soon after the city, from which the Egyptian army units had withdrawn, was engulfed by fire probably as a result of arson. In August, troops under Sir Garnet Wolseley landed in Egypt and, on 13 September, Urabi's army, unable to withstand a full-scale assault by the British, was decisively beaten at Tel-el-Kebir. The next day, British advance units entered Cairo without a blow being struck. The Khedive had dismissed Urabi as War Minister in July and had then asked Sharif to form a government. Now, his throne made secure by British forces, he returned to the Abdin Palace to pick up the threads. Tawfiq dealt at once with the 'military rebellion' he had been facing for some time. With a short, five-word decree, dated 19 September 1882, he simply 'disbanded' the Egyptian army, which therefore ceased to

exist. The British now appeared to be in charge of the country. What were they to do?

In grappling with its new responsibilities in Egypt, one of the first things the British government did was to send Lord Dufferin to Cairo to report upon the measures necessary to reconstruct the administration

> which would afford satisfactory guarantees for the maintenance of peace, order, and prosperity in Egypt, for the stability of the Khedive's authority, for the judicious development of self-government, and for the fulfilment of obligations towards the Powers.[17]

Before all this was considered, there was the Question of Urabi. The British were anxious to ensure he received a fair trial. In the event he was defended by a British QC, found guilty of rebellion before a tribunal presided over by Riaz and then exiled to Ceylon (Sri Lanka).

Dufferin produced his report in February 1883, which covered every aspect of government. Its conclusions were broadly adopted and framed under an Organic Law of 1 May 1883. The idea of direct rule was discarded. Instead, as before, the Khedive was to rule the country through his Council of Ministers, who would, however, have British Advisers at their elbow to chart the way forward while there would be British officials in the background, supervising work in government departments. A consultative Legislative Council of 30 members and an advisory General Assembly of 82 members would be established, though in practice these bodies were to play little major part in affairs for many years. There were also to be Provincial Councils to deal with local matters. Over this structure an ultimate and fundamental sanction would be exercised – this of course was unsaid – by the British Agent and Consul-General, who was backed by the presence, if needed, of the British army of occupation, soon to be reduced in number. The Dual Control system of finances was, against the wishes of the French, abolished. Finally a new Egyptian army was raised under a British Commander-in-Chief (the Sirdar), its size limited to 6,000 men. The troops would be Egyptian and Sudanese but senior posts from major up would be filled by British officers.

An able and gifted man was needed to fill the vital post of Agent and Consul-General. The choice fell on Evelyn Baring who, recalled from India, would remain at the helm in Cairo for over 23 years, until he handed over to Jack Gorst. Baring brilliantly succeeded in restoring Egypt's financial fortunes and in so doing was able to develop its economic prosperity. At the same time, he gave the country good and stable government. What he

did not do was to advance Egypt in any significant way along the political road to self-government.

When Baring arrived at the Agency in Cairo in September 1883, he was faced with two particular related problems. First there was a serious rebellion in the Sudan gathering momentum, and then second came the thorny question of when should British troops be evacuated from Egypt.

The Egyptian government had for some time been aware of a holy man in the Sudan, Muhammad Ahmed, known as the Mahdi, or the Expected One, preaching an anti-government line. Not much notice was taken of him at first, but when thousands began to flock to the Mahdi's banner of revolt and he began winning victories against Egyptian troops, action became essential. Sharif decided to send south a force under Colonel William Hicks, late of the Indian army. This third-rate force, mainly composed of men from the disbanded and discredited Egyptian army, had arrived in Khartoum in March 1883, and set out for distant Kordofan in September. Hicks did not stand a chance against the rampant Dervishes, who virtually annihilated the Egyptians in deep bush in a battle 200 miles from Khartoum in November that year.

Following this disaster and not wishing to get embroiled in a campaign in remote Sudan, the British government considered it had no choice but to advise a reluctant Egyptian government to abandon the whole of the Sudan to the Mahdi. To effect the evacuation from the Sudan of the remaining Egyptian troops and their families as well as civilian administrators – numbering some 31,000 people in all – the charismatic but unpredictable General Charles Gordon was chosen. This decision was arrived at jointly by Gladstone's government and an uneasy Baring. The Khedive had no real choice but to concur with the plan. The orders given to Gordon were just sufficiently ambiguous to enable him to delay evacuation with disastrous results. Belatedly, Gladstone had agreed to send a relief expedition to the Sudan, but there were delays and Wolseley's men arrived too late to prevent Gordon dying a hero's death in Khartoum in January 1885. This was a bad moment for Baring, and matters got worse when the Mahdi's forces began menacing the southern frontier of Egypt as well as the Red Sea port of Suakin, threats which did not finally begin to recede until the retrained Egyptian army defeated the invading Dervish forces at the battle of Toski in southern Egypt in 1889. The Sudan would continue to be a source of anxiety for Baring until the reconquest campaign was begun and successfully completed years later.

As Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid has written, the British cabinet had no thought, when first deciding to occupy Egypt, beyond rescuing the Egyptian monarch

from the nationalists, restoring his authority, effecting rapid reforms and then retiring from Egyptian political life. The British aim was to establish a paramount influence in Egypt and safeguard her interest in the Suez Canal.[18] But it was not to be as easy as that. As Baring recognised early on, there were really just two options: either a policy of speedy evacuation or one of reforms. These two policies were, however, mutually exclusive. Baring believed it would be impossible to initiate reforms and then leave the country with the job partly done. Further, with the Mahdi's military threat only too apparent, the time was not ripe for a British withdrawal. Lord Salisbury, now Prime Minister and wishing to improve relations with France and Germany, sent Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, Jack Gorst's father's colleague in the Fourth Party, to Constantinople to try and settle the affairs of Egypt with the Porte, which would include dealing with the awkward business of how long British troops should stay there. Discussions dragged on for some time, but a convention between the two countries was signed in 1887 laying down that British troops would leave Egypt within three years, with the proviso that withdrawal could be postponed if there were internal security problems. Baring was relieved at this escape clause, but in fact the Porte never ratified the convention.

Baring found that about half of Egypt's revenue was being diverted to pay its debts under the law of liquidation. This was still a heavy burden. There were also new claims being made on the government by the inhabitants of Alexandria seeking compensation from the bombardment of the city and from the fire. The government needed to cut expenditure ruthlessly and wanted international help to move it along the path to solvency. Thus a conference was held in London in 1884 on the subject of Egypt's finances and out of it presently emerged a convention which, surprisingly, empowered the Egyptian government to raise a fresh loan of £9,000,000 at an advantageous rate of interest. Two important results flowed from this according to Alfred Milner, who served in Egypt and then wrote with authority about the country. First the loan paid for the Alexandrian indemnities, wiped out the deficits for the years 1882–1885 and still left over £1,000,000 to fund essential irrigation works in the Nile delta. Second, the convention, recognising that under the law of liquidation the revenue available was insufficient to pay government administrative expenses, allowed the law to be amended so as to permit the government to have a claim on certain funds received by the *Caisse*.[19] This amendment eased the problem of balancing budgets.

At the same time, France insisted that, should the British fail to bring about financial equilibrium in Egypt within three years, an international

commission would take over the running of the country. Happily, by a mixture of imaginative and prudent measures, Baring and Edgar Vincent, the brilliant new 26-year-old Financial Adviser, succeeded in restoring solvency with time to spare and the budget showed a small surplus by 1886–1887. Milner too made a significant contribution to the financial rehabilitation of Egypt primarily through his work in the Ministry of Finance. For instance, he helped to oversee the introduction of a proper system of accounting which contributed to the reduction of waste in the government machine. Baring himself considered that what has been called 'the race against bankruptcy' was won by 1888.

With the British occupation, the aspirations of Egyptian nationalists for the moment collapsed, and the Egyptian populace – intelligentsia and *fellahin* (peasant farmers) alike – appeared ready to accept foreign rule in return for the provision of good government and growing prosperity. Under what was known as the Granville doctrine enunciated in January 1884, the Egyptian government had to follow the advice of the British government on important matters and, further, Egyptian ministers could be changed if they did not carry out British policy. This shifted responsibility away from the Egyptians to the British and as a result, one historian has commented, 'The Khedive and his government were weak and incompetent, and more and more came to rely on Baring for advice.' The Premier by now was again the polished Nubar, who worked in reasonable harmony with Baring. Nubar was described by Baring as intellectually towering above his competitors while being a 'bad administrator'. But Nubar could be devious and the two men had their differences.[20]

Throughout his term of office, Baring would be hidebound by Egypt's international obligations such as the operation of the *Caisse*, and bedevilled too – until the *Entente Cordiale* of 1904 – by bad relations with the French. He also had to contend with the system of privileges known as the 'Capitulations', which were grants made by Ottoman Sultans to European governments. These, dating back several centuries, exempted foreigners from paying taxes in Egypt and gave them the right to be tried there in their own consular courts. The privileges placed a severe limitation on Egyptian sovereignty, as foreigners were in effect above the law. Moreover if an Egyptian law were to be amended then, insofar as citizens of the Powers – and at that time they numbered 15, including oddly Brazil – were concerned, all the Powers had to agree the amendment. Usually an impossible task!

Baring's outlook towards the people over whom he held sway was, and would remain, paternalistic. Although a Liberal in politics he did not favour

any rush to self-government. Jack Gorst was clearly, as we shall observe, much influenced by Baring. Yet, when his time came, he would prove to be his own man ready to try and promote political reform in Egypt.

CHAPTER

# 5

# CLIMBING THE LADDER

On arrival in Cairo in November 1886 as an attaché in the Diplomatic Service, Jack Gorst first stayed at the house of Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, his father's old friend and colleague in the Fourth Party. Wolff was absent in London having been recalled for consultations concerning the negotiations he was conducting with the Porte on the British occupation of Egypt, a mission which necessitated his spending some time in Cairo. There must have been plenty of room in the house for there were others living there too, notably Colonel Schaefer, head of the Anti-Slavery Department (his primary role was to prevent the importation of slaves into Egypt), with his wife and two other Englishmen. Within a few months, Gorst had moved out into rooms that he shared with his friend Vaux, who was responsible for his being in Cairo in the first place. Towards the end of the year, Gorst set up on his own in two rooms he rented in the Maison Coronel, an apartment house favoured by expatriates.

Gorst worked at the Agency which is how the residence and office combined of the British representative in Cairo, the Agent and Consul-General, was described. He found that the Barings were the most hospitable of people, expecting the whole staff to lunch with them every day besides constantly inviting them all to dinner.[1] Perhaps luckily, Evelyn Baring's staff was a small one. Apart from Vaux and Gorst, there were two other diplomats: Gerald Portal, the no. 2, and Frederick Clarke. Then there was

Harry Boyle, the interpreter, who spoke Arabic like a native and of whom we shall hear more, and Claude MacDonald, the military attaché with whom Gorst became friends and who was later British Minister in Peking at the time of the Boxer rebellion. Finally there was the Chancery registrar, who handled paperwork and telegrams.

The work in the Agency was more varied than it would have been in other diplomatic posts of comparable standing. To the usual political work undertaken before the occupation had been added since 1882 the work connected with the Consul-General's wholly unusual responsibilities for what amounted to overseeing the Egyptian government machine. As has been explained in the last chapter, Baring in effect controlled Egyptian government policy by his advice to and influence over the Khedive and his ministers, particularly through the use of British Advisers. The army apart, Baring had in his early days mainly concentrated his attention on the key Ministry of Finance and on the Public Works Department (responsible for the all-important irrigation matters), both of which had a British Adviser to the minister. There was no senior British official at the Ministry of the Interior (and there would not be until Gorst's appointment as Adviser in 1894) nor were there British Advisers in the Ministries of Justice and Education. There was also, within the general purview of the Agency, a growing number of other British officials occupying important posts in the Egyptian civil service.

It would seem that, prior to Gorst's arrival in Cairo, Vaux had been far too complimentary about his friend's capabilities:

> By injudicious praise [he] had already raised a prejudice against me among the rest of the staff especially with my chief, Sir Evelyn Baring. The latter had no high opinion of Vaux's discernment and my connection with the Fourth Party was not calculated to improve his feelings with respect to me.[2]

Gorst's Fourth Party connection was a very real one. Quite apart from his father's central role in its affairs, he had been Lord Randolph Churchill's private secretary for some six months. Towards the end of 1886, there arose a matter which must have been causing Baring some unease, for his position in Egypt at the time was not as secure as he might have wished it to be. Some years later Gorst wrote:

> At the moment I arrived in Egypt, there was a very active intrigue going on, instigated by Lord Randolph, with a view of getting Sir

> E. Baring out of Egypt and putting Wolff in his place. This intrigue was brought to a sudden conclusion by the end of the year when Lord Randolph suddenly resigned his post of Chancellor of the Exchequer.[3]

Gorst may have learnt about this from talk at the Agency or he may well have picked up something of what was going on in Egypt in the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office. There is, however, some collateral to Gorst's story recounted in Professor Owen's biography of Lord Cromer (as Baring was to become). Baring, it seems, was not making himself very popular with Lord Iddesleigh, the Foreign Secretary, because he was against setting a date for the British withdrawal from Egypt. *Per contra* Wolff was trying to fix a date for this with the Porte. This was probably why Iddesleigh was in favour of sending Baring out to India to act for a short time as finance member of the Council under the Viceroy Lord Dufferin. Lord Randolph, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, liked this idea too, since the Treasury would not have to pay the salaries of two men in Cairo.[4] At any rate, with Lord Randolph's disappearance from the political scene Baring stayed on in Egypt, remaining there for another 20 years.

Whatever Baring's feelings might have been for former members of the Fourth Party or the young Gorst, he quite soon realised that Jack Gorst was a young man of marked intellectual ability, and one, moreover, who was industrious and keen to learn about Egypt. Any possible prejudice Baring might have had against him soon evaporated, and within a comparatively short space of time he was taking active steps to help Gorst in his career.

Gorst's arrival in Cairo coincided with the ongoing struggle to make Egypt solvent. The corner had not quite been turned, and nowhere could there have been greater awareness of the situation than in the Agency and among its staff, especially with the French breathing down Baring's neck. The problem quickly caught Gorst's attention and with shrewd perception he decided to make himself a master of the complexities of Egyptian finance. He had a good head for figures and his training in mathematics would have been an undoubted help. His aptitude for financial work was in time demonstrated by his being allowed by Baring to take a prominent part in early 1888 in the preparation of the section on Egyptian finance in Baring's Annual Report to the British government on Egypt for the year 1887. Excluding of course his chief, Gorst was well on the way to becoming the financial expert at the Agency.

A new possibility arose for him after this work when Lord Lansdowne, on his appointment as Viceroy of India, asked Baring to recommend him

*5. Sir Evelyn Baring, later Lord Cromer, Agent and Consul-General in Egypt, 1883–1907.*

a private secretary. Baring spoke warmly in Gorst's favour but, after taking several months to make up his mind, Lansdowne decided that Gorst at 27 was too young for the job.

The work of the Egyptian government, both in the Council of Ministers and in its departments, was conducted in French and Arabic. Gorst's French was already good, and he now felt that it would help his career if he became fluent in Arabic. So he put some of his leisure time to good use by acquiring a working knowledge of that language. By October 1887, he had been promoted to the rank of Third Secretary in the Diplomatic Service with a salary of £250 p.a. In addition to this, he had a yearly house allowance of £100 and then another £100 for his Arabic proficiency. Rather triumphantly, for there was an extravagant streak in his make-up, he could say at the end of that year that he was not in debt.

In the summer of the following year, Gorst returned home on leave, the first time he had been home for 18 months. Mainly he stayed in London with his friends the Oswald Smiths, because his own family, led by his restless father, were, as he put it, wandering around 'without any settled abode', though he did spend some time with them at houses they took in Tunbridge Wells and then in Ascot. It was about now that he began to satisfy an urge to write, and accordingly he produced two articles which

were published in a magazine called *Time*. The first one, on 'Diplomacy', came out in July and the second one on 'The Anglo-Egyptian official' nearly 18 months later. Less successfully he also tried his hand at fiction, writing what he described as 'a shilling shocker'. But he was dissatisfied with what he had done and destroyed his manuscript. Clearly his literary talent lay in the direction of academic-type articles with an Egyptian flavour. Gorst's Christian names (John Eldon) were identical with his father's, and in order to distinguish himself from his father and avoid confusion, over for instance signed articles, Gorst took to calling himself J.L. Gorst, where 'L' stood for Lowndes. This was the surname of his uncle Edward, who had been obliged to change his surname from Gorst to Lowndes, as had Thomas Gorst before him, in order to inherit property.

Gorst was particularly encouraged when the editor of the well-known *Edinburgh Review* invited him, on the recommendation of Baring, to write an article on 'The English in Egypt', the title under which it was published in January 1890 and for which he received the princely sum of £40.[5] This was a full-length piece of some 15,500 words, being a review of the state of the government of Egypt at the beginning of the British occupation in 1882 and what the British had achieved to remedy the ills found in the system during the seven intervening years. Gorst displayed in this piece an ability to explain a complex picture with lucidity, while wielding a trenchant pen. For instance he clearly enjoyed ridiculing an article by an Anglophobic Frenchman who quoted approvingly a saying that the English were the eighth plague of Egypt! Nor did he mince his words in stating as a general proposition that the Egyptians had suffered long years of misgovernment and oppression. In this context he did not fail to mention how the British had at once tackled three major abuses they had found in Egypt: (1) the *courbash*, the lash used on the fellahin to extract taxes; (2) the *corvée*, the system of forced labour mainly used to clear irrigation canals of mud; and (3) corruption, which, Gorst asserted, was present in every branch of administration. In fact, though Gorst did not mention this as he might have done, the Egyptians themselves were ready to move on abolishing both the courbash and the corvée, Riaz having been pressing to ban these practices before the British occupation.

Gorst was highly critical of the absolute rule of Khedive Ismail, one result of which, he suggested, was the 'entire absence of capable Egyptians among the younger generation'. Warming to his theme, the only three statesmen worthy of the name in modern times, he considered, were Sharif, Nubar and Riaz. The last named he commended for refusing to hush up the extensive malpractices of a former governor of Port Said, who was

eventually dismissed on grounds of fraud and oppression. And, in fairness to previous Egyptian governments, he pointed out the extreme difficulties imposed on them by the Capitulations (see Chapter 4), something on which the British had made only a little progress. For instance, customs officials were prohibited from boarding or searching for contraband any ships that were not flying the Ottoman flag. However, as he observed, the position had improved since at least nine out of the 15 Powers had consented to be bound by customs regulations to stop smuggling.

In explaining the current system of government in operation, Gorst was careful to emphasise the position of the British Consul-General, who had 'no direct authority' over the Khedive, his ministers or Egyptian officials. The practical working of the system depended on 'personal influence'. Thus the Financial Adviser attended all the meetings of the Council of Ministers but had no executive authority. Nonetheless, almost all the fiscal reforms of the last few years had been effected on his initiative. Criticism that the Egyptian Treasury was overburdened by the high salaries paid to European, especially British, staff he countered by pointing to a recent decree whereby neither British nor Egyptian staff were paid more than £2,000 a year, a by no means excessive sum when compared to the pay of officials in India.

Gorst, naturally, recounted in some detail the reforms, often administrative, carried out by the British in fields as disparate as the army, police, public works, prisons, sanitary affairs, slavery and currency. In his view, the Egyptian masses had at first looked on the British 'as a necessary evil', but were beginning to recognise the benefits that had accrued to them as a result of the British presence. And, he asserted, 'the privileged classes alone regarded us with some hostility.' Gorst's opinions were probably quite near the mark. Looking to the future, he then followed the official line in rejecting a policy advocated by certain observers of 'Egypt for the Egyptians', and of warning his readers of the danger of the British leaving Egypt before their work was done. The article was something of a tour de force, considering it was written by a young man with only some three years experience of the country. If nothing else, Gorst had demonstrated a remarkable grasp of how the government of the country was run. Almost by way of symmetry, this article was followed a year later by one on 'The French in Egypt', which showed again Gorst's aptitude for historical research. While being thoughtful about his subject he was not always flattering to the French.

In a tacit acknowledgement that Gorst had now acquired a good understanding of the country's financial situation, Baring wanted to have his protégé, for this is what Gorst effectively was, appointed as British

Commissioner on the *Caisse*, still a highly influential international body in Cairo, should a vacancy occur. Gorst himself later commented on this, maybe with some perspicacity, that luckily the position did not materialise for 'the post was a highly paid one with nothing to do and therefore very undesirable for a young man.'[6] On another occasion, Baring told Gorst that he, Baring, might have to go to the Argentine to put that country's finances in order. If he did go, he wanted to take Gorst with him. Nothing came of this, however.[7] Then, in February 1890, Baring was asked to recommend a Chief Administrator for the British East Africa Company. He suggested to Gorst that the appointment would offer him a good opening, an idea supported by Edgar Vincent, formerly Financial Adviser and now a director of the Ottoman Bank. But this job did not appeal to Gorst who apparently had some difficulty in persuading Baring that the post was not for him. For some unknown reason, Vincent was annoyed with Gorst for not pursuing this offer. We shall sometimes see in following his story that Gorst was not always as persuasive as we might expect someone of his intelligence to be. This may have been due to impatience or the abrupt manner he occasionally had.

There were no two ways about it. Gorst greatly appreciated having Baring as his chief. He was to write in generous terms:

> He was the best chief I have ever served, and it is greatly to the interest and guidance which he bestowed upon me in the early days when I worked under him that I attribute whatever success I may have subsequently obtained in Egypt. He was one of the very few men to whom I consider that I really owe something, and he has without doubt aided me in my career far more than any other man.[8]

The year 1890 was to be a busy and important one for Gorst's career. For the biographer there is now a valuable and regular new source of information on his life. From this time onwards, we are able to draw on the diaries he kept almost until the end of his life.[9] These diaries tend to be a record of social and recreational events, whom he met and what he did, but there are, nevertheless, useful items about his work and occasional nuggets.

There is reason to believe that Gorst's literary efforts helped him obtain a rather unusual assignment that summer when, as a sideline, he became for a short spell *The Times*'s special correspondent in Cairo. There is some doubt about who originally mooted the idea: was it Gorst or was it Baring? In Gorst's diary, there is a laconic entry for Saturday 10 May which reads: 'Suggested to Sir E that I might be *Times* correspondent here. He was not

averse to the idea.' In fact, Gorst insisted that the idea had come to him the previous month. In his autobiographical notes, he repeated his contention, adding 'after overcoming many obstacles I succeeded in the autumn in arranging matters [with *The Times*] as I desired. I was given a salary of £600 a year.'[10] On the other hand, Baring, a keen manager of news coming out of Egypt, had earlier been in touch with Moberly Bell of *The Times* in London, who had until recently been its correspondent in Cairo, about finding a local replacement for him. He, Baring, had also discussed this matter with John Scott, a former Indian judge, now writing a report on Egyptian courts. Scott was friendly with Gorst and may possibly have tipped him off about what was in the wind. At any rate, Gorst's conversation with his chief appeared to have an immediate effect because the very next day, 11 May, Baring wrote to Bell recommending Gorst for the position of correspondent, and singing his praises in no uncertain manner. Gorst wrote well, said Baring, and was 'very clever far and away the best man you can get' and in a good position to obtain information. He added, with perhaps a little exaggeration, that Gorst had been 'a good deal mixed up in English political life ... [and] understands English public opinion'.[11] This was something of a panegyric, and it served to do the trick. There was of course the question of secrecy, for the fewer people who knew what was being proposed the better, and the Foreign Office had to be squared. In the event they raised no objection at all. Showing his confidence in Gorst, Baring then told Bell that he would not normally expect to vet Gorst's articles.

We know of five articles, varied in subject matter, Gorst wrote as *The Times*'s correspondent. He started in August with a straightforward article on the completion of the Nile barrage, an undisguised propaganda piece extolling Britain's as yet 'greatest engineering achievement' in the Nile Valley.[12] This was followed in October with an article on 'Egypt and the Anglo-Italian negotiations' which had taken place that month in Naples, and concerned the defining and, if possible, the limitation of Italy's sphere of influence in the eastern Sudan and northern Abyssinia. The British side was led by Lord Dufferin and included Baring, who took Gorst with him to Italy. Thus Gorst had first-hand experience of these negotiations, which ended in failure. At least a bit of sightseeing had been possible: he went to the summit of Vesuvius, visited Pompeii and various museums and saw some excavations of tombs dating back to 700 BC. Gorst's main purpose, it seems, in producing his piece was to recount to his readers what effect the failure in the negotiations would have on Egyptian public opinion. On this, Gorst felt the British stance in resisting attempts by the Italians to encroach on what was regarded as Egyptian territory – they had not

accepted for instance the Egyptian right to reoccupy Kassala then in Dervish hands – had made a favourable impression among Egyptians.[13]

Next Gorst turned to the preservation of Egyptian monuments, an article prompted by criticisms made in the correspondence columns of the paper about the adequacy of the protective measures available, say, to protect tombs from robbery. Gorst did his best to answer the critics, accepting they had some valid points to make. In his article he needed tact because it was the French who had charge of the antiquities museum. The outside world, he ended, might be gratified by the spectacle of France and England acting in concert for a change over a question which was now being reviewed by Baring.[14]

In the same month, November, was published Gorst's article on the thorny subject of 'Justice in Egypt'. The administration of justice in that country was complex due to the different courts with their different jurisdictions and codes and having special regard to the privileged position of Europeans in this field, but these topics were not all covered by Gorst. While admitting that progress was 'relatively slow' he was content to limit himself to commenting on just certain aspects of his subject such as the new district courts introduced by Nubar in 1883, which had not been very successful as yet, the need for independent judges and for a proper system of legal education.[15]

The next month was published what turned out to be his last despatch for the paper, on, as might almost be expected, Egyptian finance. It was though a tame affair and turned out to be in effect a verbatim reproduction of a recent speech on the subject delivered by Riaz, the Premier. It is odd on the face of it that Gorst did not try his hand at something more original.

Earlier that summer, while Gorst had been engaged in preparing typical Agency memoranda on Egyptian finance and trade, Alfred Milner had left his position in the Ministry of Finance as Director General of Accounts to become Under Secretary of State for Finance, the no. 2 job in the Ministry after the Financial Adviser. Baring wanted Gorst to replace Milner. After some initial difficulties about this made by Riaz, both Premier and Minister of Finance, Gorst was appointed to a new post, commensurate with the vacant one, of Controller of Direct Taxes on £1,000 a year (less than Milner had been getting, which irked Gorst). Riaz signed the necessary document of appointment on 8 November, and the next day Gorst paid a call on the Khedive, whom he found 'amiable', and then on Riaz to thank both for making the appointment. Gorst's first day in the Finance Ministry was 10 November, working not as a diplomat but as an official of the Egyptian government, to which post he would have been seconded by his

own Service. In his diary he cryptically wrote about that day: 'Hercules in the Augean stables nothing to it!'

Riaz knew about Gorst's work for *The Times* and gave him special permission to continue with it.[16] In the event, Gorst decided he would not continue as a *Times* correspondent. There were various reasons he gave for this. First he now had as much work as he could get through. Second that assignment tied him to Cairo, whereas he now wished to be out and round the provinces, and third people were so sensitive over what appeared in the press that he would inevitably make enemies. In other words, he could not serve two masters. He therefore made his decision known to Baring, who told Moberly Bell that he thought Gorst was acting 'honourably'[17] and attributed no blame to him. Gorst must have parted company from *The Times* with a pang, judging by the unusual number of references to his association with the newspaper or to the articles he was writing for it appearing in his diary. There was also a loss of income (not mentioned by him), though this was made up fairly soon.

By transferring to the Finance Ministry, Gorst was entering a new world and, taking account of the four different posts he would hold under the Egyptians, one which he would inhabit for some thirteen and a half continuous years. The ministry was housed in a rambling lathe and plaster palace, once belonging to the doomed Finance Minister, Ismail Sadik, who had mysteriously disappeared many years before. Office hours were from 8 am to 1 pm every day except when the office closed on Fridays, a day of rest and prayer for Muslims. Throughout the long working morning endless cups of Egyptian coffee would be available for staff. After lunch the British officials would engage in a great variety of sporting and leisure pursuits, and then later would move on to the social whirl of dinner parties, dances and the opera, a subject to which we shall presently return.

For a Briton working as an official for the Egyptian government, there were, at least in theory, two difficult and partly related questions to contend with: accountability and loyalty. In the former case, one usually involving practical line management matters, Gorst would have been responsible upwards ultimately to the Minister of Finance. Yet as a senior British official, and one who was still in the Diplomatic Service, he had a kind of unwritten and parallel responsibility to Baring, the senior British representative in Egypt. Milner had first-hand experience of this sort of problem and wrote about it. It was, indeed, Milner who coined the expressive phrase 'The Veiled Protectorate' to describe British rule in Egypt. The relationship between the Consul-General, the Egyptian government and senior British officials, Milner saw, was a 'trying one'. The British, he

considered, had to forget they were anything but ordinary members of the Egyptian administration, yet in moments of extreme difficulty they could turn to the Consul-General for guidance.[18] Lord Lloyd, a British High Commissioner in Egypt in the 1920s and later a member of Churchill's Second World War Cabinet, in commenting on this same question, averred that British officials were legally servants of the Khedive, yet in practice took orders from the Consul-General.[19] Baring himself wrote in 1908 that the British official had to combine the qualities of a trained diplomat, a good administrator and an experienced man of the world.[20] Some paragon!

As for the more abstract concept, loyalty, for the average British official his first duty would be to his employer, the Egyptian government. But what of his *ultimate* loyalty? Here he would have to consider carefully: was it to the Khedive, or was it to the British government and Crown? The choice was not so different to the problem facing hundreds of British officials, especially administrators, in the twentieth century in the twilight years of the Raj, and when they were still serving in newly independent African or Asian countries, which might have evolving standards and an ethos alien to them. We can only speculate on how Gorst, a pragmatist to his fingertips, would have viewed the question of where his ultimate loyalty lay. Certainly, this is not a subject he ever seems to have referred to. Further he would have seen the policy being carried out by British officials in Egypt as being broadly for the benefit of the Egyptian people, derived from western ideals and liberal thought and in any case approved by the Consul-General, who was answerable to the Foreign Secretary. If the question had ever arisen, and taking account of the strange anomalies of the situation, he, together with most other British officials, we can pretty safely say, would have seen his ultimate loyalty as being to the Crown.

For the moment Gorst saw that his immediate task, a challenging one, involved getting the Revenue department, over which he presided and which superintended the collection of half the revenue of the country, into good order from the 'state of chaos and disorder'[21] in which he found it. During the whole of 1891 – he took no summer leave – he laboured away bringing the department up to scratch and making various changes. Work was conducted in Arabic and within a month of his arrival there, so he tells us, he was perfectly at home in the language. It was his proud boast that while with the Egyptian government he never needed the services of an interpreter. In this job too he travelled widely about the provinces, at one time visiting villages whose taxation was to be reduced, presumably because of over-assessment. He described this as hard work. The results

were satisfactory apparently as there were no complaints of injustice or unfair treatment. While on these tours of duty he would, in the manner of a classic District Officer, visit schools, courts, prisons and the village head, so as to be able to report back to provincial centres on any necessary remedial action. Back in his ministry office, he became interested in the state of the Egyptian civil service and the need to reform it, a subject he would return to a few years later.

When Milner went on leave that summer, Gorst hoped that he would be appointed acting Under Secretary of State for Finance, but, not for the first time, Riaz – was he showing a touch of hostility to Gorst and his advancing career? – refused his request. But when Riaz fell at a later date, the new premier, Mustafa Fahmi Pasha, made no difficulty about the acting appointment. Gorst got on well with Milner, and the two men corresponded intermittently and periodically met throughout Gorst's career.

Once Gorst in a letter to his friend Jessica Sykes (see Chapter 6) compared himself with Milner, a source of some fascination, to see who was the better man. He considered himself much quicker and that he could 'squeeze more work out of others and my brutal and offensive nature is an advantage in dealing with Orientals'. Milner, though, was 'much too amiable and afraid of hurting people's feelings'. So he decided in favour of himself, while admitting he was the only person to hold this view![22] At this point, Gorst enjoyed giving Milner the latest departmental news; gossip would be an insufficiently serious word to use. In one letter, he took a little mean pleasure in recounting how Sir Elwin Palmer, the Financial Adviser whom Gorst despised, had found himself at an important meeting with Baring and other senior staff quite isolated on account of over-hasty measures he had put forward to amend the land tax system (the young Gorst had tartly commented to Milner that he always understood that you fiddled with the land tax system at your peril). By the same token, he enjoyed bringing Milner up to date on detailed proposals being put forward by Herbert Kitchener, the Adjutant-General who had been called upon by Baring in a new and temporary role to reorganise the Egyptian police.[23] Gorst had a rather up and down relationship with Kitchener. Neither man was always popular with colleagues, for one thing because both were pushy and overtly ambitious. There was a notable difference though between them. Kitchener was tall, well built and had a powerful personality, while Gorst was very short and sometimes over assertive to compensate for his small stature. A few years later, the two men were in serious conflict professionally, when, as we shall see, Gorst came off worse.

Gorst had not been forgotten by the Diplomatic Service and, on 1 April 1892, he was promoted to Second Secretary. That summer Milner left Egypt to become Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue then, some years later, High Commissioner for South Africa and in the First World War a Cabinet Minister. Gorst now stepped into his shoes at the Finance Ministry at a salary of £1,500 p.a. He was disappointed not to get the full £2,000 to which the Under Secretary of Finance was entitled, but Baring insisted he should take the post and, as Gorst wrote, 'I owed him so much that I felt that I could not do otherwise than to accede to his wishes.'[24] In fact, his salary was raised towards the end of 1893 to the full entitlement. He was clearly sensitive about receiving what he felt were his just desserts and was never one to let the grass grow under his feet. On the other hand, usually a good tactician, to get his way he would move with circumspection.

While Gorst was working his way up the ladder in the Ministry of Finance two important events took place in Egypt, both full of consequence for the occupying British power. The first occurred in January 1892 when Khedive Tawfiq died suddenly, aged only 39. About the precise cause of his death there has been speculation by historians. His Greek doctor's report said that the cause of death was 'influenza, double pneumonia and an inflammation of the kidneys', but there was also a rumour that he had been poisoned by the Turks or even the British.[25] He was succeeded by his son, Abbas Hilmi II, not quite 18, who, out of the country at the time of his father's death, had been educated in Switzerland and Vienna, and is generally regarded as having been influenced by the autocratic nature of the rule of the Austrian Emperor.

Tawfiq had proved for the British to be a compliant Khedive. He and Baring had got on well. Abbas Hilmi would prove a very different proposition to his father, being made more in the mould of his energetic extrovert grandfather Ismail. He was intelligent, spoke Turkish, excellent French, German and English, but no Arabic. At first, the new Khedive made a favourable impression on Baring, who thought he resembled a 'very gentlemanlike, healthily minded boy fresh from Eton or Harrow'.[26] Alas, these good impressions did not last.

It was not long before Abbas Hilmi began to get impatient with a government which did the constant bidding of the occupying foreign power. He was ambitious, and the frustrating political situation irked him. He wished to do things himself. Towards the latter part of the year, Gorst commented that it was 'evident that the young Khedive was going to give [the British] a good deal of trouble'.[27] The principal causes for the hostile frame of mind into which Abbas Hilmi had been drifting during

the summer and autumn were, Gorst told Milner, the foolish counsels of Tigrane Pasha, the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Nubar's son-in-law), the injudicious treatment of the Khedive by Sir Elwin Palmer, who appeared to strive 'by might and main' to gratify the new Khedive's every whim, and finally the absence from Egypt through illness of Lord Cromer, as Baring had become in March 1892, with the consequent rumours he was going to leave Egypt.[28]

A crisis was suddenly precipitated that winter when the Khedive dismissed the premier, Fahmi Pasha, appointing in his place someone of his own choice, Hussain Fakhri Pasha, and without consulting Cromer about this move. This of course was simply not within the unwritten rules laid down by the British and quietly accepted by the previous Khedive. There was, however, nothing in the Organic Law of 1883 which stated that the Khedive could not appoint, or dismiss, his own premier and ministers. Cromer expostulated at what he perceived to be the high-handed action by the Khedive and referred back to London to obtain the support of the newish Liberal Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery. Initially Cromer had rather overreacted to the situation, suggesting he might have to send in troops to occupy the key ministries to prevent newly appointed ministers from entering their offices. This, however, was too much for Rosebery, who considered the suggestion too violent and therefore possibly a breach of international law. Instead, he decided the Khedive should be given 24 hours to reconsider the position he had adopted. The Khedive consulted Riaz, who advised him not to yield, and Nubar, who told him to give way. In the event, Abbas Hilmi backed down and a new compromise ministry was formed once again under Riaz. This in fact proved to be a somewhat temporary expedient and, within a little over a year, Nubar, though ill, was installed for his final short spell as Premier.[29] All these events were watched as they unfolded with no little fascination by Gorst who was always ready with his own views and thoughts for Milner to hear in London. His assessment of the last crisis was that it was 'very hazardous for our position in Egypt'.

Politically, Gorst was anything but a crusty conservative. He was not though radically minded like his father, who began his political career as a rather right-wing Conservative and ended it standing for parliament as a Liberal, having dedicated his last book to the members of the Labour party in the House of Commons. Gorst told Milner that, if it were up to him, *he* would allow the Khedive to choose his own ministers – he did not specifically say Premier – provided the Khedive realised that he would be held responsible for his selections and that he would have to appoint

*6. Abbas Hilmi II, Khedive of Egypt, 1892–1914.*

only those willing to work with the British.[30] Gorst showed, in writing this, that he preferred the idea of working *with* the Khedive, something Cromer would find increasingly difficult to do. In defusing the crisis, Gorst also showed himself to be against 'violence or jingoism' for fear of alienating public opinion in France or England.

On a lighter note, Gorst went on to tell Milner of a half comic scene that he had witnessed during a meeting of the Council of Ministers attended by the Khedive. The Premier, Riaz, had been declaiming in a more than ridiculous way, as Gorst thought, against Europeans in general and a named European in particular. At this, Gorst smiled to himself, very unobtrusively as he believed. But the 'little man', that is Riaz, who was even shorter than Gorst, had spotted this and turning savagely to Gorst said:

> 'Pourquoi riez-vous M. Gorst?' I was so taken aback by the sudden onslaught that I could only reply by a bald statement of the real reason. 'Parce que votre Excellence exaggère tellement' was my simple answer. Riaz nearly exploded with wrath and the Khedive burst out laughing. The rest sat with open mouths expecting the earth to swallow me up.[31]

Gorst added, a little unexpectedly since Riaz was not always well disposed to him, that despite 'many heated discussions we remained good friends'. What seems to emerge from all this is that Gorst was able to be honest with ministers, and behave naturally with them. But there is also a suspicion, a well-founded one, that perhaps the Khedive and Gorst did not get on too badly. Gorst always strove to maintain cordial relations with Egyptian politicians and, especially importantly for the future, with Khedive Abbas Hilmi.

The second important event occurred in January 1894. Abbas Hilmi was on tour in Upper Egypt with Mahir Pasha, Under Secretary of State for War, regarded by some as a potential troublemaker, and was inspecting troops of the Egyptian Army guarding the Sudan frontier in company with Kitchener, now Commander-in-Chief (Sirdar) of the army. In a rash moment, the Khedive petulantly made some disparaging remarks about the drill and smartness of his soldiers paraded before him. Kitchener at once took offence at what the Khedive had said believing the remarks to be unjustified, and offered his resignation. The Khedive saw he had gone too far and later asked Kitchener to withdraw his resignation. But it was too late for the affair to be settled locally. Telegrams were already flying between Cairo and London. Rosebery then demanded an Order of the Day be issued by the Khedive commending the Egyptian Army and its British officers, and also insisting on the dismissal of Mahir. Acting on the advice of Riaz, the Khedive climbed down and made the necessary amends, even though it meant for him some personal humiliation. As for Kitchener he of course withdrew his resignation.

The 'frontier incident', as it came to be known, merits an entry in Gorst's diary, in which he noted that 'it appears to be ended by H.H. accepting Lord C's conditions.' Writing later, Gorst obviously thought the Riaz ministry had to be held partly to blame for what had happened because they had 'pushed hostility to England too far'. In the event, Riaz lost the confidence of Abbas Hilmi and had to resign. Gorst, in reflecting on the incident to Milner, thought the Khedive had not been treated fairly since 'we' had allowed him to receive for a year bad advice.[32]

Twice that year, Gorst acted as Financial Adviser for Sir Elwin Palmer. While thus acting he was at the centre of government, attending the Council of Ministers. He had in seven years come a long way. About Palmer he was blunt, writing he was 'a man of very inferior capacity who like, all inferior people, preferred to do everything badly himself, rather than let it be done well, under his superintendence, by others'.[33] Quite an indictment! At the time, the Minister of Finance was Boutros Ghali Pasha, whose grandson

many years later would be the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Boutros Ghali was a Christian Copt, and was a man Gorst found he could work with well, even if he regarded him as an 'arch trimmer'. Further 'the tacit understanding was that he [Boutros] might do everything himself so long as he did what I wanted.'[34] There was in all this a hint of arrogance or overconfidence about Gorst. Was he becoming too successful too soon? There is indeed some suggestion that by the mid 1890s he was in danger of sometimes overreaching himself in his relations with colleagues, both Egyptian and British. This will become more apparent in due course.

Gorst was now looking beyond his present post, searching for a new field in which to excel and planning, successfully as it turned out, the next step in his career. But before examining this we must take a look at the social side of Gorst's life and his amours.

CHAPTER

# 6

# JESSICA SYKES

In Cairo there was no shortage of amusements and things going on for Europeans who wished to be in the social swim. For a start, there were innumerable balls and dances, some in fancy dress, both at hotels and private houses, and a seemingly endless round of dinner parties. Then in the season there was opera, occasionally ballet, and the French theatre. For enthusiasts, there were privately held amateur dramatics, often in the form of elaborate charades. Then there was the band to listen to in the public gardens, every now and then a concert, and music-making among friends. In the afternoons, people gave tea parties and 'calling' was customary. Some notable Egyptians, reflecting the continuing influence of French culture, had 'salons', at which like-minded Europeans might be made welcome. On Sundays, social visits to the Cairo zoo were popular. Further afield, local expeditions were organised to, for instance, the Sphinx or the Step pyramid at Sakkara. And, on a more romantic note, parties of friends might wend their way homeward from a visit to the nearer sites by moonlight riding on donkeys, a much-favoured form of transport. As for sport and other kinds of recreation, there was the Gezira Sporting Club, the Nile river, on which people had houseboats and sailed, and of course equestrian activity involving riding, the races and regular gymkhanas.

Gorst was socially minded to the nth degree and at the same time passionate about taking exercise. Naturally enough, we find him a

participant in all these forms of human endeavour mentioned and one or two not, like fencing and following a paper chase. His energy was unflagging and he would move from one activity to another practically without pause. In particular, he rode whenever he could and soon bought his own horse. Later he would join in with the racing fraternity, betting quite heavily on his fancy. His interest in horses would lead him, beneficially, into greater intimacy with Khedive Abbas Hilmi.

The first member of Jack's family to visit him in Egypt was his eldest sister Constance (Con in the family), who in January 1890 stayed with Jack's friends the Locke-Kings, owners of a hotel near the pyramids and the givers of lavish parties. Con was at the time married to a genial young naval officer, Lieutenant Edmund Paston Cooper, the younger son of a cheerful one-eyed baronet, who had been in the Rifle Brigade. Young Paston Cooper, who was serving with the Mediterranean fleet, wished to leave the navy and try his luck in civilian life. Jack, ever ready to help a member of the family, found his brother-in-law a good post in the Egyptian service. But, just as everything was fixed up, Paston Cooper, to the family's great distress, contracted some kind of fever while still with the fleet and died at Gibraltar.[1] Con returned as a widow to Egypt in December 1892 with her father, and the two of them, together with Jack and his Eton friend Oswald Smith, went up the Nile to see the sites. In the course of time Jack's other sisters, notably Hylda and Eva, came out to stay with him often for quite long periods.

When he was first in Cairo and for some years after, Gorst saw a lot of Colonel Schaefer and his wife, with whom he would often dine. The Colonel, though a good deal older than Gorst, must have taken the young man under his wing, for he often rode with him, and then took him on an official trip to upper Egypt in January 1888 up to the first cataract at Aswan, the first time Gorst had travelled so far up the river. He must have felt thoroughly at home with the Schaefers, as he would sometimes drop in to see Madam Schaefer, a musician who would give informal recitals to friends, something which much appealed to Gorst. Another musician, Ralph Paget, who played the violin and who replaced Vaux at the Agency, soon arrived on the scene. He and Gorst became close friends and for a time shared a house. Among his other friends were the former judge John Scott, who would become Judicial Adviser, and William Garstin, who like Scott was quite a bit older than Gorst, a distinguished engineer and the driving-force behind the building of the Aswan dam, opened in 1902. Garstin spotted Gorst's ability early on, and the two men remained staunch friends through thick and thin.

Gorst was always keen to extend his range of acquaintances, and he took every advantage of the polyglot community in Egypt to do so. Thus he got to know a number of prominent Greeks such as the Zervoudakis, successful merchants, and Pandelli Ralli, partner in the great trading firm of that name and whose house in Belgrave Square Gorst would visit when on leave. Yet another Greek, Ambroise Sinadino, the Rothschild's agent in Egypt,[2] moved in theatrical and terpsichorean circles, to which the adventuresome Gorst was introduced. One Christmas, Gorst, Sinadino and his set performed a charade at the Agency. One of the words which they had chosen was 'politique'. The final scene enacted was the Anglo-Italian conference at Naples with Gorst playing Lord Dufferin and evidently taking him off very well. Gorst clearly had an ability to amuse an audience, including a young one. The author's father vividly remembered, as a boy in Cairo, his uncle Jack, then Consul-General, giving a hilarious impression of a parrot refusing a lump of sugar.

Gorst also wanted to meet socially leading Egyptians, and consequently became a frequent visitor to Princess Nazli's famous salon, held in her large house behind the Khedive's Abdin Palace. The highly cultivated and liberated Princess was a niece of Khedive Ismail, had married very young and for many years had lived in Constantinople, where she was something of a protégée of the British Ambassador.[3] She was still attractive when Gorst first knew her, and her house in which she lived in great state with scores of servants and old family slaves was the meeting ground for Englishmen and Egyptians.[4] A believer in liberal principles, the Princess had once been a supporter of Urabi but, when his revolution failed, she became intensely pro-British. Blessed with a ready wit and presence, she now indulged her love of politics and intrigue with a stream of visitors. Among her Egyptian regulars were, for instance, Saad Zaghlul Pasha, a lawyer and later Minister of Education and eventually Premier, and Shaykh Muhammed Abduh, a journalist, reformer and later Grand Mufti.

In the first six months of 1890, his diary shows that Gorst visited the Princess on no fewer than eleven occasions. Early that year, he took his father and his sister Con to the salon. Once he had the confidence, and nerve, to ask the Princess to tea at his house. She came. Khedive Abbas Hilmi was to write many years later in his memoirs that

> Gorst always showed good artistic taste and knew how to appreciate music and theatre and in a salon he moved round with the ease of a Parisian.[5]

*7. Princess Nazli.*

Besides his visits to the salon, Gorst's diaries show that after he had joined the Ministry of Finance he began to meet quite often at the dinner table the leading Egyptian politicians of the day (though there were as yet no political parties), men such as Nubar, Riaz and Tigrane. Naturally enough, and as he got more senior, he would invite them to dine.

A red-blooded man, Gorst was always strongly attracted to the female sex. But his relations with women, as his story shows, could often be complex. Certain of his attributes stand out. He was generally uninhibited in his dealings with women, indeed sometimes pursuing them with relentless, almost absurd, zeal. He unashamedly enjoyed sex with them, whenever this was possible and his partners were willing. There was often about him a certain ruthless quality in his approach to women, whom he expected to dance to his tune. This may be accounted for by the fiercely assertive side of his nature, developed as a result of an early lack of self-confidence. But this quality was undoubtedly compensated for by his warm and lively personality which was unsurprisingly an attraction for women. At the same time, as demonstrated in full measure by his caring behaviour to his sisters, he could be considerate to women's comfort and welfare.

Gorst once had the rather odd habit of listing his friends by name, both male and female, with as much, if not more, emphasis placed on the latter

as on the former. In writing about the year 1888, for instance, he listed no fewer than six women, as opposed to four men, among his 'principal' friends, three of the six being married. One of the unmarried ones was the lovely Mary North,[6] who was staying in Cairo as the guest of Mrs Settle, wife of Colonel Settle, the police chief. Mary – musical like many of Gorst's friends – would marry William Garstin, a marriage which Gorst, perhaps strangely, did his best to promote. One evening he was sitting out a dance with Mary, and he told her that Garstin, not an articulate man in affairs of the heart, was in love with her.[7] Alas the marriage, one that Mary did not really want, was to end in scandal when she eventually left her husband for the dashing Major Charles à Court Repington, a man destined to become famous as military correspondent for *The Times*.

Mary had some revealing observations to make about Jack Gorst, whom she regarded before her marriage as one of her 'special friends'. Never before, she wrote, had she met anyone 'so frankly interested in himself'. Mary was a sympathetic listener and Gorst a great talker. He told Mary once that he 'deeply resented his small stature and delicate appearance'; the former he attributed to his nurse having dropped him as an infant. On the other hand and typically enough he believed his 'conversation fully made up for my physical deficiencies and caused them to be speedily forgotten', a view with which Mary, ever intrigued by the Gorst persona, agreed.[8]

Mary described how on another occasion Jack Gorst was to escort her and Mrs Settle to a semi-public ball, the colonel being away. Gorst fell in with the plan but 'not too cordially, and Mrs Settle considered he was giving himself airs and was much annoyed'. Consequently she dropped the plan, though without telling Gorst, who sat by his window for two hours waiting for the women he was to escort. When he arrived eventually at the dance and found Mrs Settle had deliberately not called for him he was 'absolutely furious ... ashy-white with blazing eyes'. He told Mary that his anger made him quite ill, and he was afraid of his 'uncontrollable fury'. Mary, however, admired him for his self-control and not making a scene.[9]

Gorst's relationships with women did not always have to be romantic ones. Often he simply enjoyed their company, particularly if they were intelligent or musical. Yet if they did not in some sense charm him he could be abruptly dismissive of them. For instance, en route home by sea he noted in his diary that there were on board the ship 'a few hideous women of no importance': a sweeping and uncharitable comment even if a private one. His mother and five sisters were all good-looking and he seemed almost to demand that his women friends should all be in the same category.

We can confidently say that, in terms of his personal life, the most

important event for Jack Gorst in his first few years in Egypt was his meeting in Cairo in January 1889 with Jessica Sykes. He was 27, and she 32. Jessica had been married for some 14 years to a rich baronet, Sir Tatton Sykes, who owned an estate at Sledmere in the East Riding of Yorkshire of 34,000 acres. Theirs had been a loveless marriage from which had sprung their only child, Mark. The Sykes, inveterate travellers, were in Egypt as visitors. As well as being strongly attracted physically to Jessica, Jack responded readily to her outgoing and striking personality as well as to her frank and direct manner. Soon they were immersed in a passionate love affair which would continue with gaps, due to inevitable separations, for some two years.

On leave in England that summer Jack saw a lot of Jessica, and was invited by her to stay at Sledmere, his sister Hylda accompanying him as a kind of chaperon. While staying for a few days at his parents' house at Lawford in Essex, he wrote Jessica daily letters, beginning them 'My darling Jessie'. These letters while being full of his love and devotion also recounted almost his every move, and were spiced too with nice touches of humour. On the way down to Lawford by train he had a

> charming journey in the society of five red-haired children aged from 2 to 7 who got into my carriage ... accompanied by a mother and two violins and forthwith proceeded to eat biscuits over my dressing-bag and best blue suit. One of them called Jessie made me kinder to her than I should otherwise have been ...[10]

At Lawford he complained to Jessica how his best trousers were

> getting seriously damaged by having to kneel on the carpet every evening at family prayers. My sisters have an excellent trick of finding out that they are tired and must go to bed five minutes before the interesting ceremonial and two female servants and myself are the only devout members of the congregation.[11]

There follow references to his sisters and the 'boring' and 'wretched' time they are having at home. Whether or not he was trying to impress Jessica with the attention he gave to his sisters' well-being we can not tell, but he mentioned how he had persuaded his father, a difficult parent, to give Hylda an allowance as she had no money at all, and also to buy a horse, presumably so his sisters could ride. In addition he had been vigorously trying to find and interview in London an Italian man, clearly an undesirable one, who somehow or other had fastened his eye on Hylda. Finally, for good measure,

he was packing off his impecunious young brother, Harold – to whom he later sent £10 – to Germany to continue his studies there.

On the way back to Egypt at the end of October, he found himself on board ship in melancholy mood at having to part from Jessica. 'My own Darling,' he wrote to her

> It is just twelve hours since I last saw you and I feel more miserable every moment at the thought I shall not see you for so long. I am quite lost without you and have no other interest in life.[12]

But Jack was a resilient man, besides being able to compartmentalise his life, and his letters back to Jessica were soon packed with information about what he was doing and his opinions of places and people. He seemed to enjoy venting his spleen on Cairo, his destination, described as a 'small-minded, scandal-talking, mosquito ridden' town. In similar vein, Lady Grenfell, wife of the Sirdar and a travelling companion, was possessed of 'envy, hatred, malice' and other forms of uncharitableness, which apparently 'raged within her female breast'. But Lady Baring, another passenger was 'a wonderful woman'.[13] Thus his letters to Jessica would continue to flow for two years more, an astonishing source of material for a biographer with their insights into Jack's character.

To help explain how the intimate relationship between Jack and Jessica came about, in particular its uninhibited intensity, something more must be said about the Sykeses and their marriage. Jessica was the daughter of George Cavendish-Bentinck, a Tory MP with a love of hunting and racing, and a granddaughter of the Duke of Portland. Her mother was of Irish descent, a formidable woman nicknamed 'Britannia', who was determined her daughter should make a good marriage. Jessica, although no beauty, was a handsome woman with large dark eyes and a sensual mouth. She was independently minded and anxious to escape from her mother's dominance. Encouraged by her father, she had opinions on subjects like politics and art, her hero being Ruskin.[14]

Tatton Sykes was celebrated in the racing world for his successful stud at Sledmere, where he had bred many famous horses like Doncaster and Spearmount who had won the Derby. Before his marriage, he had been regarded as a confirmed bachelor. He was reclusive, religious with a special interest in churches and their architecture, in outlook a misogynist and, added to all this, he was of uncertain temper. He had travelled to almost the ends of the earth and his eccentricities were legion. A worrier over his health, he believed in keeping his body temperature constant and so might wear up

to six coats, peeling them off as necessary. He nursed an obsessive hatred of flowers – 'nasty untidy things' he called them – and forbade the growing of flowers in his village. Also he disliked his cottagers using their front doors, which had therefore to be barred and bolted.[15] In 1874, when he was 48, he was entrapped by Britannia into becoming engaged to and then marrying a compliant Jessica. The marriage was doomed at the start, and was not, Jessica once told her daughter-in-law, consummated for six months.[16] The fact was that husband and wife were hopelessly incompatible. Jessica was extrovert and fun-loving; Tatton, only really happy when alone or in some remote place, neglected his wife, to whom he could be unkind and almost cruel at times. Gradually they drifted apart, over the years effectively living separate lives. At their town house, 46 Grosvenor Street, Jessica threw parties, where drink flowed liberally and guests gambled. Jessica began to have affairs, not always discreetly, and to drink too much. An extravagant woman she got into debt, and by early 1890 owed as much as £10,000.[17] To all this Tatton, at least to start with, seemed to turn a blind eye.

But there was another side to Jessica. She had a social conscience and was uneasy about the life she led. Almost by way of making amends for it she converted to Roman Catholicism, writing to Cardinal Manning about wishing 'to try and utterly abandon my sinful and useless life'.[18] Both in London's East End and in Hull she became well known for her work among children, distributing food, clothing and money to those in need. In 1884, she met and fell deeply in love with a young man, Lucien de Hirsch, whose Jewish father had amassed a fortune. Then, in April 1887, de Hirsch fell ill in Paris and died. Jessica, it seems, was devastated. Yet still she travelled with Tatton. In 1887 it was to Russia; in 1888 to India and in 1889, fatefully for Jack Gorst and herself, to Egypt.

For two months after his return from leave, Jack waited with ill-concealed impatience for the arrival of the Sykeses in Egypt. He seemed to expect almost instant answers to his long letters to Jessica, with their detailed accounts of his daily life. When these did not come, he adopted an injured tone and accused Jessica of being 'inconsiderate'. Once he wrote self-pityingly and in a whingeing tone, 'It is really rather hard upon me that the only time I have ever been in love it should be with a woman who is incapable of caring about me.'[19] Then came a short prosaic entry in Jack's diary for 9 January 1890:

> Maison Rolo all day. The Sykes arrived in the evening, dined with them. Party at d'aubignys and ball at Dormers. xx

It was certainly a busy evening, and the 'xx' will be explained presently. The 'Maison Rolo' was a house in the select Garden City part of Cairo which Jack, after much trouble, had found for the Sykeses. It was an imposing villa built by an Austrian architect and belonging to a family of rich merchants. The place seems in fact to have been run as a superior kind of guest house where it was possible for a non-resident like Jack to breakfast, lunch and dine. Madame Rolo, who ran it, did not meet with Jack's approval, and he later described her to Jessica as 'loathsome'.

Conveniently, and not untypically, Tatton disappeared on his travels up the Nile a week or so after his arrival in Cairo, leaving his wife and Jack to their own devices. Jack's diary tells us a lot about how he spent his time with Jessica, seeing her almost every day of the week for some three months until she finally followed Tatton home in April.

Jack's morning stint at the Agency over, he and Jessica would usually spend the rest of the day in each other's company, often dining at the Maison Rolo, unless asked out to a dance or dinner. In fact they seemed to go everywhere and do everything together. They visited the pyramids, the bazaars and Old Cairo; they explored the Coptic churches; once they took their dinner to the petrified forest; then they borrowed the Schaefer's cart (a little two-wheeled carriage) for a trip and had an upset in it; they went to the theatre; they called on Jack's friend Lady Abingdon, of whom, Jack once teased, Jessica might have been a shade jealous; and of course they went to the races. At least twice Jack held a tea party for Jessica with six or seven others present; another time they went to a dance at the Palmers' and several times Jessica dined at the Agency. It was a hectic time for them both and they clearly revelled in the fun and excitement of it all. They made an odd-looking pair: she pretty tall, and he very short. Behind their backs they were known as 'Cupid and Psyche'.[20] Looking back some years later on their time together Jack maintained that Jessica

> Exercised a great influence over my life ... [and] contributed very largely to the foundation of my character and general views of life during that period ... She possessed great intelligence coupled with an extraordinary variety of knowledge and a force of character unusual in one of her sex. All these qualities made her in those days a most delightful and instructive companion.[21]

He further attributed his 'intimacy' with Jessica to curing 'a certain want of confidence in my own powers and a consequent tendency not to aim high enough and ... a too humble appreciation of the position I had a right to

occupy among my fellow-men'. These were, Jack reflected, the 'last failings with which I could be reproached and few would believe that they had ever existed'.

In the diaries for the years 1890 and 1891, and coinciding with the period Jessica was with him in Cairo or England, Jack might mark against a diary entry for the day an 'x' or even 'xx' and very occasionally an 'xxx'. These marks denote, as historians have interpreted them almost certainly correctly, the occasions Jack made love to Jessica. It must have been pride in his virility that made Jack add up the total of xs for the year and enter it in his diary. Less easy to interpret is the occasional 'o', which appears as an entry in the diaries in those years; this almost invariably occurs when Jack and Jessica were separated from each other. The probable explanation is that an 'o' denotes love-making with someone other than Jessica or just going with a prostitute.

What the precise opinion was in Cairo society of the relationship between Jack and Jessica is hard to say. Jessica's reputation must have been well known, and she herself warned Jack that he had two particular female enemies (were they Lady Grenfell and Mrs Settle?) who disapproved of their friendship. Tongues must indeed have been wagging. Perhaps Jack was too carried away to ponder the situation. Yet there is an indication as we shall see in a moment that he was concerned later that year about the need for discretion in their relationship in London. Maybe to the casual observer in Cairo it might have appeared that Jack was simply acting as an escort to Jessica or was no more than an admirer of this dazzling woman. But to the more discerning, and taking account of gossip, it is hard to believe that the true nature of their relationship was not obvious.

Jack's diary entry for Saturday 12 April was short. After taking the Friday night train to Alexandria he wrote:

> Saw Lady S and Miss Leslie off by the 'Gironde' [a ship]
> – breakfasted with [illegible] – dined Schaefers and played piquet with Sir E [Baring].

Now the two of them had to rely on correspondence, never a really comfortable vehicle for them by which to maintain their liaison. Both were formidably individualistic and early that summer they had a minor quarrel on paper, which ended with Jack apologising. Before arriving in London for his leave in July, Jack asked Jessica to look out for some rooms where they could meet 'safely' but saying she should not run any risks in doing so because he 'would rather live in the most loathsome lodging than

that anyone should have any suspicions'.[22] Jessica – we would assess her anyhow as a born risk-taker – did not apparently find rooms or maybe she did not look. It was left to Jack to locate a suitable place in Oxford and Cambridge Mansions where he would pay three guineas a week including servants' wages for his rooms. He also saw her at the Sykeses town house, twice going with Jessica *and* Tatton to the theatre. The entries in his diary for 13 and 14 July are not untypical:

> 13 Sunday Down to Beaumont [school at Windsor] with Lady S to see Mark [Sykes]. We lunched at White Hart and then went on river in a punt. Dined Midland Hotel xx
>
> 14 Monday Drove with Lady S and saw Hylda [his sister]. Lunched at 46 with my father. To Marlborough House garden party. Then down to Lawford to see the family.

It was perhaps the high noon of Jack's love affair with Jessica. They loved racing and went to Newmarket and Goodwood, with Jack winning once £100 and then a net £213, apparently paying off a debt owed to Jessica. Between meetings with Baring and the people at *The Time*s, for whom he was going to work as correspondent in Cairo, he found a moment to buy Jessica a 'very pretty' bracelet encrusted with diamonds and sapphires. Just before leaving London to spend three weeks with Jessica at Sledmere, he received an 'extraordinary epistle' from his mother.[23] What could this have been about? Was it admonitory and about his liaison with Jessica of which she, perhaps, did not approve? At Sledmere – there was no sign at all of Tatton there – life was seemingly lived at a slightly slower pace than in London, although there were plenty of diversions such as racing at Stockton and York (twice), guests coming to stay, playing tennis and attending a puppy show at Beverley. Jack was also busy writing articles for *The Times*.

Back in London, and just before beginning Voltaire's life of Charles XII (he who invaded Russia and nearly captured Peter the Great), Jack heard that he was required to accompany Baring on a diplomatic mission to Italy, this being the conference mentioned in the last chapter. This development Jack described as a 'terrible blow', as it interrupted his idyll. But Jessica and he managed to snatch a few days in Paris before he boarded his train to Rome. Oddly enough, during their brief visit to France they went to a bull-fight, which Jack thought was a 'disgusting spectacle'.[24] While at Naples, he sent Jessica the usual stream of letters, in one of which he muses that 'all will come right in the end and that some day or other, God

knows when, we shall be able to live comfortably together without these perpetual separations.'[25] This was, of course, pure wishful thinking, and for the present his heart continued to rule his reason.

Even if that winter Jack told Jessica that he felt 'low' and 'abandoned' by her (and his diary records several times that he was 'very seedy'), he now had his new work in the Ministry of Finance to take his mind off his personal life. Further, never short of female companions, he refers in his diary to the slightly mysterious Kathleen Meredyth, a married woman, who flits briefly into and out of his life. She was probably unconventional – this may have been what momentarily attracted Jack to her – for in a few years time she eloped with another man. Then, to his delight, he heard that the Sykeses were coming on a visit, just for a fortnight, all that could be managed. So that March there was for the reunited pair a merry-go-round of frenetic activity crammed into the short space of time available, with Jack's diary liberally sprinkled with 'xs'. Not a sign, however, after his arrival, of Tatton. At first, Jack experienced a few initial days of awkwardness and discomfort with Jessica and then he found he loved her 'just as well as ever'. But, alas, she had to leave. Their worry now was that a very long separation loomed ahead, for Jack in his new post would not be taking leave at home that summer of 1891, and therefore they might drift apart. This indeed is just what happened.

Soon after Jessica left Cairo the niggling began. 'You always say,' wrote Jack, 'that my letters are so much more satisfactory than myself ... with me it is otherwise and your very nicest letters seem to me a poor substitute for your own charming but independent self.'[26] The tone of Jack's letters began to deteriorate, and by mid summer he was writing that he quite agreed with what she had said in her last letter 'that you are an unsatisfactory woman – almost more unsatisfactory to yourself I should imagine than even to me'.[27] In a bout of self-analysis, he admitted to her that she had done him

> a lot of good, you have enlarged my knowledge of the world and of its most remarkable product – woman, you have removed some of my middle-class prejudices ... [but] you have destroyed the few illusions I had left when I first knew you.[28]

The balance, he concluded, was decidedly in his favour. Rather woundingly he added that she was a 'very charming and delightful companion if one does not take you too seriously'. It is hardly surprising that she did not respond at once to this criticism, a failure he wrongly attributed to her 'indifference'. A few weeks later, in a letter now beginning 'My dearest

*8. Jessica Sykes.*

Jessie', he told her that he thought 'our liaison should come to an end ... I shall in future consider you merely as a friend.' Softening a bit, he recalled how happy they had been together and for this he thanked her. Then, rather pathetically, he went on, 'our ways lie far apart, and you have to drift along yours and I along mine. Good-bye, then, my darling, for the last time.'[29] This letter spurred Jessica into writing back affectionately but at the same time she told Jack, perhaps rashly, that she had been seeing a great deal of a 'very attractive man', whose identity, tantalisingly for Jack, she kept hidden. This prompted Jack to write on 28 August a long letter remarkable for its frankness and beginning 'My darling Jessie', in which he admitted to being greatly at fault for their 'estrangement'. He did not, he assured her, love any other woman, but the letter clearly revealed his feeling of insecurity and emotional confusion. He wrote:

> When I look back on the last few months I see plainly enough the causes that have led to the present unhappy state of things. You understand my character very well – better indeed than any other woman has or ever will. I am very very sensitive to neglect and at the same time have all my life had a craving for that sympathy and interest which one can only find in a woman that cares for one. With

> all that I have sufficient strength of character to try and stamp out a feeling of that kind if I deliberately come to the conclusion that it is making my life a very unhappy one.

And further on:

> And now to try and tell you exactly what I feel towards you. It is indeed difficult for until the arrival of your last letter which shows me that you still love me (a little?) I had deliberately abstained from examining myself on the subject and even now hardly know what I feel. I am very much attached to you. I know you alone can make me really happy, and there is nothing I desire more than that we may be once again upon our former footing, but this long and unsatisfactory separation has dimmed my memory and blunted my feelings as regards you.

Jack ends this great epistle by putting the burden on Jessica to decide whether it is worth her while to come out to Egypt the next winter. 'Come,' he said, 'if you really care for me, otherwise don't.'[30] It was a stark choice he gave her.

But at the very time Jack was sending off this letter to Jessica, he had met and was seeing, as we know from his diary, someone else – perhaps he was half believing his affair with Jessica was over. The woman was a 'Madame Rees'. In August he saw her 19 times, in September 23 times, in October the same number and in November, before he went up the Nile, 20 times. We know little about her, and Jack, making the work of the biographer more difficult, never gives her a first name. He would frequently ride with her, endlessly call on her, on odd occasions receive her on his houseboat, once he 'fished with Mme Rees and children', and one day he went 'to the bazaars with Mme R'. On another occasion there is a reference to taking 'the Rees' to the Garden Theatre to see 'Jack the Ripper'.[31] There thus seems to have been a Rees family, but was there a husband about? Perhaps, but this is never made clear. Occasionally towards the end of the 1891 diary, interspersed with the many references to Madame Rees, there are now odd mentions of a mysterious and quite unidentifiable 'M'. To make the confusion worse, there has to be a real possibility that Madame Rees and 'M' are one and the same person.

Some more light is shed on this in Jack's autobiographical notes for 1891 (written in the following year or later). He tells us:

> It was during the long summer months, when the few people who remain in Egypt are necessarily thrown a great deal together, that my acquaintance with M.R. ripened into a warm and durable friendship which has stood unimpaired the brunt of many unfavourable circumstances. In spite of many sufferings and of much ill-treatment at the hands of destiny, she has stood out against all her misfortunes with a courage and light heartedness which has secured the admiration of her friends – few in number but very devoted. I know of no woman who has had more reason to complain of the hasty and ill-formed judgements passed by the general public on actions which they could not appreciate.[32]

There can be little doubt that 'M.R.' is Madame Rees, but what the 'unfavourable circumstances' and 'misfortunes' were we do not know. But even if not everyone approved of M.R. she must have been a cheerful survivor. And Jack would go on seeing her from time to time for many years.

In the meantime Jack continued writing to Jessica during the winter of 1891–1892 in not unaffectionate terms, cheerfully giving her his news without though making any mention of Madame Rees or M (no diary for 1892 survives, so our information hereabouts is patchy). Once he was startled, as he told her, to receive a letter from Jessica beginning 'Dear Mr. Gorst'. This may possibly have contributed to his feeling that Jessica was losing interest in him. But in January 1892 Jessica asked Jack to go with her on a visit to Jerusalem. He replied that pressure of work made this impossible much as he would like to have gone.

Then Jessica decided to visit Jack in Cairo in March. Whether when she set out she knew anything about Jack's developing relationship with M we do not know, but when she arrived in Cairo she did learn about it though not at first from Jack. Then on the evening of 18 March 1892 she met Jack and, in what must have been a painful meeting for them both, Jack told her that it was all over between them. She took the news in a spirit of remarkable generosity. The next morning at 8.30 am Jack began a tearful letter to her:

> Whatever may have happened you are and always will be the dearest and best woman I have ever known ... It makes me inexpressibly sad to feel all that I have lost. I shall never meet a woman to suit me like you or for whom I can care as I have cared for you. If I had known that you really loved me, things might have turned out differently,

> but alas! I did not make the discovery till too late … it quite breaks my heart to leave you. I could not go on trying to deceive you … It seems very weak and foolish but I am actually crying while I write this. Please don't hate me, Jessie. I feel so utterly broken-down and miserable. Good-bye, dearest, and God bless you. I do hope you will be happy.
>
> Jack[33]

Jack had indeed been deceiving Jessica, and he had to write to her yet again explaining just why he had gone on writing to her in the way he had done. Perhaps rather lamely he excused himself, after alluding to the 'serious attachment' he had formed (this was of course with M), by saying he had been and still was 'sincerely attached' to her, and how he foolishly had not realised until she arrived that it was impossible for them to go on as before.[34] The upshot of all this was that, to Jack's evident relief since his continued fondness for Jessica was probably genuine, the two of them would go on seeing each other from time to time but ostensibly just as friends. As for Jessica, her break-up with Jack proved to be something of a body blow, for her behaviour thereafter began to deteriorate: her drinking became heavier, her promiscuity more flagrant and she got more and more into debt.[35] We shall, however, catch further glimpses of her in these pages. Above all, an extraordinary twist to this story was provided when in 1903 Jack's younger sister, Edith, married Tatton and Jessica's son, Mark.

CHAPTER

# 7

# ADVISER TO THE MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR

Jack's love affair with 'M' prospered, and, like his relationship with Jessica, seems to have been an intense one. But it was by no means all sweetness and light. For at one stage Jack decided to bring his liaison with M to an end, but within a week they had had a reconciliation. A few days after, M was 'rather disagreeable' and Jack again made up his mind to put an end to the affair. There followed a 'very painful explanation, the end of which was that we are to be friends in future and nothing more'. But this did not work out; Jack found himself having to 'cheer' up M with the consequence of another reconciliation.[1] It is hard to judge if M meant as much to Jack as Jessica – there is no correspondence to help us. On the other hand their love affair was long-lasting and despite its hiccups continued for some years.

In April 1893, Jack took his annual leave early, travelling home in a leisurely way via Athens, Constantinople, Vienna and Paris. In the Ottoman capital he saw St Sophia, 'lit up for the last day of Ramadan', he noted, called on Madam Schaefer's sister and, never missing a trick, lunched with the British Ambassador. He then passed on through the Balkans by train to Vienna, a city Jack found living up to its reputation for elegance, dalliance and music. He saw something of his friend Paget, also a visitor to the city. He was introduced to Frau Felix, a Küplerein or 'Madam', who provided him with 'light and agreeable amusement'. This included driving

around seeing the sights with a lady of pleasure before returning to 'Frau F's hospitable roof for the night.' He did not for a moment neglect his culture and in five days packed in two operas, an operetta, a good ballet as well as a poor music hall.[2]

Maybe a little surprisingly, in view of the past, Jessica met Jack in Paris as he stepped off the Orient Express, and there they walked, dined and saw a play together. In London they met too, less frequently than before, and usually at the Sykeses town house, where Jack had to give Jessica, 'a rather disagreeable lecture', presumably about her drinking. This lecture did not in any way stop Jack from indulging himself by visiting twice a high-class brothel while in London. Among the important people he met during his leave were Lord Rosebery, then Foreign Secretary, and Lord Salisbury, the leader of the opposition, who gave Jack half an hour of his time. Determined to maintain a high social profile he also went to a Ball at Buckingham Palace. To his siblings he paid appropriate attention: going to the theatre several times with Hylda, with whom he was close, rowing on the Thames with Edith and playing croquet with Gwen at his parents' house.

There are in Jack's diaries mention of women friends about whom we know almost nothing. One such was a Frenchwoman called Camille Petit who lived in Paris. Another was 'J.K.' (she may have been Jennie Konstam) whom he must have really fallen for because he met or took her out no fewer than 18 times in the last month of his summer leave in 1893.

Jack returned to Egypt on 14 July, reaching Cairo in the afternoon. That evening, 'M came to see me after dinner'. His encounters with women on his leave notwithstanding, their relationship seems to have continued as before. In fact if anything it became closer. Jack, now acting Financial Adviser, was required to attend meetings of the Council of Ministers, who met in the hot summer months at the Khedive's Ras el Tin Palace at Alexandria by the sea. Jack had an office in the Custom House there and for accommodation he found a room at the Casino in the smart suburb of San Stefano. He and M decided that it would be agreeable if she, so as to be near Jack, took a house in Alexandria for two or three months. And this is what happened. Jack searched for and found an appropriate place, and M was soon 'installed in a little house not far from the Casino'.[3] Whether she was in some way accompanied to Alexandria history does not relate. But the idyll came to an abrupt end following a 'disagreeable incident' (details of which are unknown) at M's house as a result of which Jack considered it 'wise for M to leave'.[4] The very next day Jack and M both returned to Cairo by express train.

We can only speculate that M may have felt in some way threatened, presumably due to the circumstances in which she was living in San Stefano. Letters Jack wrote to Jessica while he was at San Stefano do not allude to the incident nor of course to M! In Cairo, Jack continued to see a lot of M for the rest of the year and into 1894 and beyond. He was obviously fond of her, but does not ever seem to have contemplated marrying her. Probably at this time he was content with the rather Bohemian pattern of his emotional life.

Gorst had by the beginning of 1894 spent more than three years in the Ministry of Finance. For some time he had been looking for new opportunities. It must have irked him considerably to have above him as his chief Sir Elwin Palmer, of whom, as we have seen, he had a low opinion. Indeed, he had now concluded:

> I had got all the good possible out of my place at the Finance Ministry, and that my position there was too hemmed in to allow my doing all that I thought I was capable of doing, both for myself and the country. After all, in spite of the fact that I exercised both on Lord C and Palmer a very considerable indirect influence in the general conduct of affairs, I only occupied second place in the Finance Ministry.[5]

His eye had already alighted on a task he might relish, one giving him a more independent position and the extra responsibility he craved. He wrote:

> On looking around I perceived that one thing yet left to be taken seriously in hand by England was the Ministry of the Interior. The police, run on stiff military lines by a series of incapable chiefs, was the one English failure. The rest of the local administration had hardly been touched at all. It was a field worthy of anyone's energies and I was determined to try and get the 'job' of putting it to rights.[6]

Showing distinct courage, Gorst was not put off by the size of his ambitious undertaking or by the difficulties lying ahead of him, about which he must have been aware as a result of his experience in Finance. Indeed Cromer in *Modern Egypt* written 14 years later described the Interior Department as being 'the centre of gravity of Egyptian misgovernment … the very citadel of corruption, the headquarters of nepotism'.[7]

Gorst's precise motivation is not always easy to untangle. There is no doubt that he would not be one to conceal the advantages which would

attend his career if he was successful at the Interior. But in addition he liked order and efficiency, and with his talents he perceived that it lay within his power to bring better government, regarding both the police service and local administration, to the country.

The Interior had always dealt with the internal life of the country. Under its control had come the police and the local government officials. These latter were in descending order of importance: the *mudirs* (or governors) of the provinces, the *mamurs* in charge of districts and, last but not least, the *omdahs*, the mayors or heads of the villages, together with their assistants, the *sheikhs*. All these officials were the representatives outside Cairo of the Ministry of the Interior, and responsible among their other tasks, for implementing its decrees and regulations and for ensuring public order. The mudirs were especially powerful men and combined the roles of police chiefs and magistrates until the courts were reformed in 1884. To assist the police the traditional system also included a large but low-paid force of *ghaffirs* (watchmen) to help keep the peace in the villages.[8]

The job of reorganising the police had been given in 1883 to General Valentine Baker, a man originally ear-marked for the post of Commander-in-Chief of the new Egyptian army. Baker, therefore, as Inspector-General of Police and coming under the Minister of the Interior, set about organising a quasi-military constabulary, an important element of which was a gendarmerie. Baker's force was intended to supplement rather than replace existing local police in the provinces. Unfortunately, during his not very successful tenure of duty, Baker, a brave man, had to go off to fight the Mahdists in the Eastern Sudan with his less than adequate gendarmerie, which later was disbanded and merged into the police after Baker's death in 1887.

At about the time of Baker's appointment, Clifford Lloyd, formerly a highly active resident magistrate in Ireland, had arrived on the Egyptian scene appointed by the British government in a somewhat vague role as Director-General of Reforms. Posted to the Interior as an Under Secretary, Lloyd at once attempted – in Baker's absence fighting the dervishes – to introduce some far-reaching changes in the organisation of the police. Lloyd had a distrust of the mudirs, and, wishing to inject a greater element of direct rule into the system, he sought among other things to deprive the mudirs of some of their powers over the police. He also proceeded to divide the country into three police divisions, each under a European officer, and then to appoint for each separate province a police inspector resident in the province responsible for the discipline of his men – a function previously undertaken by the mudir – and reporting upwards to his police superior.

The mudir could still, as before, give orders to the police to investigate crime but only through police inspectors.

Lloyd was overhasty and tactless, and at once fell foul of the incoming Premier, the experienced Nubar, who disagreed vehemently with Lloyd's plans, foreseeing in them a fatal 'duality', as he expressed it, whereby there would be confusion over the powers of the police and mudirs, with an inevitable loss of authority suffered by the latter. Moreover Nubar, in favour broadly of the British occupation, wanted to keep the British from interfering in the affairs of the Interior. A battle royal ensued: Nubar v Lloyd. The Premier, needed urgently by the Consul-General to insure that the evacuation of Egyptian troops and civilians from the Sudan was carried out, won and Lloyd resigned. The police in the provinces once again came under the control of the mudirs, whose authority was mainly restored. European inspectors, however, continued to be present in provinces, though the mudirs had no powers over their discipline. The Consul-General in the meantime was content for the next few years to let Nubar make the running at Interior thus favouring the concept of indirect rule, and not replacing Lloyd with a European.

Apart from the police and mudirs, there was another body, the parquet, with an important role in the administration of the criminal justice system. As a system imported by the Egyptians from France, the parquet, a branch of the Judicial department and headed by the Procureur-Général, had local responsibilities for both the investigation of crime and for the prosecution of cases in the courts. There was, therefore, inevitably scope for friction between the parquet and the police, especially as the former tended to attract the more talented and better qualified young men, often lawyers, than the latter. Moreover, it appeared there was a lack of cooperation between the parquet and other law-enforcing officials and that the parquet sent their reports to the Ministry of Justice where they were often not seen by senior police officers who were located in the Ministry of the Interior.[9]

Various questions in which the mudirs, the parquet and police were all closely involved were tinkered with in the years leading up to 1894. For instance an attempt was made to clarify the powers of the mudirs and the parquet as they affected each other. Reports were made on the police, notably one by Kitchener temporarily made Inspector-General of Police in 1890. Then the able John Scott was appointed in 1891, against the wishes of Riaz, to the post of Judicial Adviser in the Ministry of Justice. However, despite the measures taken there was still at local level overlapping and therefore friction among government officials.

*9. Nubar Pasha, Premier of Egypt, 1878–1879, 1884–1888 and 1894–1895.*

Once he had made up his mind to concentrate his energies on the Interior, Gorst wasted no time. There were three things he set out to do. First he had to sow the seeds for his ideas on reform in 'high quarters', namely with Cromer (probably with the influential Scott as well). Second, he would strongly support the appointment of Nubar as Premier, considering that he would be the most likely of the politicians to bring about reform, and third he would need to ensure that it was he who should be called upon to prescribe what reforming measures should be taken.[10] With regard to the third point, of course, his ultimate aim was to have himself nominated as the British official charged to oversee changes made. It was quite a tall order.

Gorst would certainly have his biographer believe that it was he who initiated the whole plan for reform of the Interior. There is, however, some slight cause for doubt about this when we turn to Gorst's diary entry for 6 April 1894 which reads: 'In the afternoon walked with Lord C. He said he was thinking about an English Under Sec. at the Interior and would like to see me there if it could be arranged.' So was the original idea Gorst's or Cromer's? Whether or not Gorst was trying in a minor way to rewrite history we shall never know. But what is not in doubt is that he brilliantly seized the opening offered by Cromer.

In a change of ministry, Nubar was appointed Premier on 14 April, and on that very day told Cromer – who told Gorst – that he could not agree to an English Under Secretary at the Interior as that would ruin his position at the outset with the Khedive.[11] Four days later, Gorst went to see Nubar – a meeting presumably cleared with Cromer – and had a conversation with him about the affairs of the Interior. No doubt he was ultra cautious over what he said, wishing to prepare the ground for the future as he was due a week later to take eleven weeks annual leave in England. Gorst had a lot on his mind just then, for he had just started a new love affair, probably the most important one of his life, with a young American woman, Romaine Turnure, the course of which we shall discuss in our next chapter.

On his return from leave that summer, and while acting as Financial Adviser for Palmer, Gorst took every opportunity to discuss the reforming of the Interior with the Premier. Thus there are records in his diary of lunching nine times with Nubar during the second half of July and August, and of his having at least on five separate occasions during that time discussions with the Premier on the Interior. Altogether including Council of Ministers meetings he saw Nubar 18 times in seven weeks. There was thus ample time, during those pleasant summer weeks spent mainly in the more relaxed atmosphere of Alexandria, and with Cromer and the Khedive out of the country, of going over all the ground with the Premier – the 'wily' Armenian Gorst always called him – with whom he got on well enough. Once Nubar invited Gorst out to see his farm. As a diversion from the cares of being acting Financial Adviser Gorst chose just then to take his first lesson in how to ride a bicycle. Bicycling was a craze just sweeping through England, and was one on which Gorst, who loved new crazes, became thoroughly hooked.

By 12 August, he had ready his first memorandum on the Interior changes he proposed and a week later he noted, a little over-optimistically, that Nubar 'practically accepts' them all. Certainly, we need not, in this context, underestimate Gorst's capacity for grinding down an interlocutor, even a very senior one, by the force of his arguments; by way of illustration an Egyptian official in the Finance Ministry once said to him: 'It's no use my objecting, I know you always get your own way in the end!'[12]

For a moment, Nubar was distracted from the Interior business when Gorst's friend Colonel Schaefer, who ran the Anti-Slavery Department, arrested three prominent Egyptians, all Pashas, one of them Ali Sharif Pasha, no less a person than the President of the Legislative Council, for buying female slaves. When the news broke he, Gorst, 'had to go several times to pacify Nubar. He was very excited' about what had happened.

Sharif in a panic claimed, as a dodge, to be an Italian national so as to try and benefit by the Capitulations and avoid the Egyptian courts. But the Italians were having none of this. There followed much discussion of the case in the Council of Ministers which Gorst described as 'wearisome' and 'the eternal slavery question'. Cromer, still on leave, was consulted, and although he did not seem to be too bothered by a Pasha of the old school not understanding the ramifications of the Slave Act, he advised that nevertheless the law had to be respected. Eventually, in Gorst's words, Nubar ended by 'giving way', and a military court martial was convened to hear the case. One of the slave dealers was given a five year sentence, while one Pasha was sentenced to five months and another acquitted. As for Ali Sharif the case against him was ultimately dropped, as he had had a stroke and had then in atonement confessed to the purchase of three female slaves.[13]

There was an odd incident at about this time. Gorst was very attached to his dog which rejoiced in the curious name of 'Bacht', and which accompanied him as he travelled backwards and forwards between Cairo and Alexandria. One day as they were travelling back to Cairo, Bacht suddenly took it into his head to leap out of the train. Without hesitation, and as the train slowed down to cross a bridge, Gorst followed him. With the help of a borrowed horse, Gorst tracked Bacht to a distant village, where man and dog were reunited. Gorst had supper in a Greek restaurant in the village, and the pair then proceeded on to Cairo by the night train.

The discussions and negotiations over the Interior went on into October, with Gorst ever mindful that, apart from the need for him to produce and to have accepted a viable scheme, he must ensure that he got the top job there. He succeeded in both his objectives thanks partly to his staying power. There can be no question that he enjoyed the give and take that is necessary in this sort of negotiating exercise, and was good at it. This was something Cromer noted, and Gorst's keen mind and flexible approach would stand him in good stead when Cromer entrusted him with representing the Egyptian case in the complicated negotiations in Paris in 1903–1904 leading to the *Entente Cordiale*.

On his return from leave, Cromer accepted Gorst's proposals, and agreed with him that Colonel Settle, the Inspector-General of Police, would have to go (Gorst, it will be recalled, did not hit it off with the Colonel's wife). Settle having presumably got wind that he was likely to be superseded came to see Gorst 'looking rather glum', but Gorst would not be drawn on the question of the Interior. Next, it was virtually decided between Cromer, Nubar and Gorst that the last named would take charge at the Interior.

The formula for Gorst's appointment was to be: 'M Gorst est attaché provisoirement en M^ere^ de l'Intérieur pour aider à sa reorganisation.'[14] The last hurdle was the Khedive and, on 16 October, Nubar told Gorst that Abbas Hilmi took a favourable view of the changes proposed. But the deal was not quite fixed, for at the last moment France tried to put in an oar. The new French Consul-General saw the Khedive and remonstrated with him about the additional powers the British were about to obtain at the Interior. As a result there was some further 'shilly shallying' – Gorst's term – to describe prevarication among the Egyptian ministers.

At last Abbas Hilmi gave, reluctantly, his consent to the scheme and Gorst helped Nubar draft the note on the changes being made. On 3 November, the required decree was passed by the Council of Ministers nominating Gorst as Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior. The next day he took leave of the staff at Finance and on 5 November he was introduced to those at the Interior, besides having an audience with the Khedive whom he found to be 'very gracious'. He had done it.

But what precisely had the changes at the Interior consisted of? The main ones, as drafted by Gorst for Cromer's Annual Report on Egypt for 1894, were as follows:

> the post of Inspector-General of Police was abolished, and the various services centralised under this official were divided and placed under the direct orders of the Minister of the Interior.
>
> The English Police Inspectors living in the provinces in charge of fixed districts were recalled. In their place a few English Inspectors were attached to the Ministry of the Interior, one or two to inspect the discipline and interior economy of the police force, and the rest to inspect and report upon the manner in which the mudirs and other local officials performed their duties.
>
> The provincial police was placed, practically as well as theoretically, under the control of the local civil authorities, in future solely responsible for the maintenance of public security.
>
> An English Adviser was attached to the Ministry of the Interior. This official was to have no executive functions, but was to have the right to be kept fully informed of all the affairs of the Ministry, and to obtain all information he might consider necessary for the efficient discharge of his duties.[15]

Certainly, Gorst was justified in writing, even if it was with a touch of smugness, 'I may honestly say that no appointment was ever more a man's own doing than was this in my case. I had deliberately entered upon a business of my own free will and at my own initiative.'[16]

These reforms gave the Minister central control of the police while underlining the mudir's authority over them locally. Especially important was the mudir's clear-cut responsibility for public security in his province. As for the British there would now come, with their new power of being able to inspect the work of local officials, a proper ability to supervise local government. In all of this much would depend on the calibre of the Adviser. Perhaps it was knowing something of Gorst's proactive approach to government business as well as becoming aware of Cromer's growing dominance in Egypt which led Nubar to conclude despondently that November: 'There is no longer an Egyptian government.'[17]

The immediate reaction of Cromer to the installation of Gorst at the Interior was highly favourable for, despite its being early days, he told Kimberley, the Foreign Secretary: 'We are having a tolerably quiet time here. A good deal of this is due to the tact and judgement displayed by Gorst, who has, so far, been a great success. I no longer hear anything of the affairs of the Interior.'[18] Gorst was himself, however, immensely busy. In those first months at his new post his energy knew no bounds. Thus he was taking all the necessary action implementing the reform package, including the drafting of circulars, over the new arrangements for the police, and the redistribution of the work in the ministry. Then in January and February he spent 18 days touring provinces in Upper and Lower Egypt. On these tours he dined punctiliously with the mudirs after having inspected provincial offices etc, visited prisons and hospitals (these both fell in fact within the purview of the Ministry of the Interior) and made visits to various neighbouring villages.[19] In Cairo, he was taken by Coles Pasha, the police commandant and soon to be head of the Prison Administration, to see a number of police stations, and he once attended a demonstration of fire drill by the fire service. About his trip to Upper Egypt a newspaper, agitated by this unusual event, called it a 'voyage à sensation'.

All this time, Gorst had been developing his plans for reforming the omdahs. His scheme, put forward in February 1895, having been partly occasioned by the increase in rural crime, was essentially to improve the efficiency of local administration. The decree implementing the new arrangements was passed the following month by the Council of Ministers. This increased the judicial powers of the omdahs, though not as much as Gorst wished, and regulated the qualifications necessary for the posts as

well as establishing commissions for appointing and dismissing omdahs. The overall aim was to give effect to the power and influence of the omdahs while trying to ensure the best men were chosen for these important jobs.[20] Gorst was also involved in another scheme promoted by Scott, the Judicial Adviser, to improve relations between the parquet, the police and local government officials by clarifying their functions in the hope that the parties would work more closely together in the investigation of crime and in the preparation of cases for court. The Ministers agreed to the proposals made in April.

But the going for Gorst in these momentarily rather hectic days had not all been smooth. After a meeting at Nubar's house to discuss one of the local government projects, Gorst noted in his diary:

> Nubar and the Khedive are attacking me on the vague charge of 'acting as a Minister'. Neither of them dare to say this to my face but they complain behind my back.

This might have been rather serious for Gorst. His response was not untypical. He at once sought an interview with Nubar whom, as a result, he apparently got 'into a proper frame of mind', and then a day later went to see the Khedive 'so as to clear the atmosphere'. The latter visit was satisfactory and 'we parted the best of friends.'[21] It is possible that Gorst's enthusiasm, despite his normal tactful conduct, had rather run away with him and caused some offence. The episode does, though, illustrate that Gorst was always anxious to correct any wrong impressions he might have created.

The task of reorganising the Interior had caught Gorst's imagination, and he had been fired up by getting his scheme agreed and off the ground. But the prospect of ensuring the steady running of the new machinery did not appeal to him as much. He described the process as 'commonplace and uneventful'. By mid summer turning over his prospects in his mind he concluded that he had almost got to the top of the tree in Egypt at the early age of 34, and he was led on to imagine that the time might be ripe for a change of scene, say from Egypt to England. It was in fact the start of a long period when he was to feel unsettled. Very likely this feeling was connected with some frustrations he had concerning the progress of his all-consuming love affair with Romaine Turnure, to which we shall soon be turning. He now wondered whether his father, appointed by Lord Salisbury to the post of Minister of Education in July 1895, might help him, together with influential people like Cromer and

*10. Sir John Gorst, Eldon Gorst's father, Minister of Education, 1895–1902.*

Milner, to find suitable employment. He was to be disappointed, for his father had begun within a relatively short space of time to quarrel with his political colleagues and took up a position, in his own son's words, of a 'discontented outcast'.[22] Nevertheless, John Gorst senior did what he could but in these unpromising circumstances nothing came of his efforts. For a time, Jack Gorst was attracted by the idea of becoming a director of the Suez Canal Company, but nothing came of it. Then the suggestion was made that he might like to go to Siam as some kind of Finance Minister there but he was not remotely interested. The idea of going to India as Finance Minister had much more appeal and he pushed his claims for this post. But then he found that Clinton Dawkins, Palmer's assistant and himself a rising man, had more or less been promised it. So his thought of moving to another sphere had to be discarded. Gradually he realised he must bide his time in Egypt.

Gorst's remarkable rise in the Egyptian service had come at a price, for his success had not endeared him to all his colleagues. Harry Boyle at the Agency, who was given by Cromer a few years later the newly created post of Oriental Secretary, regarded Gorst as 'brilliantly clever' especially over matters of finance, but was on the other hand a 'hardened opportunist' and by no means a popular character.[23] Dawkins, who did not like Gorst, while

admitting his own relations with him were quite pleasant, wrote to Milner, describing Gorst as a:

> self-centred little cynic ... [who] has an extraordinary and rather impudent programme of his own. He believes that Cromer must go soon; that Cromer's successor must inevitably make a mess of the job, and that, if he [Gorst] has gone elsewhere meanwhile and distinguished himself he must be brought back to put things straight.[24]

In due course, Gorst became aware, perhaps for the first time, that he was not popular with his British colleagues by whom he was accused of being 'rough, arbitrary and ill-mannered' in his dealings with them. He thought this was not just for he knew that 'the principal foreigners looked upon me as one of the most courteous, if decided and resolute of my compatriots'.[25]

There was more disappointment in store for Gorst when he lost Cromer's confidence for a time, which Dawkins put down to Gorst having risen too quickly and then showing 'faults of temper and manner'.[26] This happened after Gorst and Kitchener had a serious difference of opinion just before the Egyptian army set out on its expedition to Dongola in 1896, the first phase in the reconquest of the Sudan. What exactly was the cause of the quarrel we do not know, but it was at a professional level with Kitchener, as Sirdar, against Gorst, the Interior Adviser. Kitchener referred the dispute to Cromer who, to Gorst's great chagrin, sided with Kitchener, a man with a ruthless knack of knocking down his opponents, as he was to do famously a few years later in India when he triumphed over the formidable Lord Curzon.

Gorst felt hardly done by. To his surprise and indignation he saw that Kitchener's

> misrepresentations had caused Lord C to believe that the whole trumpery business was caused by my aggressiveness. This touched me very nearly, as I have always prided myself in getting through my work here without 'incidents' and without ever quarrelling with other officials ... I was absolutely innocent of this accusation [by Kitchener] ...[27]

Gorst continued to defend his corner with vigour until he saw that this was being counter-productive with Cromer. So he was forced to put his pride in his pocket and sit tight. Cromer, he felt, was either too indolent to go

into the matter or else it was more convenient to side with Kitchener. The sense of injustice felt by Gorst lingered on and he could never again treat Kitchener as a friend. As for Kitchener, he 'loathed' Gorst,[28] but then he was never one to care for those who stood in his way, especially civilians!

Gorst was intensely analytical about himself, his prospects and behaviour. Thus he recognised his 'excessive sensitiveness' and 'despondent temperament' (his own words). He was conscientious about trying to correct his faults. So true to his psyche he deliberately set about trying to improve his manners, a task he found up-hill work. But helped by his friends his effort in this direction, or so he believed, paid off and he considered that by 1898 he had lived down his former reputation.

If 1896 had not been a very good year for Gorst, 1897 was, in his view, no better. Apart from there having been set-backs in his private life which caused him at times to be down in the dumps – one of these was the serious illness in Cairo of his sister Eva who had nearly died; another was no doubt his unpopularity among some of the British community – life at the office was not altogether happy. It was not that there was no progress to report over the Interior reforms and their implementation. On the contrary the overall incidence of crime had noticeably fallen, which could be, and was, interpreted as showing that the police and local officials were working well under the new arrangements. In Cairo, a school for training police officers had been established, and their pay and conditions improved. Also an anthropometric bureau for the identification of criminals had been set up, a development in which Gorst took a special interest. In the provinces the mudirs' position and prospects were now clearly defined, and the quality of other provincial officials had been improved. The control exercised by British inspectors under the new regime over local officials, not just those involved with police work, was proving effective. The newly defined powers of the omdahs were being used successfully. The ghaffirs had been reorganised, their numbers reduced, their pay made adequate and as a force they had become more efficient. In addition, there had been significant advances in various other branches of the Ministry of the Interior: the establishment of reformatories, the enlargement of two prisons, the more effective use of prison labour, the modernization of a lunatic asylum and improvements in the sanitary department in controlling, for example, the cholera epidemic in 1896,[29] to name some of them. All these developments had come about under Gorst's leadership and drive.

The problem for Gorst seemed to be centred on the nature of the job of Adviser at the Interior. The buck, almost, seemed to stop with him. He felt vulnerable to public criticism and brickbats. These could be of the kind

always likely to occur as a result of some fairly minor incident relating to police work or to the state of public security. Any Home Secretary, he ruefully recognised, might suffer in this way. And now after three years exposure to what he described as 'constant badgering' he decided he would like a change.[30] Consequently he talked the matter over with Cromer, who said he would help. Eventually in 1898 he asked his chief, 'in his despair', as he put it, in not being able to get away from the Interior, to allow him to return to the Ministry of Finance as an Under Secretary when Dawkins went to India. In making this request he seemed content to accept that hostile critics would say such a move was on account of his failure at the Interior.

But at the last minute, in June 1898, fate stepped in to assist Gorst, when Palmer suddenly resigned as Financial Adviser to become Governor of the National Bank of Egypt. To succeed him, there seemed to be two candidates: Dawkins and Gorst. The former, however, was already destined for promotion to a post in India, and so, to his joy and relief, Gorst got the job. He was on leave in England at the time, and, as he acknowledged, he did not therefore have to push his claims. Cromer had decided that Gorst was the man for the job, and it was one, as things turned out, he would do well. From now on, his career would progress steadily upwards – almost effortlessly so – until in a little under nine years' time he would succeed Cromer as de facto ruler of Egypt, an aim he had first thought about some eight years before.

What then is the verdict about Gorst's time at the Interior, a spell lasting a little short of four years? The general opinion of historians sympathetic to the British cause is that he made a significant contribution to the improvement and quality of local administration. The work he had done at the Interior would stand him in good stead when he subsequently became Consul-General.

CHAPTER

# 8

# ROMAINE TURNURE

Hylda, Jack Gorst's sister, arrived in Cairo in late November 1893 on her first visit to Egypt, and would stay with her brother for five months. Perhaps the best-looking of the Gorst sisters, she had a warm pleasing personality as well as possessing intelligence. In Cairo, she joined in at once in all the social and sporting activities on offer. No doubt proudly, Jack soon introduced her to Lady Cromer with whom she established a rapport, and to Princess Nazli. With her sympathetic outlook she had a gift for making friends.

Later on after she married George Hunter, an army officer who had transferred to the Egyptian Coastguard Service, she would settle down to live in Alexandria before moving to Cairo, where she would live with her husband until the outbreak of the First World War. She, as well as her sisters Eva and Gwen, would keep in touch with Khedive Abbas Hilmi, even after he had been exiled from Egypt in 1914.

She also had an enormous sense of fun and, like her brother, loved dressing up and joining in amateur dramatics. Once in Cairo, Jack and she went to a fancy dress ball dressed identically as Arab women. Another time, daringly and with the connivance of Lady Cromer, she sat next to Lord Cromer at a grand dinner disguised as and impersonating a distinguished visitor to Cairo. She then proceeded to tease the Consul-General about the things she knew he disliked. Lady Cromer could barely conceal her

amusement, but the great man, initially taken in by this escapade, was not – according to family legend – at first amused by Hylda's prank.

In an entry in his diary for 1 January 1894, Jack wrote 'was introduced to an American Mrs Turnure'. This in no way prepares us for the great love affair of Jack's life. In fact that first meeting – it was at a private dance given by General Walker, commanding British troops in Egypt – seems not to have made a strong impression on Jack. But 18 days later, again at a dance given this time by the South Wales Borderers he 'talked to a charming American – a Mrs Turnure.' He was evidently captivated by her, and called on her the following day.[1] On 24 January, he went to 'a ball at the Agency, which was a great success. Supped and danced the cotillion with Mrs Turnure. To bed at 4 a.m.' And a few days afterwards he 'dined with the Turnures and danced at the Continental [hotel] chiefly with Mrs Turnure ...' There was now no holding Jack back, for he had been swept off his feet by the beautiful young American, and consequently had to see her as often as possible. He lunched with her, walked with her, had tea with her, played piquet with her and danced with her. In February, he met her on 18 consecutive days. To begin with, there is in his diary hardly a mention of her husband, also an American, and we are left for a moment to wonder what he thought of his wife being monopolised by this persistent young Englishman.

Romaine Madeleine Stone Turnure was at this time 29 years old. She was married to Lawrence J. Turnure Jnr., three and a half years her senior, at St Paul's church, Knightsbridge in London in the summer of 1890 in a service conducted by the Bishop of New York. Both came from good families. Romaine was invariably described in society columns as a 'beauty' or a 'great belle'. She was tall with brown hair, a lovely complexion and had beautiful eyes. She was intelligent, cultured, laughed a lot and showed much devotion to her parents. Lawrence had had a gilded youth. He was good-looking, sociable, had a good singing voice, rode, played polo and a fashionable paper said he was 'the best dressed man in New York'. There he soon joined his father's firm, and then met and fell in love with Romaine, whom he would always adore. But it was almost too good to last. Sometime – and we do not know when exactly – he developed consumption. As a result he had to give up work, and he and Romaine passed most of their time in Europe moving easily between London and Paris and some of the spa towns. In the winter Lawrence enjoyed the dry climate of Egypt.

Romaine's father was Brigadier-General Roy Stone, a former veteran of the American Civil War in which he had fought at Gettysburg and had risen to be a colonel before he was 30. By profession he was a engineer who

*11. Romaine Turnure.*

specialised after the war in road-building. Later he returned voluntarily to the colours, was promoted, would serve with distinction in Puerto Rico, and became well known in both road and rail construction fields. Lawrence's father, with Huguenot forbears, was a well-known and rich New York banker with his own firm and very prominent there in social circles. Mr and Mrs Turnure had, it was reported, one of 'the finest houses in New York and a superb establishment at Lenox in Massachusetts'.[2]

In Cairo, even if his health was delicate, Lawrence continued to ride. He also shot, played golf and showed himself keen to explore up the Nile. The couple were in much demand socially and were asked out everywhere. Extracts from Jack Gorst's diary give a flavour of how matters were developing between him and Romaine. On Friday 23 January:

> I and Mrs T and the Hickox's walked about the hotel grounds and arranged places for dinner this evening. We all lunched at the hotel. M came to see me in the afternoon and was rather cross at first. Dined with the T.'s at the Gezireh hotel: 24 persons. Afterwards to a ball given in the Casino by one of the Regts. Supped with Mrs T. and took her home.

From this we note that Lawrence was happy for Romaine to go to balls without him. On 5 March:

> Mrs T. came to lunch and afterwards we sat in front of the fire and talked. Walked back with her to the Hotel and then we played piquet till 6 p.m.

On 9 March:

> In the morning Mrs T. came and we walked back to the Continental. Then drove with her to Gezireh Hotel where we met Hylda and Mr T. and lunched together. Rode. Tremendous dust storm followed by rain. To see M. dined at home. To see a ridiculous amateur performance of a stupid operetta called "Coquette". Then supped with the T.'s at the Continental.

On 16 March, Hylda went shooting with Lawrence and others, and Jack

> Drove down to Gezireh and met R [Romaine] who came to lunch. In the afternoon I took her to the museum to see the gold and jewellery just discovered ... then we had tea at her hotel.

It was always the same with Jack. In his pursuit of women he could be relentless. Hylda occasionally played golf, with Lawrence conveniently leaving the coast clear for Jack. The Gorsts, brother and sister, and the Turnures would now quite often lunch together and, as happened at least twice, they made up a quartet for the opera. It is something of a mystery how Lawrence could tolerate Jack's apparent and growing attachment to his wife.

Later on in March, the Turnures joined forces with Jack and Hylda for a week-long stay at Fayoum oasis, 60 miles south-west of Cairo, an expedition organised by Jack. George Hunter, already in love with Hylda, also went. Lawrence set out a few days before the others, adventurously beginning his journey by camel. The main party travelled by train with servants and baggage, and stayed at the Rest House in Fayoum. For recreation at the oasis, which is a very extensive one covering a huge area, there was riding, shooting and exploring. Hylda twice went out with Turnure and Hunter after wild fowl. On one of those occasions they all lunched together, and then Jack and Romaine 'rested' in the waiting-room of the railway station until it was cool enough for them to ride back to the Rest House. There were also friends staying in the oasis under canvas, their camp being described

by Jack as 'a dirty but comic spectacle'. Not to be outdone and showing his mettle Lawrence elected to camp out one night. This trip also gave Jack the opportunity to talk to the mudir, visit the hospital, school and prison, and look over a hatchery.[3] No doubt when he could tear his mind from Romaine he was thinking ahead about his plans for reforming the Interior Ministry and local administration. The expedition must have been judged a success for it was repeated the following year.

All this while, Jack continued his love affair with M almost as if he did not know Romaine, though by April he was not seeing her quite so often. M sounds as if she was a little jealous of Romaine but nevertheless she looked after Jack's dog Bacht when he, accompanied by Hylda, left Egypt on leave, hurrying in fact after the Turnures who had gone to Monte Carlo.

When the Gorsts arrived in Marseilles there was a message awaiting them from the Turnures, who suggested they should all join forces for a few days at Monte Carlo before going on together to Paris. Jack jumped at this opportunity. At Monte Carlo the Gorsts unexpectedly met Jessica Sykes who was just leaving for Paris. The Gorsts and Turnures indulged in some mild gambling and played roulette in their rooms. Jack and Hylda managed during their short visit to the Principality to get themselves invited to tea with the Princess of Monaco. And so the party moved on to Paris though this was, in Jack's words, a 'rather disagreeable journey owing to T. losing his temper';[4] this was something that happened every now and again, and once on a much later occasion Lawrence vented his spleen on the hapless Hylda. Undoubtedly Lawrence had a petulant streak in him perhaps attributable to ill-health or else he might, blowing hot and cold, have been irked by Jack's presence.

In Paris there was some sight-seeing including a visit to Versailles, and Jack took the two women out to supper, as Lawrence was unwell, before the Gorsts headed for the Channel coast. In London Jack kicked his heels around for a short while obviously waiting to hear from Romaine, to whom he had written. He had a very painful leg diagnosed as 'rheumatic gout'. Twice he saw his brother Harold, now married with a child, and then things brightened up when he had a 'wire' from Romaine in Paris to say that he could now come over. She was on her own, as Lawrence had gone to Aix presumably for a cure. Jack therefore hastened over to France and spent a week with Romaine though staying at a different hotel. They spent most of their time together. Then one day Jack found Romaine 'low and depressed' because a wire had arrived for her from Lawrence saying 'he was not at all well and might want R to come to Aix at once'.[5] Obviously, Romaine did not want to go to her husband and was very relieved when

another wire from him came the same day to say she might go to England. At once she became more cheerful.

And so the pair of them travelled to London having a compartment to themselves in the train to Calais. On the boat Jack read aloud to Romaine to take her mind off the rough crossing. At their destination he left her in Clarges Street with her American friend, Mrs Hickox. In a very busy Gorstian week – meetings, plays and doing things with Romaine – undoubtedly the most significant event was Jack's visit to the Temple Library to look up American divorce laws.[6] For the first time in his life, Jack had met a woman whom he really wanted to marry; it was his misfortune that she was already married. There can be little doubt that Romaine at this stage returned the feelings Jack had for her, though nowhere does Jack confirm this for us. It is plain that she would hardly have summoned him to Paris unless she was becoming seriously attached to him. Given this situation did Jack and Romaine ever discuss the possibility of her getting a divorce? Jack was impulsive and so much in love that he would almost certainly have raised this issue with her. And if he did, what then? She might have had scruples about divorce, and her response would have also depended of course on how tied or loyal she felt to her husband. A practical factor which must have loomed large for them both was Lawrence's health and what sort of expectation of life he had. Divorce, crudely, might not have been necessary. The probability is – and we put it no higher – that either about now or in due course Jack would at least have tried to extract from Romaine a promise that in the event of Lawrence's death she would marry him. From the story, as we know it and as it unfolds, while she may have led Jack on to hope for this outcome, she never quite committed herself to this course.

The spell was broken for Jack when Romaine had to return to Paris on 1 June to rejoin her husband there; Jack, showing much devotion, escorted her as far as Boulogne. Now it was his turn to feel 'very low and miserable'. He remembered Romaine's birthday on 5 June, and both he and Hylda sent her a wire. Hylda could hardly have been unaware of Jack's passion for Romaine, and she may well have been her brother's confidante. Hylda could be quite unconventional, and it is likely she sympathised with him in his predicament. Jack though did not mope for long – this was never his practice – and consoled himself in London with his woman friend, Jenny Konstam, once passing a pleasant evening with her until as late as 1 a.m. But within weeks he was reunited with the Turnures for a few days in France, this time meeting Romaine and Lawrence at La Bourboule, a well-known spa town in the Auvergne, where they all stayed at the Hotel

*12. Hylda Hunter, Eldon Gorst's sister, and her elder son.*

de Paris. Without occasioning any displeasure from Lawrence – as usual we can not quite understand his apparently compliant attitude to the relationship between his wife and Jack – Jack was able once to pass 'most of the day with R', and to drive and walk about in the woods with her. But his leave was at an end and on 7 July he had to start back for Egypt and prepare himself for his stint as acting Financial Adviser and for readying himself for his assault on the Ministry of the Interior, which we discussed in the last chapter. Unusually, his diary entries all through the Egyptian summer have virtually no references to women friends. And for instance he did not see M until early November, a gap of six months since his last meeting with her.

The Turnures returned to Egypt that autumn and stayed in Cairo until the following spring. When Hylda arrived in November she went to stay with the Turnures in a comfortable house they had taken. Jack saw Romaine as much as before, but their relationship was not always a smooth one. Once she went to tea with Jack, and this produced his comment that it was an 'unsatisfactory' visit. A few weeks later he had a dispute with her, but made his peace the next day. One can only speculate that Jack was longing for her to make up her mind about their future. For the most part hardly a day would pass when he did not see Romaine except when he was on tour

in the provinces. Pleased with his promotion he took her to see his office in the Ministry of the Interior. Quite frequently she would come to lunch or tea on her own – Lawrence did not seem to mind. Then, towards the end of February, Jack and probably Hylda went to see a play, an amateur production, at the theatre. According to the diary:

> Stone [Romaine's brother] and R joined us there. R came in to supper afterwards but was fetched home rather unceremoniously by her brother.

Some weeks later:

> R came back to supper and we had a serious talk over the situation as a certain person has shown signs of becoming tiresome.[7]

This was probably a reference to Romaine's brother Richmond – it is perhaps less likely to have been to Lawrence, who seems to have acknowledged the almost constant presence of Jack Gorst in his life. Richmond does not re-enter our story for he died of pneumonia the following year.

Towards the end of March in 1895 Jessica Sykes suddenly arrived in Cairo, unexpectedly as far as Jack was concerned, news of her arrival being conveyed to him by M. Whether this accounted for Romaine being 'rather disagreeable without reason' that very same day we cannot say. But Jack asked Jessica to lunch with the Schaefers and others, though not the Turnures. And two days later he went to a dinner party at which Jessica was present at Shepherds Hotel. This gave him a bad case of 'neuralgia', brought on one might impishly suggest by the complications of his love life, past and present! Then disaster struck, for Jessica got 'disgracefully drunk' while dining, according to Jack, at the Gezireh Palace hotel.[8] There is another account of this unhappy occasion which described how Jessica, having reached the maudlin stage, 'stood up, swayed for a moment, and then fell full length on the floor where she lay unconscious ... She had to be carried away, and left Cairo shortly afterwards.'[9] Jack in commenting in his diary on this episode wrote that, when Jessica came to see him the following morning, he received her 'very coldly and soon got rid of her'. Later, Jack reflected that he saw no sign of Jessica's 'terrible failing' early in their acquaintance but gradually had to admit that popular rumour had been right.[10] They still went on seeing each other periodically until she dealt him a wounding blow many years on when he was Consul-General.

In early May, Romaine departed for Europe. Lawrence was left on his own for a while and would see Jack from time to time, some evenings

playing poker with him after dinner. As for Jack he still saw M and dined once with Alonzo Money, the British Commissioner on the Caisse; the other guests included Cromer and the evergreen Princess Nazli. Money was a man of slightly unusual views, for he believed the British were emasculating the Egyptian governing class and weakening whatever power of self-government existed in the country;[11] Cromer was emphatically not of this view and was dismissive of Money's political opinions. Jack was now learning Turkish, considering that Constantinople would soon be the centre of attention. For his views on the thorny subject of Egyptian self-government we shall have to wait until later chapters.

That summer of 1895 on his leave at home Jack appeared to be forever shuttling between London, Paris and Normandy. He was anxious to divide his time between his family, his career and London interests and above all Romaine. As a start he met Romaine and her mother in London in July. After a frenetic kind of week in which he took Romaine and Hylda to Battersea Park to see 'the rank and fashion' on bicycles, he and Romaine went off to Paris where they seemed inseparable. Within the space of a week she had, however, been obliged to leave for Lucerne to meet Lawrence. For Jack, there followed another interlude in England, during which he took the opportunity of visiting his uncle Edward at Castle Combe. When not fishing there for trout, a pastime he enjoyed, he spent much of his time bicycling round the Wiltshire countryside with his youngest and pretty sister, Gwen. They visited Lacock Abbey and various churches with members of the local archaeological society. By late August he was back in France with the Turnures. They took rooms in the comfortable Hotel de France in Fontainebleau and the three of them had an apparently highly agreeable time, with Lawrence and Jack often riding out bicycling together in the forest. Twice Jack commented in his diary: 'delightful day'. Then, back in Paris, Lawrence proceeded to put a blight on their happy times by being 'very offensive' to Jack who went off to dine alone in a café in an 'unhappy frame of mind'.[12] The next day, Romaine went to see him presumably to cheer him up before his departure for Normandy. There he spent ten days on holiday bicycling with his energetic father, now Minister of Education in Lord Salisbury's new government, and his sister Eva (sometimes known as Dolly in the family).

After Normandy, Jack was yet again in Paris, this time just for a few days. Lawrence had been ill, but 'inconveniently', as Jack put it, had got suddenly well again. But soon Lawrence was yet again 'confined to his bed with an attack of fever', and this turn of events allowed Jack to drive about with Romaine, who later came to see him at his hotel after he had given lunch

to Nubar, then still Premier of Egypt. It was now time for him to return to London where he was exploring the possibility of becoming a director of the Suez Canal Company. At this moment he felt low and uneasy worrying about Romaine partly because he had received no letter from her. Then she sent him a wire not to come to Paris.[13] This he ignored, and for the umpteenth time that summer he travelled to Paris – in any case his way back to Egypt lay through that city. Suffering from a heavy cold, Romaine met Jack on his arrival at his hotel. To his delight – and even surprise – he found that the Turnures had decided to go by the first available ship to Egypt. On the train journey to Marseilles, Lawrence himself was not well and very 'grumbling'.

That autumn, during his first weeks in Egypt, Jack was busy and concerned with an outbreak of cholera, and visited the delta to stir the mudirs into vigorous action. In Cairo, Jack saw Romaine, as usual, practically every day until she fell ill and was ordered to bed by her doctor for a couple of days.[14] In fact, she was pregnant and must have been suffering from morning sickness, which seemed to afflict her for some weeks. There is little doubt that the father of the unborn child was Jack, though no mention or hint of this is made in his diaries. When Hylda returned to Cairo, Jack took her and the Turnures to the bazaars one December afternoon. Then he drove his sister 'about in the cart in order to discharge my duty as chaperon in an efficient manner'. Jack was as busy and sociable as ever. Let the last entry in the diary on New Year's Eve speak for itself. After working at the Interior in the morning and then giving Nubar, Cromer and others lunch:

> To some children's tableaux vivants at the Sandwiths. R came to tea. After dinner with R to the opera to see 'Le Surprise de Divorce'. Then to a New Year Eve party at the Continental given by Stanley. Later to a Bohemian party given by Sinadino in his *dahabieh* [houseboat].

Sandwith was a well-known doctor and Stanley was a diplomat at the Agency. Sinadino was Jack's theatrical friend.

There is no surviving diary for 1896 and so our knowledge of Jack's social and private life is almost a blank. But for him that year there was one major event. On 4 June, in London, Romaine gave birth to a daughter, Margaret Richmond, known in her family as Marga. Jack was made a godfather. One other family event was Hylda's marriage to George Hunter.

The Turnures again came to Egypt for the winter of 1896–1897, though Romaine of course did not bring her baby. Jack's sister Eva also paid her first

visit to the country. She was a sweet-looking young woman and musical. She was also a fine horsewoman. Probably she did not have her sister Hylda's exciting personality, but, nevertheless, it is surprising she never married. There was a certain pioneering spirit of adventure about her, for during the Balkan Wars she gamely went to nurse the sick and wounded, and reputedly drove an ambulance. Eva was certainly gutsy and was not in the least put off Egypt when in March she fell dangerously ill with what was described as 'congestion of the brain'. For a time she was unconscious and her doctor had almost lost hope. Jack, fearfully concerned, urgently sent for Hylda to come to Cairo from Alexandria. But Eva was resilient and recovered well.

Judging by his diary, Jack's relationship with Romaine was still a close one in the early months of 1897. Yet between them there must have been occasional tensions because we find Jack writing baldly in February: 'R came to lunch and we had a very necessary but very painful explanation'.[15] This was followed two days after by a reconciliation. Was Jack jealous because someone else had been perhaps looking in Romaine's direction? After all, she was a very attractive young woman, who would not have been short of admirers. Whatever the explanation we find a bit later Jack writing that Romaine was 'again in an impossible mood'. In April, the Turnures sailed away from Egypt and the next month Jack decided to set up with two partners a racing stable. He would derive in the years ahead a lot of pleasure from this new interest.

About this time, there appeared on the Cairo social scene a couple called Bird. He was American, possibly an ex-army officer, and she was Mattie, half American and half Armenian; she was musical and involved in soirées. The Turnures and Gorst came to know the Birds well, and Mattie makes further appearances in Jack Gorst's story.[16]

Soon after arriving in London for his summer leave, Jack heard from the Turnures, who invited him to go over to the USA for a holiday. He at once accepted, and sailed from Liverpool on 31 July 1897, on the Cunard liner SS *Etruria*. He had a smooth passage, won £14 at piquet during the voyage and reached New York in seven days, a record passage for the ship. He lost no time in travelling up to Bar Harbour in Maine where he found the Turnure family 'all flourishing', staying in a hotel and having a sociable time as usual. The New York Yacht Squadron was at Bar Harbour on its annual cruise and Jack was taken sailing to see the sights. He and Romaine did many things together: going to a masked ball, attending a charity performance and dance, rowing across Eagle Lake, having tea in the woods, enjoying a moonlight drive, listening to good music at the Malvern Hotel,

to name some of them. Plans to sight-see further afield were frustrated when Lawrence had a bad attack of fever.

At the end of August, their time in Maine over, they all went to Lenox in Massachusetts going via Boston where Lawrence, now recovered, showed Jack round Harvard. A few days later, Lawrence, Jack and at the last minute Romaine, for she had had a bad cold, left Lenox for a long trip. First they went north to Montreal and then by river boat along the St Lawrence river to Toronto. Next on the itinerary, via the Niagara Falls, was Buffalo, and then Cleveland, where they stayed with Mrs Hickox who lived in considerable luxury, a matter pleasing to Jack, now rather tired of hotels. Then they all went on to Chicago and there saw for an undisclosed reason the Pullman Car company works. Lawrence was again unwell which delayed their return to Lenox. But once back there at the family base Jack met various Turnure relatives, and also went with Lawrence to be presented to President William McKinley who was on a visit locally; four years later he was assassinated by an anarchist. Jack spent his last few days in the USA in New York, meeting while there Romaine's parents.[17] This time Jack crossed the Atlantic in the White Star liner *Majestic*, docking in Liverpool on 6 October.

Jack's diary for the summer of 1897 records in some detail the main events of his trip to the USA, and the very friendly reception he had from the Turnures and their friends and relatives. But there is one curious absence from its pages. Not once does Jack refer to Marga. The various people he met on his visit presumably assumed that Jack was just a good friend of the Turnures. Therefore the real relationship between him and Romaine is likely to have remained a secret, though one to which Lawrence could hardly not have been a party. Throughout Jack's long love affair with Romaine, Lawrence seems to have been resigned to the state of affairs between them, and appears not to have borne Jack any real ill-will despite his occasional petulant outbursts. Furthermore and with regard to Marga he may well have known that she could not have been his child, although he might have wished to keep up the pretence that she was. Jack did not see Romaine again that year for only Lawrence came to Egypt for the winter of 1897–1898, when on arrival in Cairo he stayed a week with Jack. Writing later about the year 1897 Jack states that his:

> affections were wounded in their tenderest spot in an absolutely unexpected manner, and I had to endure the harshest treatment from the quarter from which I least expected it. By patience and perseverance I won in the end but the effort soured my character

> and removed much of the pleasure of living. The crisis caused me to make a serious but futile effort to put matters permanently on a more satisfactory basis. I spent a happy holiday in America but nevertheless left with a feeling of insecurity which has cast a long shadow over my hopes for the future.[18]

About the 'crisis' we can throw no direct light but he must surely have been referring to a crisis with Romaine, possibly to what happened in February that year when there was a need for a 'painful explanation', as we have mentioned, and that someone else, a rival, may have come on the scene.

For the first time in four years, Jack had to endure the early months of the new year, 1898, without the presence in Cairo of Romaine. But he did not forget her and, after his portrait had been painted by Ralli, he sent it to her, in some ways a curious gesture. At Sinadino's he enjoyed an entertainment of amateur theatricals and tableaux vivants in which both Hylda and Eva took part. It was an elaborate affair with an orchestra of twelve and a stage with footlights.[19] Then, in March, Jack went up the Nile to Luxor, where he was joined by his old friends the Garstins. A certain Mary Rees, the married daughter of General Dormer, formerly commanding British troops in Egypt, was also of the party. Jack had been seeing a certain amount of Mary, an attractive young woman with whom he sometimes went bicycling (she was nothing to do with Madame Rees). Suddenly at Assiout, Mary received a wire from her husband in India ordering her peremptorily 'to return to India at once without further explanation'.[20] This put a damper on things. Perhaps Mary's husband had heard that his wife was seeing too much of Jack. Anyhow within a short time Mary left, as commanded, for India. There were two other notable events for Jack that spring. One was a visit to Egypt, her first, by his mother, principally to attend Con's wedding to St John Clarkson, an Army Officer, and the second a short and friendly holiday Jack spent in Cyprus with Lawrence Turnure. They were able to visit Nicosia and some of the castles despite Lawrence at one moment falling victim to his usual ill-health.

That summer, Jack went to see the Turnures and little Marga, now two years old, in their Paris apartment. That visit lasted some eleven days, but it was not always a happy one. One day, he drove with Romaine in the Bois de Boulogne and commented it was 'a sad afternoon'. On another later visit to Paris, he found Mattie Bird with the Turnures. He took Mattie out to dinner, and Romaine was to have joined them but was not allowed to, presumably by Lawrence. The next day, as if there had been much dissension around, he wrote 'peace restored';[21] we do not know if this was

because of Jack's presence or Mattie's, or was Lawrence just being difficult? In August, they all, including Mattie, went to the seaside at Houlgate on the Channel coast. Bicycling and bathing were the main activities though no one was successful in enticing Marga to paddle. Then a Cairo friend, Max Müller, turned up and took Mattie, who obviously was not wanted, 'off their hands'.[22] Max and Mattie left for London a few days later. (Where Mattie's husband was we do not know.) There had at least been some good news for Jack from London, as his appointment as Financial Adviser to the Egyptian government had come through. After no fewer than three weeks in Normandy he left to take up the reins in Egypt.

According to Jack's autobiographical notes, he had gone through another 'crisis' that summer which had caused him 'great anxiety and perturbation of mind'. The crisis clearly concerned Romaine. But

> with great tact I averted – I hope removed altogether – the danger of a catastrophe which would have wrecked my happiness for years, and I won again for the second time affections which were on the point of concentrating themselves elsewhere. At the same time I have realised on how frail a foundation my hopes for the future are founded.

He continued with a wry comment on the fickleness of women, and lamented that the 'wisest of us are ruled by the heart and not the head'.[23]

The Turnures came to Egypt to spend the winter of 1898–1899 there, but arrived at separate times: Lawrence came in October, and Romaine, with Marga too, a month later, her first visit to Egypt for 18 months. The way husband and wife were often apart, sometimes for quite long periods, does perhaps suggest that there were strains in their marriage and that being apart was the best way for them.

To run a little ahead of the story of Jack's career for a moment, he and Romaine were as frequently together in the early part of 1899 as they had been in previous years. The diary entry for 17 February is a fairly typical one:

> Rode to [illegible]. To the Agency to a meeting with Cecil Rhodes. To see R. In the afternoon walked with R at Gizeh. Dined with the A. Zervoudakis [Greek friends] at Savoy and to the opera: Romeo and Juliet. R came to supper.

So Jack saw Romaine on three separate times in one day. He was surely still in love with her.

In mid April, Romaine brought Marga to see Jack for half an hour and to say goodbye.[24] The next day, they left Cairo for Europe, leaving Lawrence to follow. That summer, Jack was busy with his new work and his horses; he had bought some while earlier 'Cedar' from the Khedive for £160. The horse, a thoroughbred, turned out to be one of the finest racehorses in Egypt, and won many races for Jack.

Jack now steeled himself for what would be a kind of showdown with Romaine. Presumably, he felt he had to know where he stood. On 6 July he arrived, on leave, in Paris, and that very day had 'the usual unsatisfactory interview with R'. The word 'usual' is indicative. The next evening he dined with his friend Camille Petit. On 8 July he played in the morning with Marga, and dined with the Turnures. The next day, a fateful one, he walked with Romaine in the Bois de Boulogne and 'came to a decision about the future'.[25] In the evening, he took a long walk by himself and had no dinner. The truth was that Romaine had lost her affection for Jack for her heart had been won by another. As he later was to write:

> The long-threatened catastrophe, upsetting the dearest hopes of many years, at last occurred, and this time without even a faint prospect of saving anything from the wreck. After this lapse of time I am able to contemplate it with resignation and philosophy though not with satisfaction, but at the moment the blow was the hardest I have had to support.[26]

For a sensitive man like Jack, and one who felt an overwhelming commitment to Romaine – even if this was sometimes belied by his philandering – this must indeed have been a 'catastrophe'. Nevertheless, the fact is for the next three years, that is until Lawrence's death, he would continue to hope that one day, even against the odds, his ship would come home.

By a change of scene, Jack forced himself to take his mind off what had happened and, in his words, 'to pull myself out of the slough of despond'. But it took time. For the present he indulged in a frenetic round of visiting and meeting people prior to going off to Bayreuth to see Wagner's 'Parsifal' and the 'Meistersingers'.[27] Afterwards he went bicycling with his family in the Lake District and then went off for three weeks to join friends in Austria where he mainly spent his time walking and fishing. He had much to contemplate.

CHAPTER

# 9

# FINANCIAL ADVISER

## A SUMMIT ACHIEVED

Jack Gorst was just past his 37th birthday in August 1898 when he became Financial Adviser to the Egyptian government. He had now obtained for himself a powerful place in the hierarchy of government; indeed, he was ranked second to the Consul-General himself. For some time he had been regarded as possessing marked ability. For instance in March 1895 Jack's colleague Dawkins had written to Milner asking what the position would be in England, and internationally, if the Khedive Abbas Hilmi were to be deposed by the British. Milner replied that the public at home was disenchanted by the Khedive after the crises of 1893 and 1894, and would accept such action provided there was a good pretext for it. He then interestingly added – after making the point that he was not advocating a *coup d'état* – that a provisional government might be formed either of a compliant native ministry or of an English 'ministry of affairs'. If the latter it could be under Palmer, and might consist of Kitchener, Scott, Garstin, Gorst and Dawkins.[1] Gorst was, therefore, considered at the early age of 33, by someone carrying weight, as being of ministerial calibre.

As we have seen, Gorst's character was not without its flaws. The historian P.G. Elgood, an Army officer who had become an inspector in the Ministry of the Interior and had a generally good opinion of Gorst, admitted that his 'abrupt habit of speech' offended some,[2] while Arthur Weigall, once Inspector-General of Antiquities to the Egyptian government, wrote that

Gorst was always open to criticism on account of his manners which were 'never gracious or engaging'.[3] A constant problem Gorst had was that his brain worked much faster than most people's and that he could not always conceal his impatience when others were slow to see the point.

Yet Gorst could charm the ladies. In their company he was often popular and successful, sometimes perhaps feeling more comfortable with them than with some men. But he was no angel and there was a darker side to his philandering. Once he had been worried – unnecessarily as it turned out – that he had contracted venereal disease presumably as a result of visiting the brothels of Cairo. Then Boyle of the Agency described how one day Gorst had 'knocked me up at 3 a.m. to tell me that he had just had a very disagreeable episode with an injured husband', and asking advice as to what he should do to prevent Cromer from hearing about this. But Boyle refused to meddle,[4] and we must presume that Cromer remained in ignorance of the escapade. Not all women liked Gorst. An example was Lord Edward Cecil's wife Violet, who many years later, after her husband's death, married Milner. Violet did not take to Gorst considering him 'cynical' and 'a cad with women', even if she thought him to be 'the cleverest man in the Egyptian Service'.[5] Gorst had evidently got off to a bad start with her and with his penchant for flirting and more with married women we might guess he made an unwarranted and unacceptable pass at her.

Of course Cromer will have known of Gorst's reputation, and his affairs with Jessica Sykes and Romaine Turnure could hardly have been kept secret in Cairo. Nonetheless Cromer himself could not be too stuffy, for he had had a fling as a young unmarried soldier in Corfu when he had an illegitimate daughter probably by a local woman.[6] Nevertheless, Cromer thought he would take the opportunity occasioned by Gorst's new appointment of giving his subordinate some fatherly advice. Gorst tells how his chief

> read me a little homily on my future conduct. The two points he criticised were my relations with the fair sex which apparently were too conciliatory, and my own sex which were not conciliatory enough. The former defect, if it is a defect, is not, I fear, to be changed. The latter I had already taken in hand, and at last began to feel that I have really effected good progress.[7]

Cromer was referring to Gorst's relations with the expatriate community. Equally important, if not more, were his relations with the Egyptians. Was his attitude to them, like Cromer's, paternalistic, or was it more progressive? Certainly, Gorst prided himself in having good relations

with the people he was helping to govern. He had taken the trouble to get to know the upper classes, men like Boutros Ghali, Tigrane and Boghos Nubar, the former Premier's son, and then he met intellectuals at Princess Nazli's salon, although he does not give us anywhere his impressions of this section of Egyptian society. In addition he had worked for eight years in the Ministries of Finance and the Interior with a large number of Egyptian civil servants of varying grades – in this he differed somewhat from Cromer who lived more and more in an ivory tower at the Agency – and so could form a considered opinion of the Egyptian's nature and capacity.

Happily an article Gorst wrote, entitled 'The Oriental Character' and published in 1899, usefully throws some light on his general thinking on this subject. By 'Oriental', and he sometimes used in the alternative the word 'Eastern', he seemed to mean all those people living in the Middle East, plus those to whom he gave the generic term 'Arabs' and 'Indians', and including of course Egyptians, concerning whom the main thrust of the article was directed. While analysing certain characteristics of the average Egyptian, as he perceived these to be, such as passive endurance, submission to authority and a natural conservatism, he considered the Egyptian to be 'easy to govern in the sense of maintaining outward order and obedience' provided there was a display of sufficient force. This was notwithstanding the frequent and vindictive family vendettas found in rural areas of Egypt often resulting in violence and murder. Moreover, he believed the Egyptian Muslim, a normally tolerant person, was not averse to being ruled by a Christian power provided no attempt was made at proselytism.

Gorst's interest as an administrator was especially focused on the way the Egyptian performed as an official. Here his main characteristic, in Gorst's view, was his 'extreme dread' of taking responsibility. Thus he cited the way the minister would take refuge behind the head of department, the head of department behind the section chief and so on down the scale until the harmless clerk at the bottom of the pile was reached, a man whose participation might have been limited to merely copying out the order or document being complained of. These were practices, Gorst pointed out, that the British sought to change but old habits died hard. Gorst was clearly fascinated by the 'Eastern' as opposed to the 'Western' mind, finding the former to be quick and adroit. But, critically, he thought it could lack a sense of proportion, often fixing on minor points to the exclusion of the bigger issues and thus leading to the making of a defective judgement. Yet he admired the capacity for detail exhibited by the Oriental whereby all possible arguments in favour of or against a particular thesis could be displayed.

Expressing at the same time disappointment, Gorst concluded that the attempt by the British to reform the administration of Egypt so as to place the Egyptians as soon as possible in a position to govern themselves, had so far failed, despite what he described as the 'very liberal constitution' introduced by the British. Nor was there very much progress to report in fields like education and local government. The improvement in the material condition of the people served, he thought, to postpone rather than accelerate the time when they might be ready for self-government. Still pessimistic, he felt that it was doubtful if efforts to instil a 'public spirit in the hearts of a subject race' would in the long run be successful. But the experiment, he insisted, should be persevered with if only to fulfil a duty to those under British rule. These words and sentiments appeared before, for example, Mustafa Kamil's newspaper had been established and had become something of a rallying point for a new wave of nationalist feeling. He ended his article:

> It must not, however, be forgotten that the Eastern races had a start of many centuries over the Western in spite of which they have failed in working out their own salvation. They enjoyed a comparatively high state of civilisation at a time when the ancestors of modern Europe were wild savages. If with these initial advantages they have been unable in the past to develop the qualities by which communities succeed in the struggle for existence, there does not seem much probability of their developing them hereafter by their own unaided exertions. In that case it is surely in their best interests that the successful races should lend them a helping hand, even if that hand cannot be withdrawn, and should give them the opportunity of sharing in the material blessings which the peoples of Europe have earned by the labour and suffering of many centuries.[8]

To our ears a century later, Gorst's somewhat patronising and superior manner strikes a discordant note. Yet he was a man of his time and this was how many Victorian administrators viewed the world. As we shall see, Gorst, a few years on and with new responsibilities, approached his work in Egypt in a liberal and more optimistic frame of mind.

What precisely were the functions of the Financial Adviser, the man whom Cromer – and he should have known – had stated was 'the most important British official in Egypt' and Milner 'the corner-stone of the English influence inside the Egyptian Administration'? In true pragmatic British style no one at the time attempted to define them. The Financial

Adviser was present at all meetings of the Council of Ministers, yet he had no executive role. Broadly speaking his job was to 'advise on all important financial matters without though unduly encroaching on the prerogatives' of the Premier.[9] At one stage, the British government had laid it down that no firm decision should be taken without the consent of the Financial Adviser, an interpretation of his role never called into question by the Egyptians. Undoubtedly he had an enviable foot in both camps so to say. While he was able, as required, to guide ministers on any matter including ones not involving finance, he could at the same time keep the Consul-General informed of what was going on among ministers and how the government seemed to be performing. Gorst, the fourth incumbent in the post, gave his own views of his new position:

> The Financial Adviser can be practically the Prime Minister of the country with Lord Cromer as a very easy-going Sovereign when once his confidence is attained. Within three months of my taking over my new office I may say without boasting that I had quite regained all the confidence he formerly reposed in me when I worked directly under his orders and which, not altogether by my own fault, had been oozing away during the last few years. The daily intercourse necessitated by my new duties and constant opportunities I enjoy of making myself useful and indispensable relieve me of all apprehensions on this score in the future.[10]

It might appear that in writing these lines Gorst was showing himself to be overconfident. But this was not so, and Owen has commented that Cromer found in Gorst 'an admirable adjutant'.[11] The evidence points to Gorst having served as Financial Adviser for five and a half years with great competence.

Not wishing his work at the Ministry of the Interior to be undone, Gorst secured the appointment of Percy Machell, an ex-soldier who was Director-General of the Egyptian Coastguard Service, as his successor there; Machell was to be later on Best Man at Gorst's wedding. But eventually Gorst decided, when Consul-General, that Machell was not in harmony with the new outlook being demanded and he was obliged to sack him, a disagreeable task to perform. Machell an ever loyal patriot would join up in 1914 and was killed aged 52 on the first day of the Somme commanding a battalion he had helped to raise. In the meantime Machell's place in the Coastguards went to George Hunter. Gorst was ready to help members of his extended family but always provided they had ability.

It was fortunate for Gorst that when he took over the reins from Palmer, Egypt was experiencing a rising tide of economic prosperity which would last for not far short of another decade. Cromer's prescription for Egyptian financial recovery from the difficult early days of the British occupation had been based on low taxation, strong fiscal management and expenditure on a carefully considered programme of public works.[12] His remedies had proved highly efficacious and in the 1890s, with confidence in Egypt restored in Europe, foreign capital began increasingly to flow back into the country, especially for the development of new railways, land reclamation and irrigation purposes. In 1897, £E11.9 million out of a total of £E13.9 million invested in Egyptian companies was foreign owned. By 1902, the figure had risen to £E24.6 million out of £E26.3 million. Between 1900 and 1907, no fewer than 160 new companies were formed in Egypt.[13] French and British investors, and to a lesser extent Belgian, were predominant.

The major improvement in the economy took place in the agriculture sector. As a result of hydraulic reforms instituted by British engineers, the amount of land under cultivation increased from 6,350,000 *fedans* (one fedan = approximately one acre) in 1893 to 7,620,000 fedans in 1914.[14] Thus was the production of Egyptian cotton – recognised throughout the world for its high quality – boosted. In fact the crop under cultivation more than doubled in the period between 1885 and 1910, its total value at the end of that period being £E35,667,000, which was an increase of nearly 180 per cent over 25 years.[15] The production of corn and for a time sugar cane also significantly increased during this time. The effect of this surge of prosperity was to increase the wealth, and contentment, of farmers. And for Gorst, who had to balance the books, the booming economy meant that the revenue available for the Treasury was steadily increasing from year to year.

Since the crises in the first two years of Abbas Hilmi's reign there had been no dramatic political developments in Egypt. Premier Nubar had broken his ankle towards the end of 1894 and had had a long convalescence. But he was by then tired of office and resigned, giving way to the pro-British Mustafa Fahmi Pasha, an elegant Turk with a weakness for fine shirts obtained from London. He got on well with Cromer and Gorst and would serve until 1908. He has been described as honest and hard-working, but happier obeying rather than giving orders. Rather unkindly but perhaps not so inaccurately his stint in office would be dubbed by some as 'the Ministry of Dummies'.[16]

On 3 September 1898, Gorst's first day at the Ministry of Finance as, effectively, its head, news came through in the evening of the massive

defeat in the Sudan of the forces of the Khalifa Abdullahi (the Mahdi's successor) at the hands of Kitchener's Anglo-Egyptian army at the battle of Omdurman fought the previous day. The conquest of the Sudan, Gorst knew, would be felt at once in his ministry with urgent demands being made for money with which to rebuild the country. Indeed the British did not let the grass grow under their feet, and within a week Gorst was in discussions about extending the railway south of Atbara to Khartoum, for the building of which Gorst, to his delight, was able to obtain a big advance from the *Caisse*. At Finance, he got off, he believed, to a good start:

> ... I at once placed the office on a higher footing than in Palmer's time and swept away all the undesirable and dubious financial arrangements by which he added to his income and which had been adversely criticised.[17]

Opposite this passage in his autobiographical notes, Gorst had annotated the words 'the F.A. should like Caesar's wife be above suspicion'.

An early major task to be undertaken by Gorst was the preparation of the annual budget, normally to be delivered to the Council of Ministers in November. But we will postpone our commentary on this until the next chapter and turn our attention to a matter crossing his desk at an earlier stage concerning the important Egyptian cotton industry. A number of British businessmen had decided in 1898 to set up a textile factory in Egypt and accordingly registered a company, Egyptian Cotton Mills Ltd (ECM). This business would automatically be competing with the Lancashire cotton factories which imported Egyptian cotton for the manufacture of their products. When their finished goods were imported to Egypt they attracted a duty of eight per cent, which was a useful source of revenue for the Egyptian Treasury. Cromer was concerned that if factories in Egypt were producing cotton goods for local consumers then imports from England of finished articles would decline with a consequent loss of revenue for Egypt. Gorst was, therefore, required to tell the British consortium, in response to the plans it was making, that no assurance could be given that an excise duty would not be imposed on its finished goods. ECM ignored this warning, and proceeded with its plans. Subsequently, Cromer, through Gorst, had a decree issued levying the threatened eight per cent tax on ECM's manufactured cotton goods. The consortium next took a case to the Mixed Tribunals arguing that such an imposition was a violation of its rights under the Capitulations, and won. The government appealed, and surprisingly to many, though not to Cromer and Gorst, the

appeal court overturned the lower court's decision. The ECM continued with its plans but had to incur the duty imposed on its goods. The business did not prosper and had to be wound up so it was unable to benefit some years later when Gorst, by then promoted, suspended the duty.[18]

There were in 1898 two great projects for which the Egyptian Treasury had to find large sums of money. The first was the building of the mighty Aswan dam and reservoir, and the second was for the campaign to reconquer the Sudan. William Willcocks, the hydraulics engineer, had reported in 1894 that the best site for a dam was at Aswan. Cromer was keen on the project seeing at once how it would bring great benefits to Egyptian agriculture. When the British government in effect forced Cromer in 1896 to begin his campaign to reconquer the Sudan earlier than expected his plans for the dam seemed threatened. To finance the campaign he looked for help to the *Caisse* which at first agreed to loan the Egyptian government £800,000. But then the awkward French and Russian Commissioners intervened and, disagreeing about the loan, sued Egypt for that sum in the Mixed Tribunals. When they won their case the money had to be repaid to the *Caisse*. In these circumstances Cromer turned to the British government who agreed to advance a loan for the same sum at a low rate of interest (afterwards the British in a fit of generosity decided to treat the loan as a grant). As for the dam the British had not been so helpful when approached, refusing Cromer's request for a £2 million grant or loan towards the cost of building it. He, therefore, had to go to the private sector and notably to the millionaire financier Sir Ernest Cassel, friend of the Prince of Wales, and an influential man with very wide business interests as well as being a winter visitor to Cairo for health reasons. Gorst would in the course of the next few years get to know Cassel well, making it his business to have good relations with him, as a result of which Cassel would help Gorst in his career.

In due course a deal was struck whereby Cassel provided a loan for the building of the dam by Aird and Co., the London engineering firm, on condition that the loan was to be repaid over 30 years. Cassel had also become involved that year in another important development, one which had, indirectly, been responsible for Gorst's elevation to Financial Adviser. This was the creation of the National Bank of Egypt, for which exercise Cassel had provided much of the initial capital needed. The Bank was to act as the government's treasurer, and was empowered also to issue banknotes.[19]

Cassel had not become closely involved in the financing of various projects in Egypt without picking up some lucrative concessions from the

Egyptian government. For instance he had acquired in 1898 some of the remaining properties in the Daira Estates, which comprised government-owned land originally in the hands of Khedive Ismail, together with some other industrial assets, and pledged by the government towards the payment of the Egyptian Debt. The government was in favour of selling off these Estates – advantageously so they hoped – to reduce the Debt. In time Cromer became concerned about the profits being made by Cassel, and in the following year Gorst had a hand in stopping the financier from acquiring interests in the Domaine Estates (also government land once owned by Ismail). Subsequently, Cromer and Gorst rejected various proposals to privatise the railways.[20]

After Christmas in 1898, Gorst accompanied Cromer and his two sons Rowland and Windham aged 21 and 18 respectively on a visit to Khartoum. Also in the party were Stanley and Boyle from the Agency. Cromer had suffered a grievous blow in October when his wife, Ethel, died from Bright's disease. Travelling by rail and steamer the party finally reached Omdurman on 3 January. The next day was spent with Kitchener in sight-seeing, inspecting troops and in attending a great meeting of sheikhs at which Cromer made a speech. He told the notables that they would now be ruled by the Queen of England and the Khedive of Egypt and promised that there would be no interference with their religion. Replying to a question Cromer gave a rather ambiguous answer on the matter of slavery. Gorst referring both to the speech and Boyle's translation of it wrote: 'God knows what they made of it all'.[21] Cromer also laid the foundation stone for Gordon's Memorial College, and then he and Gorst had important discussions with Kitchener on the country's finances.

In recording his recollections of this visit, Boyle mentions the Mahdi's skull, over which there had been a scandal. Rumours had reached Queen Victoria that Kitchener had desecrated the skull by keeping it on his desk. She had therefore ordered it to be given a proper burial.[22] According to Boyle, the skull was buried in the desert in the middle of the night, only Boyle and Gorst knowing the exact spot.[23] Gorst himself makes no reference to this in any of his writings but then, as far as official matters went, he could be discretion itself.

It had been a short trip to the Sudan with, curiously, no Egyptian representation in the visiting party. On the way back to Cairo, Gorst was able to stop off at Abu Simbel and Luxor where he visited the Valley of the Kings with Cromer's sons to look at the newly opened tomb of the warrior King Thotham III. Gorst liked to keep abreast of all that was going on in Egypt in the world of archaeology. In Cairo events were to move

fast. A convention on the Sudan, a draft of which had earlier been sent by Cromer to London, was prepared for signature between Britain and Egypt. The Council of Ministers submitted the document to the Khedive on 16 January 1899, and this was approved by him the following day. On 19 January the convention was formally signed by Cromer and Boutros Ghali (then the Egyptian Foreign Minister) on behalf of their two countries.

Under the convention the Sudan was to be ruled jointly by Britain and Egypt in what became known as a condominium. A Governor-General (it would be Kitchener) was to be appointed by Khedivial decree on the recommendation of the British government. In practice that position would always be held by a Briton until the Sudan became an independent state in 1956. The Governor-General would have powers to make laws provided these were notified to the Egyptian Premier and the British Consul-General. The countries would in practice be separate and Egyptian law would not normally apply in the Sudan. Happily there would be no special privileges for foreigners in the Sudan as there were in Egypt under the Capitulations. The day-to-day administration of the country would be left in the hands of the Governor-General, who would need to rebuild its organs of government, both central and local, after the depredations of the Mahdiya, whereby the population had been hugely reduced by battle, famine and disease. In a report produced for Cromer in 1903 it was estimated that out of a population of 8,525,000 prior to Dervish rule, 6,654,000 had been killed or died during the 14 or so years this rule lasted.[24] Then tribal unity had been weakened or destroyed with consequent loss of civil order, while schools and law courts were not properly functioning. In addition there was little trade and much poverty.[25] But the way Britain took over the running of the Sudan did not go down well with the Khedive, despite his agreeing to the convention, and many leading Egyptians. For one thing the Sudan had once been an Egyptian province and for another Egypt had made a major contribution to the reconquest campaign providing some 65 per cent of the troops used and a sizeable proportion of the funds expended.

The rebuilding of the Sudan would be a massive exercise and for many years the country would have to rely on liberal financial support from Egypt, who would have to make good annual deficits as well as financing capital expenditure. The financial arrangements, by which control over the Sudan was exercised by Egypt, were agreed outside the convention. Thus the Sudan budget would have to be submitted annually to the Council of Ministers. The amount of money granted by the Egyptian Treasury to the Sudan could not be exceeded, and if any special expenditure was needed this too would have to be sanctioned by ministers in Cairo. Further, the

Egyptian Ministry of Finance, in other words Jack Gorst, had at all times the right of 'supervision, audit or inspection of the whole of the financial arrangements of the Sudan'.[26] Gorst had certainly acquired a powerful position in overseeing the running of that country's finances. Inevitably some tensions would develop in the years ahead between Cairo and Khartoum, nor would these cease when Kitchener gave way to General Sir Reginald Wingate at the end of 1899.

The first months of 1899 were busy ones for Gorst with for instance the demands of his new job, the problems of the Sudan, VIPs like Cecil Rhodes and other magnates to be entertained, a prolonged visit by his father, Nubar's funeral to attend. And all the time he was still seeing quite a lot of Romaine. Nevertheless, he was able to sum up the year as being one of 'steady but quiet progress' and one in which compared with previous years there was surprisingly an

> entire absence of friction in our dealings with the various authorities with whom we are brought in contact – Khedive, ministers, Caisse de la Dette, even the French Government.[27]

Taking everything in his stride, Gorst claimed for this satisfactory state of affairs 'no inconsiderable share' of the credit. There may have been a touch of smugness about this but there was some justification in his claim as well. The most difficult part of his task, he estimated, was in acquiring the confidence of the Khedive, who had been alienated from the ruling British, in Gorst's view, partly by his disposition and partly by the clumsy handling of British officials. There is no doubt that Abbas Hilmi, who himself had very good manners, appreciated the way he was treated by Gorst in contrast to the much less considerate treatment he received from Cromer. Also in seeking the Khedive's advice and asking him for assistance in official matters, Gorst made him feel wanted. As a result of this moderate and reasonable approach in dealing with the Khedive, Gorst averred that on several important occasions the Khedive was in favour of the British position instead of being hostile to it. For example, he considered that there must have been a strong temptation for the Khedive to take sides against the British after the string of serious reverses suffered by them in the Boer War during the winter of 1899–1900. However, pressures put on him were resisted, and Abbas Hilmi worked 'cordially' with the British over that difficult period.

Perhaps equally surprising was the cooperation Gorst reported from the French after years of uncompromising hostility. Relations between Britain

and France had towards the end of 1898 been severely strained following the Fashoda incident on the White Nile. This had taken place a short time after the battle of Omdurman. Captain Marchand, at the conclusion of an epic march across central Africa, had with his small force of soldiers boldly established a military post 400 miles south of Khartoum, and raised the French Tricolour there. It was a dangerous game for the British regarded the Upper Nile region as their preserve. Fortunately, in the face of Kitchener's superior force and sensible handling of the situation, Marchand and France backed down. This was a serious confrontation – some thought it would lead to war – happily defused. Subsequently, Gorst found the French made no difficulties in the *Caisse* over a new loan requested for capital expenditure on railways, and the *Caisse* was further ready to grant large sums from their reserves for certain works.[28]

A problem for Gorst as Financial Adviser was that the Egyptian government was considerably hamstrung by its inability to benefit from the country's financial reserves quite rapidly accumulating with the rising tide of prosperity. There were three reserve funds: 'the conversion economies', 'the General Reserve Fund' and 'the Special Reserve fund'. The government could only look to the last named fund, which was unfettered and entirely at its disposal. The other two funds were directly controlled by the *Caisse*. The funds in 'the conversion economies' were invested in Egyptian stock and were treated as a sinking fund, that is a fund pledged to reduce the Egyptian Debt; the latter on 31 December 1898 stood at £103,372,180, of which £7,047,580 was held by the *Caisse* while the rest was in the hands of the public (note these funds were in Sterling as opposed to Egyptian Pounds; the latter was valued at just a fraction above the former).[29] In fact, the total Debt was only fractionally above the figure for 1884 and had been reduced from a high reached in 1891. At this date, the General Reserve Fund stood at £E3,893,000, in contrast to the Special Reserve Fund which showed a deficit of £E92,439, though four years later the latter Fund would be in credit to £E1,678,000.[30]

It was therefore, at least in theory, a tiresome complication for Gorst to have to go to the *Caisse*, usually once a year, cap in hand, requesting sums for capital expenditure As it happened he maintained good relations with this body and did not seem to have difficulty in obtaining from them the funds he needed. For instance in 1898 the *Caisse* had agreed (as mentioned above) to advancing a sum of £E550,000 for capital expenditure on public works such as irrigation, drainage, railways, port installations, schools and prisons, and to making available a further £E720,000 in subsequent years for railways. In 1901 Gorst succeeded in obtaining from the *Caisse* nearly

£E2,000,000 as a grant for extra money needed for the Aswan dam.[31]

During 1899 – and what follows helps to illustrate the kind of work on which Gorst was engaged – the Salt department was privatised, concessions were granted for the development of minerals and conditions imposed in respect of the floatation of Egyptian companies to protect the interest of investors. Another especially important piece of work Gorst was responsible for carrying through was the reassessment of the land tax. His proposals were required to be submitted to the General Assembly before being promulgated in May by Khedivial decree. The incidence of land tax had long been recognised as being unequal in the country, and accordingly, after endless surveys had been undertaken, the tax had been readjusted to provide a fairer burden on the people overall. Cromer in his Annual Report for the year 1899 complimented Gorst by stating that the measures became law 'largely due to the skill, judgement and conciliatory spirit shown' by him in his treatment of the points raised by the General Assembly.[32] This was all the kind of work, complicated and detailed, which Gorst relished and was good at. It is also interesting to note that he handled the General Assembly, a somewhat neglected forum, with evident sympathy.

In his position, Gorst had to work with many senior expatriate officials who would often be crying out for funds for their departments and projects. He would, therefore, be constantly making decisions, or giving advice to his minister, about the allocation of funds, the refusal of requests for funds and so on. On this subject he confidently wrote in June 1900:

> Since my nomination as F.A. I have had no difficulties whatever in managing the high English officials and I cannot recall a single instance of there having been any appeal unto Caesar (i.e. Lord C) against any of my decisions. My authority with them and with the Egyptian ministers is unquestioned, nothing is done without my approval, and without boasting I may say that subject to the *influence* rather than direction [Gorst's emphasis] emanating from Lord C (which I do not in the least wish to minimize), I practically run the internal government of this country – I trust wisely.[33]

Some years before, Gorst had written to Milner with some perception:

> One of the most difficult things here and in my opinion the thing in which Lord Cromer shines most is keeping the English in order. They are a difficult team to drive, especially ones like Kitchener and Rogers and for that matter Palmer. I do not think anyone

> could possibly keep them in hand who does not know the ropes thoroughly. If ever Lord Cromer goes and an ordinary diplomatist comes here who does not understand the details of the situation you will see that this element will bring him to grief and upset the whole Egyptian coach.[34]

When Gorst succeeded Cromer, he was to face this problem of carrying his subordinates with him over the reforms he was making, and unhappily without marked success.

As we have already seen, Gorst had at an earlier time harboured dreams in his ambitious mind of succeeding Cromer. His aspirations did not desert him, even if he had itchy feet for a time in the mid 1890s and even though he lost Cromer's confidence for a period, when, as it seemed, his career was beginning to stagnate. His promotion in 1898 acted as a stimulus when he considered the future, and in the summer of 1900 Gorst had what he described as a 'very satisfactory conversation' with Cromer, who had clearly begun to think of Gorst as his successor. Gorst's continuing on as Financial Adviser would not be, in Cromer's view, a hindrance to this possibility, for, apparently, the Consul-General thought he would be allowed to nominate his successor. And indeed this turned out to be virtually so. Rather astutely Gorst now decided not to allude to this subject again on his own initiative. Yet it was never far from his mind. Once ruminating about the future – he often mused in his autobiographical notes on this particular subject – Gorst thought that being on the spot and having a 'complete knowledge of the ropes' ought to make him favourite for the post, especially if he had Cromer's backing. A little later on Cromer varied his plans for Gorst succeeding him when he told his subordinate that it might be advantageous if he were to broaden his experience by leaving Egypt for a time and doing a turn in some suitable post at home. The upshot of this was that Cromer wrote to London. It was consequently thought that a suitable vacancy might come up in the Treasury. In the event no such position ever materialised.

The year 1900 had got off to a good start for Gorst's career when on New Year's Day he was made a CB. In fact, before putting his name forward for an award, Cromer had asked him if he would prefer a CB or CMG. For some reason, Gorst believed that the latter order was conferred on 'nonentities and failures',[35] and so opted for the Bath. He had, we know, a few years before been disappointed not to have received an honour in recognition of his work in the Ministry of Interior, thus betraying what a sensitive man he was deep down. Of course this sensitivity was something he concealed from friends and colleagues, though with what success it is not easy to

gauge. From these pages the reader might sometimes wonder if Gorst was a selfish man inclined only to look after No 1. But there is a reminder that there was another side to him when he tells us that he managed to get in 1899 promotion for his secretary Muhamed Bey Beyram who had 'served me faithfully and well at the Interior'.[36] Sadly a month after his promotion Beyram suddenly died.

CHAPTER

# 10

# FINANCIAL ADVISER

## PLACE ASSURED

Sometimes those who have heavy responsibilities for the finances of a great business or are stewards of a nation's treasury are found to be disinterested or even careless in managing their own money affairs. This was certainly not the case with Gorst. He was unusually prudent in handling his own personal finances, keeping meticulous records of them in the back of his diaries where the totals of income and expenditure were always seen to balance. Once he was confirmed at the age of 26 as a Third Secretary in the Diplomatic Service he was never bothered by money worries. In six years, his salary rose, due to his own capability and effort, from £250 to £2,000 a year, a remarkable rise for a young man at that time. He had of course no family to support, but then he was generous to his sisters, paying for them to come out to Egypt and looking after them during their visits which were not short.

There may have been an extravagant streak in his make-up but, if so, he kept himself on a tight rein. Indeed, he liked betting at cards and on horses, owning race horses and entertaining, all things he could afford. By the mid 1890s he had acquired a modest holding of stocks and shares to the value of between £2,000 and £3,000 in which he took a close and knowledgeable interest. In 1903, as we shall see, he was to marry an heiress, and was, therefore, to be very comfortably off though he was never to be ostentatious about this happy situation. Judging overall by the way he

attended to his own affairs, Egypt was in safe financial hands with Gorst as its Financial Adviser.

One of Gorst's principal tasks in his job was to produce in November each year a budget for the government's estimated expenditure for the succeeding year based on the anticipated revenue. This budget had to be approved by the Council of Ministers and was also passed to the Legislative Council for their comments though they had no power to vary it. All this was an exercise repeated each year according to a set procedure.

In his Annual Report to the Foreign Secretary on Egypt and the Sudan, it was customary for the Consul-General to report fully on (1) the financial situation concerning the accounts of the year under review, both revenue achieved and expenditure incurred, and (2) the estimates made for the following year by the Financial Adviser and agreed by the Council of Ministers. Regarding (1) and the situation revealed, the Consul-General would compare critically what had been estimated earlier with what the results had been in practice as shown in the accounts. Regarding (2) and the framing of the budget the Financial Adviser would normally, as in all prudent house-keeping, ensure a margin as between revenue and expenditure in favour of the former. Yet this was not a practice slavishly followed by Gorst. For instance in 1899, with the full approval of Cromer, there was no margin at all of revenue over expenditure; this was on account of the 'low' Nile when much land was left dry because of the failure of the flood and consequent reduction in the crop planted, resulting in the collection of less tax. Expenditure was not however cut back so as to ensure that development of the country continued.[1]

There was one innovation by Gorst. Encouraged by Cromer he presented the budget accompanied with a full explanatory note, a sensible departure. He was thus able to explain the reasons behind the figures, for example, why in 1899 there had been a loss of revenue. Then ever-watchful for trends he discussed in his note on the estimates for 1902 whether the perceived growth in revenue was due to abnormal conditions, or was the natural result of the country's increasing wealth.[2] Gorst was clearly keen on analysing what the figures might mean and telling his audience. During Gorst's five-year tenure of office, the actual revenue rose from £E11,348,000 collected in 1898 to £E12,464,000 in 1903,[3] with expenditure being just below both these figures. A very large proportion of the revenue still went to the *Caisse*, which institution both Cromer and Gorst wished to see swept away. As will be seen in a later chapter, success attended their joint efforts to reduce the power and influence of the *Caisse*. Another indicator of the state of the economy on which Gorst must have kept a beady eye

were the trade figures. In 1898 the combined total for imports *and* exports stood at £E22,298,800. By 1903, the figure had risen to £E35,265,000.[4] Certainly, he was operating in boom conditions. Also in those days there was no inflation to worry about.

Gorst was able in his time as Financial Adviser to continue a policy pursued by Cromer of reducing or abolishing taxes whenever possible; in this way he reduced the land tax – moving with some circumspection as this was the main source of revenue – and the salt tax. All tolls for boats commercially navigating the Nile were abolished, as were taxes due in respect of carriages, horses, mules and donkeys from the local population in Cairo. The sheep and goats tax, the weighing tax and the professional tax were also all swept away. In 1901 the octroi duties, being taxes imposed on commodities including foodstuffs entering towns, were abolished in the main provincial towns (earlier they had been abolished in villages and smaller towns). In 1902 these taxes, critically described by Gorst as ones which pressed 'unduly on the poorest classes', were rescinded in Cairo and Alexandria where they had produced a revenue of as much as £E200,000 levied at the rate of nine per cent *ad valorem*. The effect of this abolition was found to be somewhat detrimental to consumers but proportionally beneficial to producers.[5]

Another tax reform brought in by Gorst, this time in 1903, concerned the taxing of fishermen, who plied their important trade on the lakes and the Nile and who under the prevailing system were in thrall to oppressive 'tax-farmers'. The latter required the fishermen's catch to be sold at auction under their auspices. They were assisted by numerous 'watchmen', underpaid and therefore prone to abuse their position, to see that catches were only sold at auction. Most of the receipts from the sales went either to the tax-farmers or to the government as tax. The fishermen got a pittance. Under Gorst's reforms the system run by the tax-farmers was abolished and in its place there was a simple direct tax levied on the fishing boat. In future the fishermen, distrustful at first, could ply their trade in freedom.[6] Although the abolition of these taxes and duties resulted obviously in a loss of some revenue, the overall position of revenue obtained was not adversely affected; indeed the amount of revenue collected in 1903 was the largest amount ever collected in one year. The readiness of Gorst to sweep away taxes, especially to help the lot of the common people, shows him in a liberal and reforming light.

It was not always a question of relieving the population, including farmers, from paying taxes. On occasions they were required to pay more. For instance as a result of hydraulic developments a change in the pattern

of agricultural life occurred with what was termed 'perennial irrigation'.[7] This was when water was carried by irrigation canals (made feasible by the distribution of water from the great dams upstream) and it became possible to farm land throughout the year. Such land attracted new taxes devised by Gorst in 1902 and approved by the General Assembly.

With some measure of justification, Gorst could claim credit for the part he played in bringing about the establishment of the Agricultural Bank,[8] whereby Egyptian peasant farmers received help in obtaining loans to work the land. This would greatly assist them in reducing their indebtedness to rapacious money-lenders who sometimes charged a rate of interest as high as 40 per cent. The problem was a long-standing one, which began to improve when the National Bank of Egypt had as an experiment started making small advances to farmers charging nine per cent interest. Some 870 cultivators benefited from this scheme confined at first to just one district. The experiment, deemed successful, was soon extended throughout lower Egypt, the loans being made repayable over five years with the bank lending its money through agents supervised by a British inspector. The collection of interest payments owed by farmers was conveniently undertaken by government officials at the same time as they were gathering the land tax. In time it was considered that the National Bank was not an appropriate vehicle for this whole exercise for it had to lock up £E400,000 capital to support the scheme. It was therefore proposed in 1902 to set up a separate Agricultural Bank with a capital of £2,500,000 to run the operation under the auspices of the National Bank. Loans were made of £E1 up to £E300, and by the end of 1903, 78,911 farmers had entered the scheme,[9] described by Gorst as a 'novel' one and one which caught the attention of the British press. The feared defaulting on payments owed to the new bank did not materialise, though the loans made were often used to liquidate previous debts owed to moneylenders and not, as intended, to help develop the land. The scheme continued to run smoothly until the Egyptian economy faltered some years later.

There was one particular piece of business in 1902 which Gorst was pleased to have been responsible for completing. This was a commercial convention between Egypt and France signed after protracted negotiations. The importance of this lay not so much on content, which was essentially concerned with rates of duty to be imposed on goods imported into Egypt and which, with a few exceptions, was fixed at eight per cent, but on the fact the French were willing to sign an agreement. Gorst commented that this was a 'very considerable diplomatic triumph indicating a great change in attitude on the part of the French as regards the Egyptian question'.[10]

Gorst's work was by no means all financial or finance-related. His mind was wide-ranging and he would be ready with an opinion for ministers and others on all aspects of government and beyond. A good example of a more unusual problem with which he became involved occurred in November 1902. This came about when the Khedive raised with him the possibility of having to stop the next year's pilgrimage on public health grounds. The problem centred round the existence of cholera in the Hejaz and the idea that only a limited number of pilgrims should be allowed to travel to Mecca from Egypt. What was wanted were some proposals to minimize the dangers of infection spreading to Egypt without at the same time interfering with the performance of a religious duty placed on Muslims.

As it happened, and as we shall see later, Gorst had visited and inspected the quarantine station for pilgrims at Tor in Sinai earlier in the year. He was, therefore, familiar with current arrangements there for pilgrims. In addition he had been involved when in the Ministry of the Interior with anti-cholera measures being taken in Egypt. Accordingly, Gorst was able to put forward some appropriate proposals involving pilgrims' travel, which were approved as satisfactory by the Council of Ministers the same month; also the Khedive was pleased with Gorst's help. The proposals included varying the route taken by pilgrims to reach Medina from Mecca (250 miles). Instead of proceeding by the long and tiring overland journey by camel, the new arrangement was that pilgrims should return from Mecca to Jeddah and then go by sea to the port of Yambo, when they would make the comparatively short inland journey to Medina (a little over 100 miles). Also better and cheaper fares were arranged for conveying pilgrims from Suez to Jeddah.

As a further follow-up, the quarantine station at Tor was considerably improved, adding to the comfort of those having to stay there by: building a new hospital with the result that the number of beds available at the station was increased from 80 to 140; constructing tanks provided 2,000 tons of drinking water and extending the electric light installations. Finally an entirely new quarantine station along the lines of the one at Tor was built at Suakin for pilgrims from the Sudan.[11]

Another field in which Gorst became involved at this time was the recruitment of British officials to the Egyptian Civil Service. Accurate figures giving the breakdown in this Service as between Egyptians and Europeans or British are hard to come by, as are the figures showing the precise number of Europeans or British employed. This is partly because of the difficulty in deciding which agencies should be considered as part of the Egyptian Civil Service. In 1893, there were, as far as can be determined, some 578

Europeans employed in the Service (of which about 250 were British). In 1896, according to Cromer himself, the figure for Europeans employed was 690 (no figure for the British given) compared to 8,444 Egyptians. By 1906, those figures had risen to 1252 Europeans and 12,027 Egyptians, though 303 Europeans belonged to the International Railway Administration.[12]

One thing seems clear. From about the mid 1890s there was a sharp rise in the number of Europeans employed. One reason had been the increase in the number of inspectors and others in the Ministries of Finance and the Interior. Nevertheless, Cromer underscored the principle that the number of Europeans in the Egyptian Civil Service should be limited as much as possible, whether as 'superior or subordinate' agents.[13] But somehow, and whatever Cromer stated about the 'number of Europeans appointed to the Egyptian public service [having to be] strictly controlled', that well-meant intention got lost sight of in the last years of Cromer's rule. And with the influx of more Europeans the evidence suggests that the number of Egyptians in higher posts began to decline. Certainly, the career prospects in the Service for young Egyptians especially those emerging from the higher institutions of learning such as the Law School were discouraging. This was a matter Gorst was to address urgently when he became Consul-General.

In the meantime the system of recruiting expatriate, including British, personnel for the Egyptian Civil Service was varied. Previously a rather *ad hoc* system had prevailed largely relying on the personal recommendation of someone already serving. A change became necessary as a result of the reconquest of the Sudan and the ensuing need to build up an entirely new Sudanese Civil Service. As the Sudan came effectively under the broad control of Egypt, the new recruiting system would apply to both countries. The regulations were drafted, under the eagle eye of Cromer, by Gorst and Wingate. Although the two men did not get on well with each other – Gorst regarded Wingate, perhaps unfairly, as a poor administrator while Wingate was no doubt influenced by his predecessor, Kitchener's, strong dislike of Gorst – they produced a system satisfying the needs, apparently, of the various parties concerned. Vacancies for non-technical branches of the administration were to be advertised in the major universities. There would be no competitive examination – unlike the position in India existing for the previous 40 years or so – and applicants' suitability would be judged by a Board. They would be interviewed in London, and, if successful, they would spend a year at Oxford or Cambridge learning Arabic. If they passed a language exam they would then be eligible for an appointment at a starting salary of £E240 p.a.[14] Theoretically, they could choose whether they wished to serve in Egypt or the Sudan. But the latter

became a more popular posting and in due course the Sudanese Political Service emerged as an elite corps of men. In 1903, eight to ten candidates were selected under the new system, Gorst himself initially interviewing a number of applicants, including Ronald Storrs, who would later become his Oriental Secretary in Cairo. Storrs would go on to have a distinguished career and would have some pertinent observations to make on Gorst and his work in Egypt.

Like many administrators who served British imperial and colonial interests in Africa and Asia, Gorst liked nothing better than for a week or two to throw off the demands made on him at his office in Cairo and escape into the countryside or desert to tour the provinces and remoter parts. This helped him, he believed, to get a real feel for how the ordinary people and farmers – and the majority of the population in Egypt lived in villages – were faring under what was in effect British rule. He was also an inveterate sightseer and a man whose constant curiosity and thirst for knowledge needed satisfying. Sometimes he found that he could combine business with pleasure.

Most years Gorst would travel in the winter to Upper Egypt, usually to Luxor, and often with members of his family. In December 1900, he again accompanied Cromer to Khartoum. The reasons for the trip were to see how Wingate was settling into his new post there, and to evaluate the progress being made in reconstructing the country. There were seven in the party. Cromer was accompanied by his son, Windham, Boyle and a family friend, Miss Winn. Gorst had with him his sisters, Eva and Gwen. As usual they set off having dinner on the night train as it headed south along the eastern bank of the Nile. Beyond Aswan they took the steamer *Isis* described by Gorst as 'very comfortable almost luxurious'. For reading matter he took Lord Rosebery's biography of Napoleon Bonaparte published that year. At Wadi Halfa the party split with the ladies proceeding on by train all the way to Khartoum, a distance of not far short of 600 miles, the last part of the journey being on the very recently completed stretch of line south of Atbara, built in record time. The men of the party, however, travelled down on the branch line to Kerma in Dongola province where Wingate was waiting to show them round. After this visit they retraced their steps and then followed the others to Khartoum.[15] Gorst had, curiously, no apparent interest in railways and offers little comment in his diary on the travelling.

On Christmas Day, Wingate took Cromer up the Blue Nile, the steamer embarrassingly running aground so that their party did not arrive back at Khartoum until midnight. They therefore missed the Christmas dinner at Government House and the fun afterwards which included some

amateur dramatics witnessed by 60 guests. Boyle in describing these said that Gorst took the lead and gave a 'life-like imitation of Lord Cromer'.[16] On the journey back north, Gorst managed to squeeze in a quick visit to the magnificent temple of Medinat Habou near Luxor which he probably had not seen before. On arrival in Cairo fairly late in the evening, he dined before, inexhaustible man that he was, hurrying off to see the opera *Tannhäuser*. Only surely a real Wagner opera buff would have done this just after completing a journey from Khartoum of around 1,200 miles!

It sometimes seemed as if Gorst wished to test himself physically in rather more demanding circumstances than he was used to with his normal routine of work and play. He was on close terms with his brother-in-law George Hunter and enjoyed his company, be it at the dinner table, on the golf course or in the desert. In April 1899 Hunter organised a trip for Gorst in the western desert of Egypt with its starting point at Mersa Matrou on the coast 170 miles west of Alexandria. The party consisted, apart from the two friends, of an army officer and 13 men from the Coastguards together with their 25 camels. It was to be a working patrol of the camel corps section of the Coastguards Administration, one of whose tasks was to intercept smugglers, who might be armed, and carrying contraband or drugs such as hashish to the urban centres of Egypt.

Gorst reached Mersa Matrou by coastguard cruiser from Alexandria early in the morning and the party at once set off on their camels at 4.45 a.m. travelling east along the coast before somewhere near El Alamein – the site of the battle fought 43 years later between the British and Axis (German and Italian) armies – turning south-east into the desert. They would start early each morning, rest in the middle of the day when the heat was at its most intense and then ride again in the late afternoon until they pitched camp: once they did not stop until 10 p.m. riding on in the moonlight. Their objective was the sodium carbonate works on the Natron lakes some 70 miles or so west of Cairo; these lay at the end of a light railway joining these works to the main railway in the Nile valley. A Swiss syndicate employing European staff had built a factory by the lakes, and were producing there soap and a brand of soda water using as a basis for their products the local deposits of salt and soda. The staff were well-housed and there was a comfortable guest house for visitors. Gorst and his party rode in all 229 miles in eight days (we know these details from his carefully kept diary),[17] covering 40 miles in the last day so that they arrived at the works in time to dine with the hospitable director. Gorst may have been hoping for some excitement on the trip involving smugglers, and if so he must have been disappointed.

Three years later, in March 1902, Gorst went on a more elaborate expedition, this time to the eastern desert, when he would be accompanied by four members of his extended family. For some while the government had been dealing with requests for mining concessions in the area between the Nile and the Red Sea. Its policy was to place no obstacles in the way of legitimate commercial enterprise but to exercise some control over this activity. Licences were issued by the Ministry of Finance both for prospecting and then for mining in a given area, the concessions lasting up to 30 years. The concessionaries had to pay the government rent for the land being used for mining. Gorst, interested in these developments, wished to see for himself what was happening on the ground.

With him on this expedition Gorst took George and Hylda Hunter, Eva, Clemence Robertson who, a young woman of 28, was George's unmarried half-sister, and André von Dumreicher plus an escort of Coastguard men together with servants. The last named was then in command of the camel corps section of the Coastguard Administration and had an interesting background. He had been born in Germany with, on his father's side, Danish ancestors and had an Italian mother. His forbears had grown cotton and owned cotton mills in Egypt, and Napoleon had stayed at their house in Alexandria during his short Egyptian campaign. André would in a few years time marry George's niece. Many years later he would write a fascinating book about his service in Egypt and intercepting smugglers in the desert wastes there. He was a good organiser and had sent out a small reconnaissance ahead of Gorst to ensure all was clear and in order.

The starting point for the expedition was Quena on the Nile, 300 miles south of Cairo. The party rode off on camels on their first day north-eastwards through more or less uninhabited country towards a series of barren coastal ranges rising up in front of them to between 3,000 and 4,000 feet. The scenery may have been desolate and rocky, but had its own fascination. On the third day among the mountains they arrived at the recently reopened Fatira gold mines which were inspected.[18] These mines went back to Roman days and had been worked by slaves. The gold lay in pockets, not seams, and the expenses involved in working the mines appeared to be high. Beyond Fatira the party rode up a valley and in a deep gorge found, surprisingly, a waterfall and pool, in which Gorst and Dumreicher, both hardy men, bathed.

Each evening they camped and Dumreicher's orderly produced dinner. Next they came to the Gebel Duchan quarries and some old disused workings. Nearer the coast they reached on the seventh day of their journey a new petroleum well, near Gebel Zeit harbour on the Red Sea,

*13. Eva Gorst, Eldon Gorst's sister.*

being worked by a Bavaria mining engineer. To reach oil he had had to drill down over 1,000 feet. In Gorst's honour the engineer opened a valve a fraction and a black geyser of oil gushed explosively upwards to 60 feet.[19] There is no indication that this well ever became productively viable and we have to assume that it was by way of being a pilot project.

At Gebel Zeit they boarded the *Abbas*, a Coastguard cruiser, which took them all across the Red Sea to Tor, the pilgrim quarantine camp on the Sinai peninsula. Gorst inspected the arrangements there – some cholera-infected pilgrims were expected any minute – and the party then visited the local village and monastery. As mentioned earlier in this chapter it was decided later in the year to improve the facilities for pilgrims at this camp. After the visit to Tor the *Abbas* took the party north up the Sinai coast to a bay where they disembarked for a 15-mile camel ride inland to the famous turquoise mines, the workings of which went back to Egypt's IV dynasty (*c.*2620 BC). There they were put up comfortably by the English managers of the mines who were running the enterprise on behalf of a rich syndicate. The next day Gorst interviewed local Sinai sheikhs and then the party continued on to visit 'Moses' well' up a valley through which the prophet was supposed to have led the children of Israel during their wanderings in the wilderness. A tracker took them to the rock which Moses is said to have

struck with his rod as a result of which water flowed out and so quenched the thirst of the Israelites.[20] The expedition was now nearly over. That day the party rode back to the coast and re-embarked on the *Abbas* for the voyage north to Port Tawfiq in time the following day to catch the 10 a.m. train to Cairo. The trip had lasted twelve days and the party had covered by land from Quena about 196 miles, all by camel. Everyone, Gorst reported, was 'very sorry' their trip was over. On arrival home Gorst typically enough found things to do that evening. He went first to see Romaine, then dined alone before going off to a private dance being given at the Savoy Hotel by a leading Cairo hostess.[21] Happily for posterity a record of the expedition had been kept. George Hunter was a keen photographer and photographs taken during the expedition have survived.

That winter, following the expedition into the eastern desert, Gorst, now knighted in the Coronation Honours list, was in Upper Egypt with Cromer for the last time. The occasion, a momentous one, was the grand official opening of the Aswan dam. The Khedive's guest of honour was the Duke of Connaught, younger brother of King Edward VII. Among the many distinguished guests was Joseph Chamberlain, the Colonial Secretary, with whom Gorst had a long conversation in which he was encouraged to give his views on South Africa and its future. A little earlier, Cromer had told Gorst that he was contemplating putting the idea to those who mattered of Gorst succeeding Milner in that country.[22] Whether or not Chamberlain's talk with Gorst was connected with this idea we can not say. In any case it was not immediately relevant as Milner did not leave his post in South Africa until 1905. It does, however, indicate how Gorst's name was being considered, almost canvassed, at least by Cromer, for further promotion.

Other guests in Egypt for the Aswan dam ceremonies included the Cassels and, in the same party, Mrs Keppel, Edward VII's mistress. Gorst thought it would be good tactics for him to be friendly with Mrs Keppel, and he therefore made a point of taking her to see the Cairo museum and on another occasion the Coptic churches. Always he was thinking ahead and he felt sure that the King might somehow be involved when it came to nominating Cromer's successor. He was right.

Jack Gorst's father, no longer a member of the government after seven years as Minister of Education, came to Egypt for some six weeks that winter and relished being present at Aswan. In particular, Jack noted, his father 'was especially pleased at the position of authority which I have attained here'.[23] Jack respected his father though he did not always agree with him. But above all he welcomed his good opinion.

CHAPTER

# 11

# MARRIAGE AT LAST

Although his long love affair with Romaine had ended 'in catastrophe' (his word), Jack would go on seeing her with some regularity. Part of the reason was of course Marga. But even now he had not quite reconciled himself to the fact that with Romaine his was a lost cause. He was now being urged by his friends, and by Lord Cromer, to get married. So he began to make vigorous efforts to find a wife – his term was a 'suitable object'. For quite some time he was unsuccessful.

Another aspect of this question had become a burning issue. As Financial Adviser, Jack was entertaining much more, and he wanted to find someone who would preside over his establishment. His unmarried sister Eva, devoted to her brother's very existence, was helping him in this department but clearly, despite Eva's efforts, this was for Jack a temporary expedient. So what exactly was he looking for in a wife-cum-hostess? It would be trite to say that he demanded beauty, intelligence, companionship and someone with a love for music and so on, in other words a paragon of womanhood. But having a penchant for married women was he also looking for maturity and poise? He himself put it quite simply:

> I shall not be happy unless I succeed in satisfying the sentimental and romantic side of my nature, and at my age and with my experience this is no easy task.

Still reflective, he mused that he did not want to make 'a mistake in a matter where mistakes are almost impossible to repair'.[1]

In Cairo in January 1900, he met a Mrs Sloane Chauncey, and was at once attracted by her. Whether or not she was a widow we do not know – but never was there a sign or mention of a Mr Chauncey. Jack set about wooing her in his customary manner during the first three months of the year while she was in Cairo and before she returned to London. He met her most days and his enthusiasm for being in her company seemed to be unlimited. That July, on leave in England, Jack resumed his wooing. The first thing he did on reaching London was to take 'Mrs C' out to dine at the Savoy. Next they tried Claridges. Then he took her rowing on the Thames at Taplow, on a visit to Windsor when they visited his old school Eton next door, to exhibitions, and once he traipsed with her round the Houses of Parliament.[2] Then there came a break – just as well perhaps – when they both travelled to France with 'little Alice', Mrs Chauncey's daughter, before they separated for some weeks. Jack went to join his family – his mother, Eva and Gwen, and for a time the Hunters – on holiday at Aussee in Austria.

In September he was seeing a lot of Mrs Chauncey again, now in his diary she was 'Alice' or 'A', in Paris. Once she put him off a dinner engagement at the last moment, and there is a suggestion that this may have irritated him. He also saw Camille Petit, his French woman friend, and the Turnures before returning with his sister Hylda to London. There he fell ill for a time with a very bad throat, suspected for a moment of being diphtheria. When he was better he lunched with Alice. The next day he went to her hotel to say goodbye as he had to return to Cairo but he found 'she had gone out. This was the last straw as far as she is concerned'.[3] So it seems that in the end Alice did not somehow come up to expectations, despite, as he commented, 'her many charms and other inducements'.[4] But Jack never dropped her and henceforth saw her occasionally.

Jack was not put off in his quest after his rather abortive pursuit of Alice Chauncey. The following year, in February, he met someone else, liked her and after a short acquaintance he took the plunge and proposed. And was conditionally accepted. But matters did not work out. The young woman was Lady Beatrix Taylour, daughter of the Marquis of Headfort. She had come to Cairo with her mother for the winter months. This time Jack did not chase after her in his customary manner. On the contrary, his diary records that he met her on no more that six occasions in a little under two months. But we must suppose in view of what followed that she had attracted him, and he had probably marked her down as a candidate for

a wife. If so, the problem was going to be how could he get to know her better?

At any event, Jack met Beatrix again at a dance in London on 11 July, and 'talked' to her. A week later, after he had got back from Cambridge, where he saw his family and went racing at Newmarket, he proceeded to call on Lady Headfort.[5] He did this, we assume, to try and arrange a visit by Beatrix to Scotland where the Gorst family had taken a house near Pitlochry for the rest of the summer. He may have used the argument, if this was necessary, that Beatrix had got to know Jack's sisters when in Cairo. Jack's efforts, and probably plotting, met with success, and Beatrix joined the Gorsts (both parents, Edith, Eva and Gwen) at Moulinearn, just outside Pitlochry, on 24 August for the inside of a week. The party indulged in the usual activities of the time. During the day they went bicycling: once to Dunfeld 15 miles away, returning by train, and on another day taking the train to Struan and then bicycling back. On the second occasion the unfortunate John Gorst senior fell off his machine and was badly shaken up. In the evening after dinner there was music and bridge, and once Beatrix sang to them. There were also, according to Jack's diary, 'romps', whatever that meant.[6] Beatrix's attractions to Jack were now greater than ever. He did not, it seemed, have much time alone in her company but he did manage a walk with her just once in the first four days of her visit. Jack was going to have to work fast for there was not much time left him. He did. His diary entry for 28 August reads:

> Took Lady B up the woods opposite the house and asked her to be my wife. She will if her mother gives her consent. To-day for the first time in my life I feel really happy. In the afternoon we walked with Eva and Gwen, and I then composed a letter to Lady Headfort. Singing and bridge after dinner and then I lay awake for hours.

The next day, as he confided to his diary, he felt 'happier every moment and more and more certain that I have done the right thing'. He then bicycled with Beatrix to the station and saw her off. She was worried, he noted, and was 'very frightened at what will happen when she tells her mother'.[7]

Jack was to be desperately disappointed and almost at once. Twenty-four hours later, he received a wire from Beatrix saying 'she had yielded to her mother's objection'. The same day, the afternoon post brought a 'sad' letter from her to say that her mother and aunt 'had bullied her into giving him up'.[8] Jack at once wrote to her to cheer her up and offer encouragement. The day after, he had a letter from Beatrix's mother which simply said that her daughter had changed her mind This was enough to make Jack ill and he

retired to bed for three days feeling 'very seedy' and with his stomach out of order. He could not eat anything and felt he must have been poisoned. It was often thus: an emotional shock affected his nerves and health. A persistent man, Jack wrote again to Beatrix's mother appealing to her for an interview but he never mentions in his diary whether he was favoured with an answer or not. Beatrix, however, did write to him and it was a 'nice' letter to which he replied. Evidently Jack was not regarded by the Headforts as suitable for their daughter's hand for one reason or another. We can only speculate about this: perhaps it was simply that his pedigree was considered as being inadequate.

Jack's pitifully short romance with Beatrix constitutes an extraordinary episode, and for someone of his sensitivity its outcome must have been wounding to his *amour propre.* Having known Beatrix so short a time there is a hint of desperation about his precipitate proposal, something that was not quite in character. Writing later he commented, a shade enigmatically, that while this particular attempt to get married seemed 'at its commencement' to promise well he was very thankful that nothing came of the affair'.[9] In the coming winter he would tell Cromer what had happened.

For the time being there seemed to be no further efforts made by Jack to find a wife. But in the following April an event that he had long foreseen took place. Lawrence Turnure, for sometime regarded by Jack as a friend, was suddenly taken ill while at home in Cairo – it was the very evening that Jack was dining with the Turnures. His condition deteriorated rapidly. By the next day the doctors had given up hope. Eva, always kind and thoughtful, hurried to stay the night with Romaine and to keep her company. Jack, himself, was 'very seedy all day with influenza'. Early in the morning on 10 April, Lawrence died. Jack, still not well himself, had little Marga for lunch and she stayed all afternoon.[10] On 12 April, there was a 'memorial service' for Lawrence at All Saints Church which Jack went to, and the following day he saw Romaine for the first time since her husband's death. She had decided to go at once with Marga to Paris, with Mattie Bird as a companion, and then planned to go to the USA, where Lawrence was to be buried.

During the early part of the summer we gain the impression that Jack was unsettled. True that outside the office he had become interested in the, for him, new sport of tandem racing. His attention too had been caught in a mild way by golf. Then there was a certain amount of tennis and of course he had his horses. Also he was now often playing bridge in the evenings. But really he was thinking about Romaine, his hopes for regaining her affections having resurfaced with Lawrence's death. He wrote to her in Paris

for her birthday – for she seemed to have postponed her departure for New York – telling her that he hoped to join her in France that summer en route home for his leave. He had a reply on the day a thief got into his house, stealing his gold stop-watch, a locket and chain, and all the money left on his dressing table.[11] It was a bad omen, for some days later, in another letter, Romaine said it would not do for Jack to visit her in France. We can hardly doubt that he wanted just one more chance to persuade her to marry him. It was not, though, to be. In July she told him very firmly that she did not want to see him before she left for the USA.[12]

Luckily for Jack, there was plenty to occupy himself with that summer in England and to take his mind away from Romaine. Undoubtedly the main event was that the King invested him with the KCB at Balmoral. On being knighted, Jack chose to be known as Sir Eldon so as to be distinguished from his father; Eldon is a small village in Durham from which, we believe, his maternal grandmother came. Although Jack had never met Edward VII before he was under the impression for some reason that the King was 'somewhat prejudiced' against him. Was this because the King, Cassel and Mrs Keppel were supposed to be anti-Cromer and that Gorst was associated, in the King's mind, with the Consul-General, whom the monarch thought had no manners?[13] During his visit Jack played bridge with the King, and, giving himself a little pat on the back, he thought that the King 'approved of me on nearer acquaintance'.[14] Still with royalty, Jack also met that summer in Belgium King Leopold who spoke to him of his grievances about the Congo, the vast territory Leopold had acquired as his personal estate. Then there was the usual family holiday, when the Gorsts went in strength, as had once happened before, to Normandy; Jack was fond of his parents and took holidays with them whenever he could. It was about this time that Jack began to enjoy motoring despite its early discomforts. He was quick to spot the potential of the motor car and would be in the vanguard of those pioneering this new means of travel.

The year 1903 was to be for Jack a momentous one in his personal life. Only a week after he had seen his father off at Cairo station, he noted in his diary on 26 January that he had been introduced by his friend Mrs Satow to a Miss Rudd. She was a young woman of 22, staying in Cairo with her friends Colonel and Mrs Playfair, and was the daughter of Charles Rudd, the financial magnate and former business partner of Cecil Rhodes in South Africa. Her mother had died some years before.

From now on, everything that year would happen at an exciting pace. Two days later he heard after many months from Romaine. It was, as he put it, a 'very cold and uncompromising letter', and one to which he wrote an

immediate reply 'with a view to bringing matters to a head'. After writing it he felt more comfortable. This time he received a reply quickly which proved to be definite and 'closed that chapter of my existence'.[15] So now Jack had had from Romaine her final answer, one that somehow he had never quite been able to face up to receiving. The curtain had rung down for the last time.

In the middle of this busy month Jack suddenly decided to quit racing and give up his stud. At once he made arrangements to dispose of his horses. Cedar, who had carried all before him in Egypt the previous year and at any distance, he gave to the Khedive for his stud. This horse according to one expert was the best ever foaled in Egypt.[16] Quite what had prompted Jack to retire from the turf is hard to say, for racing horses had given him much pleasure. But it was obviously decision time and Jack was never one to dither. Once his mind was made up he acted.

In the meantime Hylda – the Hunters and with them the headquarters of the Coastguard Administration had been moved by Jack from Alexandria to Cairo a year or so before – had asked Jack to lunch to meet Evelyn Rudd, always known to her family and friends as Doll. This was going to become a bit of a muddle as Eva was often known as Dolly. As was usual, Jack wasted no time in getting to know Doll, who was subjected to the full treatment: visits to the opera, cosy teas together, walking in the gardens, romantic visits to the Sphinx by moonlight and so on. Obviously he was badly smitten by her charms and must have seen in Doll the wife he was still urgently looking for. The climax came on 7 March when he went down to Fayoum Oasis with the Hunters and Doll for a few days. The ladies occupied the irrigation rest-house, while George and Jack were in the police house. That evening on the balcony Jack proposed or, as he put it, 'spoke to D'. Because, perhaps, she had not given him an immediate answer, Jack had 'a very disturbed night',[17] worrying presumably if he had done the right thing and what the outcome would be. The next day he found Doll 'feverish' and 'out of spirits', for her part no doubt wondering how she should respond to Jack. Soon the Playfairs, delayed as the Colonel had not been well, arrived in Fayoum so Doll could at least now discuss matters with the older woman. They all returned to Cairo, Jack still awaiting his fate. At last, pressed by the expectant Jack, Doll gave her answer. It was yes.[18] It had certainly been a whirlwind romance. Jack, pursuing his theme of being decisive, had been in no mood to pause. He wanted to hurry on the business as fast as possible. A date and place for the wedding was decided. It would be London in June at the start of Jack's leave. Jubilantly, Jack now wrote letters to tell the world of his engagement and plans. He told too Cromer and the Khedive.

But what of Doll? What sort of a person was she and what kind of a background did she have? Judging by photographs she was a very good-looking woman. Boyle who came to know her well in Cairo after she was married said she was 'a very charming woman as well as being extremely pretty ... she could carry on highly intelligent talk on most subjects. Her principal shortcoming was in writing French.'[19] We know too that she was kind and generous, and would be an admiring and devoted wife to Jack. It all therefore augured well, but did Jack really know her after such a short acquaintance and how was a young woman going to manage in the hurly burly of the sophisticated Cairo society over which in a few years she would be required to preside? Further, would she be able to cope with the emotional strains which might be imposed on her? For the present these were unanswered questions. At least her background would help so far as money was concerned, for her father was in the class of the super rich. Doll's father, Charles Rudd, had been educated at Harrow and Cambridge, where he had been an athlete and won a Blue for rackets. But his health had broken down, and he had consequently gone to South Africa at the age of 21 (without a degree) to try his luck there. After some false starts he met Cecil Rhodes and so began their highly lucrative association in gold and diamonds which Rudd combined with other business interests such as insurance, machinery and the staple goods of the frontier. Life had prospered and by the time he and Rhodes had, with others, formed in 1880 the De Beers Company he was a rich man even though he was only in his mid thirties. Rudd had married early, and had three sons and a daughter, Doll, by his wife Frances Leighton, who died in 1896. Rudd then remarried and settled with his wife Corrie in West Scotland, buying the huge Ardnamurchan estate in Argyll and building two houses there, Glenborrowdale castle and a 20-bedroom fishing lodge, Shielbridge.[20] Doll, therefore, lacked nothing that money could buy. Rudd had some curious ideas, however, about female education and, according to Harry Boyle, owing to some eccentricity on the part of her father, Doll did not learn to read and write until she was past the age of sixteen, though she made rapid strides after that. This extraordinary behaviour on the part of Rudd, if true, does not reflect well on him, and makes Doll out to be a rather uncurious and submissive person.

It was towards the end of May in Cairo that Mattie Bird gave Jack the details about Romaine's engagement to Lord Monson,[21] an attaché at the British embassy in Paris and whose uncle, Sir Edward Monson, was Ambassador there. Evidently she had known him for some time. Jack at once wrote a letter of congratulations to her which would at the same time

*14. Evelyn (Doll) Gorst, Eldon Gorst's wife.*

have given her the news of his forthcoming wedding if Mattie had not already told her.

Jack arrived in England from Egypt late on 18 June, being met at Charing Cross station by Doll and Eva. He was introduced the next day to the bushy-bearded Rudd, his father-in-law to be, and then went down to see his mother at Yateley in Hampshire, where the Gorst parents were now living. In London again Jack visited his father at the House of Commons and while there he met Joseph Chamberlain and Winston Churchill, men he liked to keep up with. He also went to view the presents he and Doll had been given – there were over 300 of them.

On Jack's 42nd birthday, Thursday 25 June, he and Doll were married at Christ Church, Lancaster Gate with Percy Machell as Best Man. Jack's diary then tells the story:

> Reception at the Rudds' afterwards. Khedive came. Left for Castle Combe by 5.15 train and arrived about ¼ to 9 – both rather tired. The motor I ordered never turned up at the station.[22]

We suspect that Gorst set some store by the Khedive coming to the reception. Probably he would have been at the church but for his audience

at Buckingham Palace with the King inconveniently arranged, as far as the wedding went, for 3.15 p.m.! At Castle Combe, Jack and Doll stayed at the Manor for the first stage of their honeymoon. During the ten days there they fished for trout in the Bybrook, and made excursions to Bath and Badminton. For once Jack seemed unhurried. There followed a few days in London before they went up to Scotland to stay on the Rudd estates at Ardnamurchan for more than two months. These seemed from the diary to be idyllic days. Quite soon Jack became intoxicated with the sport of deer-stalking. Day after day, in good weather and bad, he went after deer. One day, when he walked for nine hours, he killed five stags and wounded one. On another outing he killed an 11-pointer with his first shot.[23] Eva and the Hunters came up for a stay. Hylda did not care for deer-stalking and there is a suspicion that Doll was of the same persuasion. But Eva and George joined in with enthusiasm. Various other people came and went including Doll's brothers, Frank and Jack Rudd, the Playfairs and Charles Rudd himself.

The Gorsts' honeymoon was then interrupted by an urgent summons by Cromer, in London awaiting the birth of his child by his second wife, for Jack to attend a meeting at the Foreign Office with the Foreign Secretary Lord Lansdowne. Important negotiations with the French were looming up over the horizon in which Jack was destined to be a principal player as we shall see in the next chapter. In London, Cromer, who could blow hot and cold on the advice he offered Jack about his career, told him that he should leave Egypt as he could never succeed to the post of Consul-General while Financial Adviser, and suggested he went into parliament![24] Jack must have ruminated about this advice as he dined that evening with Mattie Bird before returning the next day to Scotland for further idyllic weeks with Doll, and of course indulging his new passion of deer-stalking.

By the end of September, Jack's leave was at an end, so he and his bride were obliged to return to Egypt. They took the train through France and Italy to Brindisi, and reached Port Said after a calm three-day crossing, during which Jack studied Board of Trade statistics! The Gorsts had already decided to take the handsome villa in Cairo once occupied by the Turnures and which was owned by the Carton de Wiarts, a well-known Belgian family. But the Gorsts were not to be allowed to settle down to married life in Cairo. They had just finished unpacking their wedding presents when, less than six weeks after reaching Cairo, they were obliged to return to Europe in view of the impending Anglo-French negotiations.

CHAPTER

# 12

# NEGOTIATING THE ANGLO-FRENCH ENTENTE, 1904

In the last score years or so of the nineteenth century, the political face of Europe had been changing. France, emerging from its wounding defeat in the Franco-Prussian war, was now developing an empire which, at least in West Africa, was rivalling Britain's. Germany was becoming the most powerful industrial and military state in Europe, as well as acquiring colonies in Africa and among the Pacific islands. She was now associated in the Triple Alliance with the Austro-Hungarian Empire and with Italy, a minor colonial power. Russia, though in alliance with France, was mainly a somnolent giant, while to its south the once great Empire of the Ottomans was in gradual and terminal decline in the Balkans, and was continuing to lose its prestige at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

Relations between Britain and France had during this time been strained, a primary cause being Britain's continuing occupation of Egypt, once represented as temporary but now having all the appearances of permanency. As the scramble for Africa among the European powers gathered momentum in the mid 1880s, the points of friction between these two rival imperial countries increased. Expeditions, usually commercially driven, into the hinterland of the continent provided flashpoints, notably on the Niger and Benue rivers, although attempts, never very successful, were made to define the relevant borders. Then came Captain Marchand's secret and epic expedition beginning in the French Congo – not to be

confused with King Leopold II of Belgium's Congo Free State – and finishing at Fashoda with the aim of laying claim for France to the southern part of the Sudan by the establishment of a string of forts in the region. As we have mentioned before, Marchand was frustrated by Kitchener, and France was obliged to retreat from its ambitions.

Fashoda was soon followed by the outbreak of the Boer War, which sparked a burst of Anglophobia in the French press. Nevertheless, there were signs that the realistic French were becoming resigned to British rule in Egypt. Gorst found, for instance, that the French were being more cooperative on the *Caisse de la Dette Publique*, a body still exercising an oppressive strangehold over Egyptian finances. Then a commercial treaty between France and Egypt, an encouraging development in which Gorst had a hand as we have seen, was signed in 1902. The same year, there were discussions in Paris held by Théophile Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister with Sir Edward Monson the British Ambassador on the subject of Morocco, something which caught the astute eye of Cromer in Cairo. Morocco, never part of the Ottoman Empire, was a country in some turmoil. The power of its ruler, the young Sultan, was showing signs of crumbling and there was unrest on its borders with Algeria. For a time, France had been looking to consolidate her interests in North Africa. Part of Algeria had for 20 years been incorporated into Metropolitan France, while Tunisia, invaded by the French in 1881, had become a French protectorate. Lower down the coast of Africa and below Morocco, Senegal had long been a French colony, its capital city Dakar having been founded by the French in the seventeenth century. From France's point of view, it made political sense in the circumstances of the day for Morocco to be brought within the ambit of the French African Empire.

In May 1903, King Edward VII paid an official visit to France lasting five weeks. His reception at first seemed to be frosty, but the King's friendly personality, together with his obvious enjoyment at being in Paris, wrought within a short space of time a change of atmosphere. The crowds became enthusiastic; there were incessant shouts of 'Vive Edouard' and 'Notre bon Edouard'.[1] The visit was judged a success, and it was generally acknowledged the King had made a significant contribution to the improving of relations between the two countries.

In Egypt, Cromer, and Gorst too, had for a long time been preoccupied with how the power of the *Caisse* might be dismantled or reduced. As Gorst wrote in his autobiographical notes for 1903:

> The main work of the year was ... the consideration of various

> schemes connected with the conversion of the Egyptian debt and having, as their main object, the removal of the international control over the finances of Egypt. On my departure on leave in June Lord C entrusted me with the explanation of our ideas to H.M.G., and a visit to Paris in the autumn was put forward (at my suggestion) in order that I might discuss matters with Cogordan and Louis who both held important posts in the French F.O. This small beginning developed into the larger idea of an all-round arrangement between France and England.[2]

The conversion of the Egyptian debt was concerned with the government being able to offer the debt as interest-paying stock to the public on the open market and without of course being constricted by the powers of the *Caisse*. This was a complex subject on which Gorst had made himself a master since becoming Financial Adviser. Of course what was really wanted was the abolition of the *Caisse* which would give the Egyptian government complete freedom of action financially. Soon after his marriage in June, in fact during his honeymoon the next month, Gorst was having discussions at the Foreign Office and with the Law Officers on these very questions. But these discussions were soon overtaken by other events.

In the first week of July 1903, the French President, Emile Loubet, paid an official return visit to London, receiving a warm welcome. He was accompanied by Delcassé, who had a meeting with Lord Lansdowne, the British Foreign Secretary, during which the latter noted that the French wanted 'to secure for their country a position of assured predominance in Morocco'.[3] Following this visit, an Anglo-French Arbitration Treaty between the countries was signed, which it was no doubt hoped might facilitate the settling of a number of outstanding differences at the newly created Court of Arbitration at The Hague.

Lansdowne, who had earlier been Viceroy of India and then Secretary of State for War, was regarded as a sound though not a brilliant Foreign Secretary. He was willing to solicit and accept advice[4] and, importantly when negotiating, to compromise. In character, he was somewhat reserved. Cromer, on leave in London, was close to Lansdowne. He had noticed in Cairo an article in *The Times* in February suggesting that the French might be interested in settling in combination the Moroccan and Egyptian questions. Now hearing about Lansdowne's conversation with Delcassé, he at once detected the elements of a bargain and, on 17 July, he wrote to the Foreign Secretary suggesting that in the forthcoming discussions with the French the question of Egypt should be attached to that of Morocco

and other matters likely to be raised, namely, Newfoundland, Siam, the New Hebrides (in the Pacific) and Sokoto (in Nigeria). He pointed out that in Morocco, Siam and Sokoto the French wanted things the British could give, while in Egypt and Newfoundland, a self-governing British Colony, the position was reversed. Cromer favoured the British making concessions over Morocco in return for French counter-concessions over Egypt. He went on:

> I understand you to approve of a suggestion I made to the effect that Sir Eldon Gorst should go to Paris in the autumn with a view to sounding the French as regards their attitude in respect to the Conversion of the Egyptian Debt and the abolition of the Caisse de la Dette ... If Sir Eldon Gorst attempts to negotiate about Egyptian affairs in Paris without some idea as to the attitude of H.M.G. as regards Morocco, his mission is foredoomed to failure; but if some indication is given that we should be prepared to consider favourably the French proposals in that quarter, there would be a fair chance of success. What therefore I now venture to suggest is this – that before Sir Eldon Gorst goes to Paris, the government should come to some decision as to the general lines of their policy in regard to Morocco.[5]

The British cabinet agreed that Egypt should be included in matters for discussion with the French, and this prompted Cromer to set out in another key document, dated 7 August, what the British main objectives should be in the negotiations as far as Egypt was concerned. It is interesting to note that Gorst was summoned down from his honeymoon and new pursuit of deer-stalking in Scotland to attend meetings in London with Lansdowne and Cromer on 6 and 7 August, so it is likely that Cromer consulted Gorst on the contents of his memorandum, which essentially laid down:

> 1. The French should recognise the occupation of Egypt;
>
> 2. Britain should obtain freedom of action in financial matters which meant the Egyptian government would have the right to convert the debt. This in effect would mean the *Caisse* and the International Railway Administration would cease to exist;
>
> 3. Various matters concerning the Capitulations should be left alone for the present.[6]

The French position vis-à-vis Morocco would not turn out to present any difficulties to the British side during the protracted negotiations that were about to start. On 1 October, the day before Gorst left with Doll to return to duty in Egypt, Lansdowne wrote to M. Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, setting out 'a statement of the conditions upon which we should be disposed to accede to such an arrangement as the French government contemplate' in Morocco.[7] In more detail, the British recognised, because of the coterminous frontier with Algeria, France's interest in maintaining law and order, and bringing about administrative, economic and financial improvements in Morocco provided British commercial liberty was respected, no fortifications were erected on the seaboard in the Straits of Gibraltar and the interests of Spain, who needed to be consulted, were observed. At the same time, France needed to understand that Britain did not wish to alter the political status of Egypt. Further, as far as British occupation of Egypt went, 'the period of its duration should be left entirely to the discretion of HMG'. This last point – as well as the question of abolishing the *Caisse* – was not to prove straightforward. On the other matters up for discussion, it would be Newfoundland, and to a lesser extent the question of frontiers in West Africa, which would cause some real difficulties in the months ahead. The other places – Siam and the New Hebrides, as well as Madagascar – were not to cause in the event any real problems during the course of these negotiations.

In Newfoundland, there had been a long-standing dispute between Britain and France going back to the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 concerning the rights of French fishermen from the neighbouring islands of St Pierre and Miguelon to catch and dry fish on the 'French shore' of Newfoundland. At issue were the supply of bait, the kinds of fish being landed and the unfair (to Newfoundlanders) bounty paid by the French government to French fishermen.[8] And now, as Gorst was learning, the whole business of negotiating over Egypt and Morocco – matters of major consequence – would now be tied to these rather fiddly details regarding a country in a different part of the globe.

The French response to Lansdowne was slow and not immediately encouraging. As a quid pro quo for the settling of the fisheries dispute, the French now proposed that the British should surrender the small crown colony of the Gambia, a proposal which was sharply rejected by the cabinet. But the British had left a loophole in their negotiating position by indicating they were willing to consider satisfying some minor French territorial ambitions in West Africa. These related in particular to the borders between Sokoto in Nigeria and French territory. The French seized

on this opportunity to improve their access to the Lake Chad region to the east and would in due course gain some 14,000 square miles of thinly populated land. Back and forth went the communications between Lansdowne and Cambon in London and Delcassé in Paris, with Cromer watching events very closely in Cairo.

Gorst was now summoned urgently back from Egypt to play his role in the impending negotiations in Paris, arriving in London with Doll towards the end of November. He reported to Lansdowne at once, and would then begin a series of regular letters (and telegrams) to Cromer keeping him posted on developments over progress or non-progress with the negotiations. There was a certain amount of 'kicking his heels' around at the Foreign Office awaiting events. During this interlude, he was asked down to a house party at Bowood, near Calne, where various notables were gathered. While there he explained to Lansdowne and Austen Chamberlain, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Egyptian background to the negotiations. Lansdowne told Cromer that this review was 'excellent',[9] while Gorst wrote to Cromer on 11 December to tell him that he had prepared for Lansdowne a draft as to how present objections raised by Delcassé could be met: the Foreign Minister's main criticism so far had been directed at the future position of bondholders. He also told Cromer – his letters seemed always to be candid as well as lucid – 'I am afraid that the Government are inclined to be stiff', about some of the points at issue. He instanced the Gambia. For his part, Cromer wrote to Lansdowne urging that Gorst now be sent to Paris to discuss matters.[10] Either Cromer's advice was heeded – it usually was – or Lansdowne felt ready to move. For finally, on Christmas Day, Jack took the night train to Paris, while Doll went off to Scotland.

For a few days, Gorst had to wait for Delcassé to put in an appearance, but he did not meanwhile waste his time – he rarely did. He lunched with Cogordan of the Quai d'Orsay, renewed acquaintance with Embassy friends, went to see Sarah Bernhardt in *La Sorcière* and then travelled down to stay two nights with Baron Gustave Rothschild at Laversine, north of Paris, where at a house party in progress there was shooting in the morning and afternoon, and bridge in the evening. On 31 December, back in Paris, his diary read:

> after lunch had my interview with Delcassé. He was most amiable and accepted nearly all our proposals. Afterwards explained the draft decree to Louis [a senior French official] ... worked in the evening to include certain changes in the decree.

Further interviews, deemed satisfactory by Gorst, were held by him with Cogordan and Louis, before he returned to London on 3 January 1904. There seems little doubt that the British side were content for Gorst to play the lead role in the conduct of face-to-face negotiations with the French in Paris. There is no evidence that anyone else from the Embassy, for instance, was present during them. With the responsibilities given him, Gorst had to have a full understanding of all the issues involved. As for the Decree, this was a key document. Its articles – there would finally be no fewer than 68 of them – would provide regulations for the administration and management of the Egyptian debt and would effectively give the Egyptian government a free hand in disposing of its resources.[11] The original work on it had been done by William Brunyate, later to be Judicial Adviser in Cairo. However, most, if not all, the subsequent work appears to have been done by Gorst, acting within the limits laid down by Cromer. Perhaps rather typically, Gorst told Cromer 'nobody understands the question here except myself.'[12] It was of course hoped that the French would agree to the Decree as an element in the Package involving Egypt and Morocco, and that it would then be accepted by the Powers.

On his return to London, Gorst found Doll ill. Almost as soon as he arrived he had to send for a doctor, and that night she had a miscarriage, chloroform having to be administered to her. However, thankfully for them both, she seemed to make a good recovery, though she was kept in bed for a good week.

At the Foreign Office, Gorst, suffering from a heavy cold, reported to the Foreign Secretary on his visit. Lansdowne was soon telling Cromer that 'Gorst's visit was most useful and he seems to have proceeded with great judgement and tact. So far as I can make out, the Egyptian part of the business may be regarded as virtually settled.'[13] The same day, Gorst also saw the financier Ernest Cassel, who had suggested to Lansdowne that the Foreign Secretary should have someone like Gorst to help him.[14] He presumably meant on a permanent basis. Anxious to keep Cairo abreast of what had taken place in Paris, Gorst wrote three separate detailed letters to Cromer within the space of eight days. In his view, the issue of Newfoundland was blocking progress. This emerged from his discussion with Cogordan on non-Egyptian questions. It would be, he told Cromer, 'a real calamity if the whole business broke down on this account'. On Egypt, Gorst had taken it upon himself to meet Delcassé's strongly held wish that the present system of pledged revenues being paid directly to the *Caisse* should continue. With Louis, Gorst would not yield over the British determination to abolish the present consent needed from the *Caisse* for new

loans. Louis wanted the International Railway Administration to continue until 1905. Gorst said 'emphatically no' to this. As a sop, he hinted that the British would do something special over pensions for French people who lost their jobs as a result of new arrangements. Gorst also told Louis how he proposed to draft the terms of the general agreement on Egypt. This certainly illustrates the wide-ranging role Gorst was playing. Overall Gorst was still somewhat critical of the Foreign Office's style of negotiating, and felt there was not enough give and take by them.[15] As for the French, Delcassé let it be known that he thought Gorst and Cromer were taking a somewhat over-sanguine view of the results of the former's conversations with him and French officials.[16] Nevertheless, as Lansdowne pointed out in letters that month to Monson, the British position in Egypt was 'practically unassailable', while in Morocco the French had no corresponding position; they were not, for example, in occupation of the country. He also related, as an example of the concessions he was offering, how the British were giving the French a free hand east of Siam. But when the French said they could not accept British proposals for rectifying the frontier in Sokoto, Lansdowne concluded rather pessimistically that all this seemed 'to bring our negotiations to a deadlock'.[17] Cromer, responding no doubt to what Gorst and Lansdowne had told him, confided his worries to the Foreign Secretary about the danger of a breakdown; he urged concessions should be made on Newfoundland and that consideration be given to the possibility of dealing with the question of Egypt and Morocco as a separate issue. The latter was something Gorst appeared also to have suggested to Lansdowne at about this time.[18]

Little obvious progress in the negotiations was evident in February, except that Lansdowne set out for Cambon various proposals and minor concessions in relation to West Africa which in due course would help to move forward the negotiating process. Gorst had also managed to settle the terms of the Decree by correspondence with Louis, and there had been much hard work on the draft Agreement on Egypt and Morocco which caused 'endless difficulties'.

Gorst, when not making visits to the Foreign Office, had some time on his hands and did an increasing amount of motoring. He had in fact caught the bug and typically enough took driving lessons. He and Doll, in the meantime, had taken a flat in Whitehall Court, and were seeing something of Jack's sister, Edith, who had married Mark Sykes, Jessica's son, the previous year. The charismatic Mark, already known as an explorer and writer, would become an MP and later, with his knowledge of the Middle East, would himself be engaged in complex negotiations with the French.

He would be remembered as being the co-author in 1916 of the celebrated Sykes-Picot agreement, which purported to partition the Ottoman Empire in the area of the Levant. Sadly he died young in 1919, while in Paris to attend the Versailles Peace Conference.

Suddenly there was some good news for Gorst. His diary entry for 23 February read:

> To see Lord Lansdowne who offered me C. Hardinge's place as Assistant Under Sec. at F.O. which I accepted ... [Eva and I] had tea at H of C with my father and told him above news.

Hardinge was off to be Ambassador to Russia at St Petersburg and would soon be Permanent Under Secretary at the Foreign Office. This appointment in London was just what Gorst, and Cromer too, had wanted. His current good work on the negotiations with the French – with just possibly a little help from Cassel – was paying off. On the day he began house-hunting, letters and telegrams of congratulation began to pour in. But Gorst's work with the French was not finished yet. A tough few weeks lay ahead.

By March, things were looking up and Lansdowne when writing to Monson was concentrating on *how* the negotiations should be concluded: Newfoundland (together with matters relating to West Africa) would need a Convention, whereas written Statements (to evolve as Declarations) would be adequate for the other issues agreed plus a Khedivial Decree on the financial matters. Delcassé, Lansdowne said, now wanted no time wasted (the Foreign Secretary suspected he was concerned about the stability of the French government) and proposed that Gorst should start out at once for Paris.[19] During the whole time negotiations were taking place, the British side, Gorst included, showed some anxiety as to how Germany would react to the agreements made. Indeed Gorst showed himself to be ready to go to Berlin to sell there the contents of the Decree.

So Gorst once again left London for Paris, this time on 13 March, armed with drafts dealing with all the issues in respect of which the principals seemed content to let their subordinates attend to the small print now the main problems seemed to have been sorted out with the necessary compromises reached. Lansdowne clearly had confidence in Gorst and commented that he had 'great hopes that his adroitness aided by Delcassé's impatience may enable us to come to terms'.[20] Cromer continued to play an influential part in what was going on, at one stage proposing to Lansdowne that he should give, if necessary as a bargaining counter to the French, the De Los islands off French Guinea.

In Paris, where he was staying at the Ritz, Gorst had a very busy week. His diary holds the following snippets:

> 14 March: had a most interesting interview of over an hour with [Delcassé]. We discussed negotiations in a friendly spirit and then he talked about the Russo-Japanese war, English fleet and European armaments ...
>
> 16 March: passed the morning with Cogordan discussing our drafts, antiquities questions in Egypt and Abyssinia ... sent Lord C a wire saying how things were going ... everybody civil and hospitable. [Cogordan died suddenly five days after this entry]
>
> 17 March: in the morning discussed the draft decree with Louis and we arrived at a satisfactory arrangement [on the *Caisse* and related financial matters] ... dined with Louis. L told me that Delcassé's was annoyed at an account of the negotiations in the *Figaro* [newspaper].

Gorst seemed able to relax well enough during the seven evenings he spent in Paris, thus showing how well he coped with pressure. Apart from dinner with Louis, he attended one official reception given by the President of the Chamber of Deputies, went to two plays and one farce, and saw one opera, appropriately enough, *Aida*, borrowing for the occasion Baron Rothschild's box.

Almost inevitably with so many facets to the negotiations, some sticking points were to emerge in their final stages. Towards the end of March, on no fewer than three occasions, Lansdowne and Gorst had to see the Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, on contentious points of detail.[21]

There seemed no difficulties over Siam, where the two countries recognised each other's spheres of influence (the British would gain here when some years later the French raised no objection to the British doubling the amount of territory they controlled in the Malay peninsula), or over Madagascar where the British gave ground on commercial rights. Regarding the New Hebrides, it was decided that a joint commission would examine problems of jurisdiction over the population and titles to land. In West Africa, adjustments to the frontiers in Sokoto and in the Gambia too had been agreed and the De Los islands ceded to the French. But over Newfoundland there was a serious last-minute problem concerning the purchase of bait by French fishermen, which the French side thought should be unrestricted. Nevertheless, under the final agreement, the

French renounced their now rather valueless privileges under the Treaty of Utrecht, though the fishermen retained some fishing rights and were given compensation for loss of their establishments on the 'French shore'.

On the vital agreement for Egypt and Morocco, Gorst told Cromer on 31 March that 'throughout these negotiations I have endeavoured to secure the substance of what we desire, while being easy with the French in the matter of form.' He then went on:

> It has been a terribly difficult business to settle the text ... I am afraid you will not find the Agreement as much to your taste as the Decree but I had to do the best I could without running the risk of upsetting the whole business. There was so very little of the spirit of compromise in the colonial part that I had to make some sacrifices in the Egyptian and Morocco parts, or the whole business would have broken down.[22]

One such sacrifice was that the original British insistence that the French help them in getting the Powers to carry out the Decree had to be dropped. The British had to be content with the following wording in Article IX: 'the two governments agree to afford one another their diplomatic support' to obtain the execution of the declaration. Thus Cromer's hawkish advice was overridden,[23] Gorst almost certainly having to side with Lansdowne on this.

Once again there was a last-minute hitch. It occurred the next day, 1 April, which was Good Friday. As Gorst explained to Cromer:

> Delcassé objects very strongly [in a telegram] about the latest phrase as to not fixing a limit of time for the occupation, and demands its omission if he yields on the bait question. Lord Lansdowne will not be back till Wednesday and I shall urge him not to give way on this point, but would you have the whole negotiations break down on this account? ... I hope that these considerations will convince you that the Arrangement will not be a bad one, either for England or for Egypt. In these matters one has to take what one can get, and do not forget how often you have impressed on me the vanishing character of our Morocco asset and the consequent need of selling it as quickly as possible. Moreover in the above I have left out the most important argument of all – namely the desirability of a rapprochement between England and France.[24]

Cromer's biographer, Zetland, comments on what a great responsibility rested on Gorst's shoulders at this moment.[25] Cromer replied to Gorst generously enough on 8 April: 'Pray do not think that I am discontented with the turn affairs have taken. It is clear that we do not get all we want; no one ever does.' On the question Gorst posed, Cromer said, 'Yes, I would break off negotiations on this point,' but then went on to qualify himself! In the event, the wording of the key Article I of the Agreement (or Declaration) on Egypt read:

> The Government of the French Republic declare that they will not obstruct the action of Great Britain in that country [Egypt] by asking that a limit of time be fixed for the British occupation or in any other matter.[26]

Gorst told Cromer that this phrasing seemed to him 'to give practically what we want without putting the dots on the 'i's too conspicuously'. But Cromer was not quite convinced and suggested another formula. But by now it was too late for the crisis had passed and the negotiating was over.

At last, on 8 April, a Convention on Newfoundland (which included matters relating to West Africa), accompanied by four Declarations on Egypt and Morocco, Siam, Madagascar and the New Hebrides was signed in London by Lansdowne and Cambon, forming the Treaty of 1904 between the two countries. To the Declaration on Egypt and Morocco was annexed the long Khedivial Decree on financial matters. The accord on Morocco also contained some secret articles including references to Spain's position in Morocco. The dreaded *Caisse* would remain in being but shorn of its old powers with its functions now strictly limited to receiving assigned revenue for the bondholders and to ensuring payment to them. No longer would the *Caisse* be able to interfere in Egypt's financial affairs and the surplus reserve funds held by the *Caisse*, amounting to some £E6 million, would be transferred to the Egyptian Treasury – a splendid bonus.[27] The British had thus obtained in effect virtual freedom of financial action for the Egyptian government as well as unrestricted control over the country's railways and ports. All this, of course, was provided the other Powers agreed. Only the Capitulations remained as an administrative and juridical fetter and these would not finally be abolished until 1937.

An effect of the treaty which came to be known as the Anglo-French Entente, or the *Entente Cordiale*, was that Egypt ceased to be an international problem. Germany, Austria and Italy all, happily, adhered to the Decree (Germany and Russia later obtained some minor concessions in respect

of it). The Treaty was well received by the British Parliament, though it was subject to some criticism in the French Chamber; however, the policy of accord with the British was approved of in Paris. Above all, the Treaty re-established good relations between France and Britain, something that would lead to timely military cooperation as the storm clouds over Europe began to gather.

The negotiations have been described as long and difficult. For Gorst, they were something of a triumph. He himself commented that the Egyptian part of the agreement was considered as being 'highly satisfactory' by Lansdowne and Cromer.[28] Gorst was not of course the architect of the Entente but he had played an essential part in its creation. Owen has judged that for the success of the negotiations 'great credit must also go to Gorst, who had done most of the diplomatic donkey-work'.[29] Indeed, those in which he had been involved he had handled with skill and coolness. He must too have been an invaluable adviser to Lansdowne, while his drafting was clearly of a high order. Overall he had been seen to perform with success in a major political arena. His reputation as a government financial expert had already been made in Egypt. Now he had emerged as a diplomat of standing.

CHAPTER

# 13

# INTERLUDE

## AT THE FOREIGN OFFICE

On the evening of the day the Anglo-French Entente was signed, Gorst left for Egypt. On arrival in Cairo, he stayed at the Agency as a self-invited guest of the Cromers. A busy ten days lay before him. Perhaps the climax came when he attended a public dinner given in his honour with about 200 people present. He noted:

> I sat between Mustapha Fahmi [the Premier] and Riaz [a former Premier]. Speeches by M.F., Lord C and then Riaz insisted on saying a few words. My reply seemed a great success. Much handshaking and enthusiasm. Afterwards played bridge.[1]

There followed an almost continuous round of saying goodbye to friends and colleagues, as well as business meetings. Apart from the Hunters and Dumreicher, he mentions in particular Boutros Ghali, Garstin, the Findlays and Mitchell Innes from the Agency, Mattie Bird, the Pinchings and the Satows, whose children Gorst was fond of. Then the Greek community, touchingly, wanted to give him a souvenir of his work in Egypt. Most people presumably thought he would not return to Cairo and would now revert to being a conventional diplomat. On business he had long talks with the French Consul-General, and with his successor as Financial Adviser, Vincent Corbett, an old Trinity friend. Alas, Corbett would not make a success of the job.

On his second day back in Egypt, Gorst went to see the Khedive with whom he spent an hour during which Abbas Hilmi 'recapitulated his woes' (were these, or some of them, about Cromer?). A few days later Abbas Hilmi gave him a banquet at the Abdin Palace, but the pity is we do not know who was present. On another day Abbas Hilmi invited Gorst out to his stables to see his horses – Ladybird and Cedar, both looking well, among them – and then sent him back to Cairo in his electric brougham.[2] There can be little doubt that the Khedive genuinely liked Gorst and his company. The relationship between the two men would play an important part in the affairs of Egypt a few years hence.

Just as he was preparing to leave Cairo to catch his ship home from Port Said, a telegram came in for Gorst indicating the Germans were making difficulties over the Khedivial Decree, a key element in the Anglo-French Entente. It looked as if Gorst would have to go to Berlin, something he was ready to do, for Gorst was a man who relished new challenges. In the end, and probably to his disappointment, he did not have to go.

In London, Jack Gorst and Doll settled down to lead a life very different to the one Jack had been accustomed to during all those years in Cairo. They had taken a house, No. 36 in Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster. This was convenient for Jack, giving him a short daily walk skirting St James's Park to his office in Whitehall. The house was roomy and the Gorsts did not seem to be put off by the periodic winter flooding of their basement. For three years they lived a comfortable and, as far as we know, a contented existence. Charles Rudd, Jack's father-in-law, had given the Gorsts an allowance of £3,000 a year so they did not have in any way to stint themselves. They bought a lot of furniture, some from Maples, and a Steinway piano, opened an account at the Army and Navy stores, hired an electric brougham as well as a petrol-driven motor car – the running costs of these two vehicles came, Jack noted down, to about £450 a year – and entertained on quite a handsome scale. According to Jack's diary they would go to the theatre, opera or a concert on an average two or three times a week when they were in London.

Jack was always family minded, and there were relations from both sides of the family as well as friends constantly coming to see the Gorsts. Jack's father, who would lose his seat in parliament in the 1906 election after over 40 years as an MP, was a regular visitor as were Jack's sisters. His mother came less often. Hylda always came with George when on leave, as did Gwen, soon to marry Captain Edward Herbert, an engaging Irishman seconded to the Egyptian army who had fought at Omdurman and would survive Gallipoli before retiring as a Brigadier-General. The Rudd brothers too were often at Queen Anne's Gate as was their father and Doll's step-

mother. Jack quite often saw little Marga Turnure, to whom he was devoted. He would have tea with her, take her to the zoo and when she was not yet nine they went together to see *Henry V*. He also kept up with her mother as well as with old flames like Jessica Sykes and Alice Chauncey. But for the Gorsts the most important event of their London years was the birth of their daughter, Katherine Rachel, in May 1905. She would always be known as Kitty, and would one day be sole life tenant of Castle Combe, its manor, village and estate. She was intelligent, good-looking and, an only child, destined to be spoilt.

Jack did not neglect his exercise. He never did until the last year of his life when he was ill. Besides riding in Hyde Park, Jack took up, after an interval of 25 years, real tennis, which he played several times a week, and in the winter he went skating sometimes with Doll. But the pastime which, excepting perhaps deer-stalking, gave him the most pleasure, though not exercise, was motoring. He and often Doll would go off at weekends on visits to friends or just jaunts out of London. In those days motoring was a pioneer sport, and cars were unreliable, often breaking down and leaving driver and passengers stranded. Jack was not put off at all by this and seemed to treat each journey, of course carefully recorded in his diary, as an adventure: thus going to stay with friends at Mark's Tey in Essex a tyre burst and travelling with his father to Cambridge to attend a celebratory dinner the journey of 55-odd miles took with its many breakdowns just short of four hours. Speeds of course were low. Rattling along at anything over 20 m.p.h. was good going. As might have been expected he was a regular visitor to the Motor Show, and in due course bought a Fiat for the sum of £425. For a moment it seemed his attention was being caught by ballooning. But he may have been, uncharacteristically, put off this sport when on his first trip the balloon with an experienced pilot made a shockingly bad landing at Ilford after being aloft for an hour, badly shaking up the two female passengers.

The Gorsts enjoyed good holidays, and would go every year to Scotland for a month in the late summer for shooting, fishing and deer-stalking on the Rudd estate. Jack was never happier than when dressed in his knickerbocker suit he spent hours on the moors. His second summer in Argyll he claimed two 'royals', one of them the best head of the year in the whole of Scotland. Doll fished but never went stalking or shot. One winter they went to St Moritz, then the most fashionable resort in Switzerland for skating and tobogganing. Skiing had not yet been developed – had it been Jack would have been first down the slopes. Typically, Jack recorded the cost of their fortnight at the Palace Hotel, St Moritz: £40 travel, £50 hotel and

£35 bridge (debts!), making a total of £125. In January 1907 they travelled to Bordeaux by train and then, adventurously, went on by touring car into the winter-bound Pyrenees and even as far as San Sebastian in Spain. At Biarritz where they stayed some days they dined with the Cassels, who had a villa there.[3]

When Jack Gorst returned to the Foreign Office in 1904, after an absence of more than 18 years, he found the place much as it had been. The Office was regarded as being, administratively, badly in need of reform. For instance there was still no registry for processing the papers and telegrams it was receiving daily in increasing numbers. The Permanent Under Secretary, or PUS as the head of the service was called, was the conservative-minded Thomas Sanderson, who had been Gorst's first chief in the Eastern Department, an industrious man with a reputation for having a prodigious memory. He was known as 'Lamps', presumably on account of his oversized spectacles. Gorst was one of three supervising Under Secretaries working to Sanderson, and was allotted the Commercial Department, Egypt, the Sudan, Abyssinia, Morocco and some minor European countries. To these were added in the autumn the Consular Department, Persia and Central Asia.[4] Under him came first division clerks forming the diplomatic establishment handling the political work, and then the junior clerks. Later he had some responsibility for the important Eastern Department. The other two Under Secretaries were the Harrovian Francis Villiers, Lord Clarendon's son, and Francis Campbell, an expert on China.[5] There were two especially notable ambassadors at the time. Charles Hardinge, another Harrovian, whom Gorst had just replaced in the Foreign Office was Ambassador at St Petersburg and, an able man, was destined for the top job. The other was the influential and outspoken Francis Bertie, known as 'the Bull' and since 1903 Ambassador in Rome. The place was apparently full of factions; Bertie headed those in favour of reform, while Sanderson and Villiers were broadly against change. Then there was a good deal of jockeying for position going on for Sanderson's place when he was due to retire in 1905. Gorst had not formed a high opinion of the Foreign Office and its work when engaged on the Anglo-French negotiations, telling Cromer that 'they are very helpless at the Foreign Office and we must not leave anything to chance'.[6] In his autobiographical notes he was candid about how he saw his new surroundings:

> In general ... I found the bureaucratic atmosphere and the want of responsibility – as well as the dead-weight obstacles to anything like real reform – disheartening and dreary beyond words.[7]

He consoled himself that he was only in London because this gave him the best chance of succeeding Cromer. If it were not for this, the impatient man reflected, he 'could hardly endure the monotony and futility of the work'. This was not a promising frame of mind to be in, though things would get better. In fact along the way other possible posts came up, all of which he turned down, as he did in November 1904 when he declined the appointment of Finance member of the Viceroy's Council in India which he was offered by St John Brodrick, the Secretary of State.[8]

In a typical bout of self-analysis he wrote at the end of the year about the 'revolution' in his manner of life:

> ... new domestic life, new work, new surroundings and new relaxations. Considering how irksome all change is after a certain time of life, I am satisfied with the way in which I have grappled with many new and unforeseen difficulties and I feel that my energy and spirit of enterprise are so far not on the wane.[9]

There is, nevertheless, an impression gained, perhaps a fleeting one, from his diaries of this period that he was not being sufficiently stretched in his work, Certainly, his position as the Egyptian expert at the Foreign Office was confirmed, and when Cromer was home on leave he attended discussions with him, Balfour, still the Prime Minister, and Lansdowne. Also about this time he was made aware by his friend Garstin that in Egypt a clique was forming – the names of Wingate and the lawyer Brunyate were mentioned – who were working against his succeeding Cromer. Their favoured candidate was Rennell Rodd of the Agency, a popular man whom Gorst liked too and who one day would be Ambassador in Rome for a record eleven years. Of him the Khedive once said that Rodd was the only British official with whom he had never had a disagreement. These rumours Gorst brushed aside as not being of much consequence. Probably, to his relief, he also heard that the formidable Milner, now home from South Africa, did not want to go to Cairo.[10] He, therefore, would not be a rival to Gorst. Later on he heard that Kitchener was very keen on getting Cromer's job. But happily for Gorst the Foreign Office was against this, and in any case Kitchener's term as C-in-C India was extended. Cassel, on the same theme, warned Gorst in May 1905 that he had enemies at the Foreign Office who were accusing him of being lazy. The next day he dined with Cassel and afterwards played bridge. The King was there and

> told me that he had heard that I was never to be found at the F.O. I

had already guessed the source of this rumour and this confirmed my suspicion.

This sort of allegation could be damaging, and the next day Gorst took steps to see that Lansdowne was informed. He noted that measures were to be taken 'to dissipate H.M.'s error. It is clear that Bertie is the source of this calumny'. The previous year, Bertie had taken temporary charge of the Foreign Office when Sanderson was away ill, and clearly he and Gorst had clashed. Another senior official who did not care for Gorst and his pushiness was Louis Mallet, later Ambassador in Turkey.[11]

That summer there was work in the Foreign Office concerning Abyssinia, over which Gorst took the lead. A French company was building a railway from Djibouti in French Somaliland to Addis Ababa, and at some stage Emperor Menelik II had refused the French permission to continue the line on to his capital. British money, and hence British interests, were involved. The following year after much discussion a Tripartite Agreement was signed between Britain, France and Italy (the last named country was building a railway in Eritrea) recognising the interests of the various parties and the *status quo* in Abyssinia. While this was not perhaps a major issue, Gorst regarded the Agreement as being largely his work,[12] and so he could claim credit for a contribution to safeguarding the position in Abyssinia of both Britain and Egypt; the latter was involved on account of Abyssinia being the country at the headwaters of the Blue Nile.

More importantly, the Germans were now being difficult about Morocco. Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, had through German pressure resigned. This had followed a visit to Tangier by Kaiser Wilhelm II at the end of March 1905, when he had flamboyantly proclaimed that the Sultan of Morocco was 'absolutely free', that the Powers had equal rights there under the Sultan's sovereignty and that Germany had growing interests in Morocco. In fact all this was due to a carefully orchestrated policy, a mischievous one, by the German government calculated to test the solidarity of the Entente.[13] A conference of the Powers was now being mooted, and Gorst, ever to the fore, conferred with Cambon, the French Ambassador, afterwards seeing Lansdowne. The next day, 14 July, Gorst 'suggested to Sanderson that, if there was nobody special in view to represent HMG at the Conference on Morocco it would be a suitable job for me'.[14] No one could accuse Gorst of being unwilling to take responsibility. We do not know Sanderson's response to this but in the event no conference was held for six months. But when it was convened, at Algeciras, Gorst did not attend it.

For the staff at the Foreign Office there was an eventful end to the year 1905. Quite apart from the change of government following Balfour's resignation in December and the coming to power of the strong Liberal administration under Campbell-Bannerman, there was a change of PUS. Sanderson had retired and his successor was Hardinge of the Diplomatic Service. Gorst wrote: 'there was no other possible candidate in the office itself'.[15] For the past 50 years, the PUS had always been chosen from the Foreign Office officials and not from the Diplomatic Service. So Hardinge's appointment did not therefore conform to the usual pattern. Steiner records that 'various names were suggested as possible replacements for Sanderson – Bertie, Hardinge, Gorst and Sir A. Godley of the India Office.'[16] It is a surprise to find Gorst's name on this list, since, as a junior member of the hierarchy of top officials and with virtually only the experience of Egypt and the French negotiations to his credit, he was surely an unlikely candidate. Nevertheless, his star must have risen very quickly. As early as November 1904, Drummond Wolff, his father's old friend and colleague, had met Gorst at the Carlton Club. He had been told, he said to Gorst, that he, Jack Gorst, was to succeed Sanderson.[17]

Gorst himself admitted, 'I do not know whether I was considered in connection with the vacancy.' Having a good opinion of his own abilities he may well have thought he was in the running. Bearing all this in mind, Bertie must have seen Gorst as a distinct rival, which would explain his clumsy tactics earlier in the year.

The main thing for Gorst, perhaps, was that with the change of office regime his work became more congenial and he found that 'my capacities were better appreciated than formerly'.[18] The shrewd Hardinge clearly was a better man-manager than his predecessor, and, it would seem, had a good opinion of Gorst. Certainly, Gorst felt more assured of his future. If this had not been so, Cassel might have been successful in persuading Gorst to accept the governorship of the National Bank of Egypt, made vacant through Palmer's sudden death.

Cromer, such was his prestige, had been offered the job of Foreign Secretary in the new government but had turned it down. Instead Edward Grey, aged only 43 but already with 20 years experience of the House of Commons and with some of foreign affairs, was appointed. He was earnest, somewhat shy, and not on the radical side of his party. But he had a good brain and was a man ready to make decisions about difficult problems. He was also a dedicated naturalist, ornithologist and fisherman. Poor Grey got off to a sad start as Foreign Secretary because soon after taking office his wife was fatally injured in a carriage accident. Gorst's relationship with

*15. Sir Edward Grey, Foreign Secretary, 1905–1916.*

Grey would be critical later on regarding his management of affairs in Cairo. It has been suggested that he, wrapped up in his work at the Foreign Office, had little contact with Grey before he went to Egypt. This is not, however, exactly borne out by Gorst's diary. In 1906 there are references to his having at least twelve meetings, including some lunches, with Grey. One of these occasions was when Grey paid a call on Gorst in his box during a concert at the Albert Hall. In 1907 Gorst lunched or dined with Grey four times in a little over three months. The two men may not have been intimate, but must have known each other quite well. And as far as we can tell they developed a rapport.

A subject over which Gorst spent some time while at the Foreign Office was Persia (now Iran). Here he would have been dabbling on the fringes of the 'Great Game'. The British government, not short of advice on the subject from Curzon when he was Viceroy of India, was made constantly aware of encroachment by Russia on Afghanistan, something affecting the security of the Indian sub-continent. In due course and a little after Gorst had left the Foreign Office there was signed in 1907 an Anglo-Russian Convention which *inter alia* partitioned Persia into two spheres of influence with a neutral zone between them, Britain taking the western and Russia the eastern sphere. Following this accord the old threat to India

from Russia receded, though this may not have been fully recognised at the time. Gorst was involved closely in work leading up to the Convention, in which Hardinge played a key role. Steiner states: 'with Eldon Gorst's assistance he [Hardinge] was able to draft the Persian agreement and convince the India Office, if not the Indian Government, of its necessity'. She goes on to say how Gorst quickly mastered many of the details needed during the course of the Anglo-Russian negotiations, commenting that his minutes showed 'a first class mind at work'. Among his colleagues he was known for the rapidity with which he invariably worked. Intense and concentrated energy was one of his most marked characteristics.[19]

In February 1906, Gorst found himself chairing the New Hebrides Commission, a body set up to solve friction between French and British traders and missionaries in these Pacific islands. Gorst must have landed the job because this issue had come up in the Anglo-French Entente negotiations. The French representatives on the Commission were a senator and the Governor of the large French island of New Caledonia. The solution arrived at – and how much, one asks, was Gorst influenced by the case of the Sudan – was that the islands were to be administered jointly by Britain and France as a condominium, with each country appointing a High Commissioner, each one with jurisdiction over his own nationals. The negotiations leading to a Convention signed in October 1906 had been spread over 19 sessions of discussion and had not all been straightforward. Gorst records that, for instance, during the afternoon of 7 February there had been a 'stormy meeting'.[20] It looks as if Gorst must have been a skilful chairman, even if the final results of the Commission were somewhat contrived. The arrangements made met with mixed success – one problem was who would chair the joint court; this eventually had to be resolved by a neutral chairman appointed by the King of Spain – and in its later years the condominium was known as the pandemonium! However, the New Hebrides was governed as a condominium up to the time when the country became in 1980 the Republic of Vanuatu.

Another piece of work involving tricky negotiating took place in May the same year when Gorst succeeded in reaching an agreement with Baron von Eetevelde, the personal emissary of King Leopold II of Belgium. This was concerned with leases in the Sudan province of Bahr-el-Ghazal which the British had in 1894 rashly allowed the King to obtain on behalf of the Congo Free State in return for a strip of land in East Africa which might facilitate the wild project of a Cape-to-Cairo railway. The result of these negotiations – and Gorst had to fight hard to get his way – was that the Baron agreed to abrogate the leases to the great anger of the King.

Anything to do with the Congo Free State was something of a minefield since the place was run as the King's personal fief in a cruel and barbaric way until international opinion forced Leopold to convey the State to the Belgian government in 1908 as a colony. Gorst may have been fortunate to get away so successfully with this piece of work, for, as he stated, had the dispute gone to arbitration the case would have been decided against Britain.[21]

Also in that month, Gorst met Grey, at the time fairly new to his job, to discuss the incursion of Turkish troops into Egypt's Sinai peninsula. This is referred to as the Taba, or Aqaba, crisis. As early as January 1906 a small British reconnaissance force had discovered that Taba lying eight miles south-west of the head of the Gulf of Aqaba was occupied by a Turkish garrison, who were there following a decision by the Turks to extend the Hejaz railway to Aqaba. Turkey, it transpired, was claiming Sinai as part of the Ottoman Empire. Diplomatic exchanges followed with an eventual stiff ultimatum from Britain to the Sultan demanding the withdrawal of the Turkish force. Eventually a frontier commission was set up to settle the dispute and Taba was kept within Egyptian territory.[22] What is particularly interesting about the incident is the way that Egyptian nationalists led by Mustafa Kamil sided with the Ottomans against the Egyptian government as part of their protest at British rule in Egypt.

When he returned to Egypt, Gorst would be intimately concerned with the aftermath of the Dinshawai incident, one of major significance to British rule in Egypt and which occurred in June 1906. What happened was this. A party of five British officers, one a doctor and all from the Mounted Infantry, set off from their camp in the Delta on 13 June 1906, to shoot pigeons in the neighbouring village of Dinshawai. They thought they had the requisite permission as their leader, Major Pine-Coffin, had shot there the previous year. Thus far the facts are clear but accounts of succeeding events vary.[23] The party, having arrived at the village, split into two and began their shooting some 500 metres outside it. At just about this time a fire broke out in a grain pile on a threshing floor nearby. Blaming the officers for the fire, an angry villager tried to seize one of their guns. In the fracas that followed a gun went off wounding several villagers, including the wife of the owner of the threshing floor. The Major attempted to calm things down but as the officers withdrew a crowd of villagers attacked them with heavy staves, broke the Major's arm and tried to stop them all from leaving. The Major told Captain Bull, one of the party, and the doctor to get back to the camp six miles away and bring help. On his way Bull collapsed and died that evening from, according to the medical verdict, the combination

of heatstroke and a blow to the head. In the meantime the rest of the party were rescued, and no fewer than 70 villagers were arrested.

The British reaction was swift. A special tribunal was convened – this had been made possible with the passing in 1895 of a Khedival decree to deal with attacks on army personnel – comprising five judges, three British and two Egyptian. The acting Minister of Justice, Boutros Ghali, presided. Fifty-two villagers were charged with the murder of Bull, and, astonishingly, within just two weeks of the incident the trial was over and sentences passed. These were harsh. Twenty-one of the accused were found guilty having been identified by the officers as their assailants. Of these, four were to be hanged, two imprisoned for life, one was to receive a fifteen-year sentence, six a seven-year sentence, three a one-year sentence plus 50 lashes and the other five to just 50 lashes. There was no appeal. The death sentences were carried out at once the day after the trial ended, at Dinshawai and in public. The British were determined to make an example of the villagers. There was an outcry at the outcome of the trial both in Egypt and in Britain. Cromer was on his way home for annual leave during the trial and by the time he had reached Britain the sentences had been passed. According to his biographer, Owen, as soon as he heard about them he realised a mistake had been made. In a memorandum Cromer wrote in July, he stated that 'the sentences, though severe, were just and necessary'.[24] Obviously, he had to support the Egyptian authorities. As for Gorst, we have no information of how he responded at the time to Dinshawai. For instance his diary is quite silent about the affair. Later, however, he was to write of this unhappy event describing it as:

> our most mismanaged piece of work since the beginning of the Occupation. Our ill-timed severity gave a tremendous fillip to the nationalist party and alienated the middle-class Egyptian Moslems.[25]

The scars left on British rule in Egypt by the Dinshawai affair were long in healing. Some would say they were permanent. We examine in a later chapter what Gorst did on becoming Consul-General in an attempt to ameliorate the punishments handed down to the villagers.

One of Gorst's responsibilities was to supervise the Commercial Department. Most Foreign Office officials preferred to deal with political and not commercial matters. This Department was regarded as being a dull one to serve in and also as being inefficient. The senior clerks there were reputed to be men who had lost ambition.[26] In missions abroad, commercial matters were usually dealt with by commercial attachés who

according to Gorst had no status or prospects. In the summer of 1906 Gorst having been instructed, together with H. Llewellyn-Smith, to undertake an inquiry into 'The System of British Commercial Attachés and Commercial Agents', produced a short and punchy report about these rather forgotten personnel.[27] The four recommendations made were aimed at improving the position of commercial attachés, and proposed they should work from a headquarters in London. In missions it was felt that diplomatic staff should not be despised, as they were at present, because of doing commercial work which the authors of the report thought to be important. As for commercial agents – they were involved with collecting commercial information though their duties were never strictly defined – their work, it was recommended, should henceforth be undertaken by consular staff. Gorst's report was published 13 months after it was written, perhaps showing that this was a subject not meriting speedy attention.

That October, Gorst heard that the post of Ambassador to the USA was to become vacant, and that there would be difficulties filling it. Writing about this ten months later he told how he had been

> privately approached by Cassel (doubtless at the instigation of H.M.) who hinted that I could get the post if I liked. After consideration I decided to discourage the idea. The work would not have been congenial – principally pouring butter on the Americans – and would have taken me too far away from my natural destination Egypt.[28]

In reflecting earlier about this semi-offer, in his diary on 6 December, he felt he could not refuse the post if actually offered it. In the event it went to the lawyer-politician James Bryce.

That autumn, Gorst turned his mind to writing an article about Egypt. This may have been sparked by his brother's idea of producing a book on that country. Harold, who had had a rather chequered career after his efforts to be a professional musician had run into the sands, had already had books published: his short biography on Disraeli had much to commend it, while his study of *The Fourth Party*, that maverick group of Conservative MPs which included his father, was historically valuable. But Jack Gorst was not keen on this project of Harold's, which, he thought, might prejudice his chances of succeeding Cromer, and so the elder brother persuaded the younger one to drop his plan. If Harold's idea never materialised, Jack's did. His article did emerge and was published in January 1907. Somehow he had the enduring knack of carrying through his intentions be they on a big or a small scale.

The article was a long one and was entitled 'Egypt: The Old Problem and the New'.[29] Much of the piece covered old familiar ground and was a defence, a competent one, of British policy in Egypt and of Cromer's stewardship. Of course he could hardly be critical of his former chief if he wished to succeed him, and nor was he. On the contrary, he lavished praise on the Consul-General. For Gorst the 'new' problem was nationalism, although he did not favour that term, not then quite in vogue, preferring to say that there was now a new 'inquiring and critical spirit' abroad in Egypt. The question he posed was how to reconcile what had been achieved under the British occupation with what was 'reasonable and legitimate in the new national spirit'. Those promoting this spirit seemed, he asserted, to have three objectives:

> (1) an Egyptian constitution modelled on one from an advanced European country;
>
> (2) the substitution of Egyptians for Europeans in higher civil service posts;
>
> (3) the expansion of higher education by the state.

While these objectives were, as Gorst saw it, 'eminently laudatory' in themselves he, nonetheless, proceeded to pour cold water on the proposals. It would be 'folly' to think of increasing political rights until Egyptians had learnt to exercise the powers they already possessed. Likewise the demand for more Egyptians in higher posts was 'premature' – administrative inefficiency would result. And he thought regarding the present higher education policy the government was right to limit facilities to providing what was needed for supplying the public services and the professions. He did not wish to see the country flooded with superficially trained young men for whose energies no suitable outlet was available and who might consequently become political agitators.

Nevertheless, he considered the combination of the forces of 'nationalist agitation', the anglophobe press and Pan-Islamism coming from Constantinople could 'not fail to give rise to some uneasiness in regard to the future'.

Perhaps rather surprisingly he also touched on, boldly but tactfully enough, the relationship in Cairo between the Khedive and the British Agency. This was no longer, he observed, as cordial as it had been in an earlier period of the occupation. He considered the best way to counter the

nationalist and Pan-Islamic combination was for the Agency to enlist the support of Abbas Hilmi, even though the Khedive's prestige might have declined. Moreover, he opined, the sections of Egyptian society which counted had decided that their ruler viewed the existence of the foreign occupation with disfavour and was in sympathy with those agitating against it. In this regard Gorst would soon be following his own advice.

On the fundamental question as to whether there should be changes in British policy he cautioned against the hasty abandonment of past policy which had proved successful, such as the regime of light taxation, and its replacement by ill-considered reforms. While the introduction of anything like constitutional government would be out of the question, the development of self-governing municipalities could be undertaken and at the same time some changes might be made to the powers of the Legislative Council to increase its position and influence. All this might be summed up, he believed, as 'Egypt for the Egyptians', a catchphrase he now favoured, though he warned that any 'violent disturbance of the existing order would be fatal'. He ended his article on a perhaps unfeeling note for at least moderate Egyptian readers. These words they might have read with some dismay.

> The consolidation of the reforms which have been introduced, the transformation of the Egyptians into a people ready for autonomy, must be a work, not of years, but of generations.

This article had of course been written while Gorst had been away from Egypt for three years or so. Although he had been keeping abreast of Egyptian affairs in the Foreign Office, as he would soon discover, things in 1907 were rather different to what they had been before. Gorst in his article appeared to be advocating a combination of keeping the status quo and of trying one or two modest reforms as palliatives. Realistically he recognised these palliatives needed to be given due to current political circumstances a degree of precedence. His words could certainly help to show the new Liberal government at Westminster that he had the right credentials to succeed Cromer.

CHAPTER

# 14

# SUCCEEDING LORD CROMER AND THE RISE OF NATIONALISM

By March 1907, there were signs that Cromer's health, both mental and physical, was giving way. He was beset, it seemed, with worries and problems which were getting on top of him. In the aftermath of the Dinshawai affair there had been in the House of Commons endless and tormenting questions to plague him about special courts and the length of sentences passed on those found guilty; further, an Egyptian committee had been formed in the House to watch over what was happening in Egypt. Cromer was complaining too about the volume of work, and confided to Grey that all the responsibility was now falling onto his shoulders. Then he went on to say that 'Gorst's departure made a great difference to me. I have absolutely no one here except Garstin who is not departmental in the narrow sense.'[1] And he had the feeling too that he was not being backed up properly by the government at home. For his part, Grey tried to make reassuring noises and agreed to increase the size of the army of occupation.

Cromer's medical problem concerned his digestion. For some time he had been suffering from dyspepsia and had become weak through not eating properly; in fact he had been relying for sustenance on Bengers food for young children.[2] Then something snapped – he must have been near to having a nervous breakdown – and he decided to go. On 28 March he telegraphed his resignation to Grey, giving health reasons, and following this up with a long letter written the same day. He wanted his resignation

announced by Grey in Parliament and did not want any leaks. Towards the end of the letter he wrote:

> If, as I hope will be the case, Gorst succeeds me, you could lay stress on the fact that, inasmuch as he may almost be called a pupil of mine, his nomination is of itself an adequate guarantee that no change of policy is in contemplation.[3]

In reply, Grey expressed his shock at the news of Cromer's resignation but understood the medical reasons which had led to it. As for his successor, Grey replied that:

> I am sure Gorst is the best choice; he has knowledge, ability and caution, combined in a special degree for the place in Egypt; but he will have great difficulties at first; sooner or later the Khedive etc, will try to take advantage of your absence, and Gorst may have difficulties, which you have not had in recent years because he will not have the same ascendancy over the British element and officials. But all this would apply equally to anyone else, and I am satisfied that in sending out Gorst we are doing the best we can.[4]

At the Foreign Office, Gorst learned 'very privately' from the PUS Hardinge on 4 April, as his diary tells us, that Cromer was 'about to resign almost immediately on account of ill-health and that he had recommended me as his successor'.[5] This news Gorst kept to himself, not even telling Doll. Appropriately perhaps, he played poker that evening. On 7 April, he saw his mother and Eva just back from Egypt where they had been staying with Hylda and Gwen. No rumours about Cromer or his health were vouchsafed, though Eva, who liked to give her brother tit bits of Cairo gossip, said that Lord Edward Cecil now working in Cairo was supposed to be a dangerous intriguer! Certainly, Lord Edward disliked Gorst, and is reputed to have told Harry Boyle, the Oriental Secretary, 'If Gorst succeeds Lord Cromer I leave Egypt by the first boat.'[6] (He did no such thing.) After Gorst's death, Cecil became under Kitchener Financial Adviser though by all accounts he had little talent for finance.

Then came the, for Jack, stupendous entry in his diary for Tuesday 9 April:

> Rackets [The game]. F.O. Sir E sent for me to say the Govt. and the King wished to appoint me Lord Cromer's successor. As the Cabinet

> were to be asked the matter was to be kept secret until Thursday. He spoke most nicely about me ... told D at lunch ... we have to start in 10 days.

The announcement was duly made by Grey in the Commons 'in very flattering language'. Balfour replied for the opposition and, Gorst noted, warmly applauded the new appointment. Jack Gorst might at this point have waved a small flag of exultation, for Balfour and his father John Gorst had been together in the Fourth Party and then for very many years colleagues in Lord Salisbury's various administrations. There had been, however, animosity at length between the two men, and Balfour had once wanted his uncle Salisbury to sack John Gorst for being disloyal. Although Balfour had not succeeded he had thereafter successfully blocked Gorst senior's further political advancement.[7]

Jack Gorst's own reaction to his promotion, as he was to write later, was not one of surprise but rather of the inevitability of the appointment. He had always had a semi-superstitious belief in his own star and thus ability to achieve this particular goal. Also he thought this was the right psychological moment for his return to Egypt. The fact that no one else was considered for the job, he mused, reflected credit on the 'thoroughness with which I had been for some years qualifying for this post'. He went on:

> Throughout the British Empire [Egypt was not in fact part of it] there is no place of which the occupant enjoys greater freedom of action than that of the British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt. The C-G is the *de facto* ruler of the country without being hampered by a Parliament or a net-work of Councils like the Viceroy of India, and the interference of the home govt. has hitherto been limited ... Otherwise H.M's representative can practically run the government of the country on whatever lines he thinks right – a great responsibility involving the welfare of some 11 millions of human beings ... I embark upon this great trust at the age of 46, with my mental and bodily powers unimpaired and full of vigour and with the feeling that my past training and experience of affairs had been exactly what was necessary to prepare me to fill this position worthily.[8]

The man may have been ambitious and enjoyed the exercise of power but his sentiments could be lofty. Nor, we believe, was he without humility.

Gorst had a busy ten days in the middle of April during which he saw the Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and then dined with

*16. The Gorsts arrive in Cairo, April 1907.*

Grey when they had a long talk on Egyptian matters. A furious round of further meetings, goodbyes to friends and family, and then on 19 April he and Doll, but not small Kitty, caught the Brindisi mail from Charing Cross at 9 p.m. On the train Gorst read Willmore's Arabic grammar and found that he 'remembered the language well'. He also found to his evident relief that Doll was 'much happier in her mind at her apprehensions for the immediate future turning out to be unfounded'. While on board ship he discussed technical education with a Mr Wells, who was to be the new Head of that department in Cairo. He pleased Gorst by appearing to be 'a sensible man with liberal views'.[9]

At Port Said, a special train awaited the Gorsts in order to hurry them on to Cairo. There Jack found Cromer in a nervous shaky state and, as he later told Grey, 'greatly changed since last autumn both physically and morally'. But he was able, nevertheless, to have a good talk with him, and afterwards saw his old friend Garstin. That night, although he was tired, he was 'excited and could not sleep'. Within a few days Cromer seemed better and 'the operation', Gorst observed to Grey, 'of transferring his burden on to my shoulders is giving him immediate relief and seems even to have mitigated his digestive attacks'. This says something for the confidence Gorst inspired in his old chief. Concerning Gorst's arrival in Cairo, the

young Ronald Storrs of the Agency, who had been recruited by Gorst a few years before, wrote to his father: 'People here are relieved that Gorst is coming: they were in a mad terror but it should be Kitchener or Milner.'[10]

Gorst had early meetings with the Premier, still after many years the faithful Fahmi, and the Khedive. His audience with the latter lasted an hour and he commented that 'nothing could have been more cordial or friendly than the reception I received'. The conversation was general and both tactfully avoided 'treading on delicate ground'.[11] Gorst had always had good relations with Abbas Hilmi and intended these should continue where they had left off. *Per contra* the hostile relations between Cromer and the Khedive had grown to such a pitch, Gorst later wrote, that a 'condition of armed neutrality' existed between the two men; this Gorst felt could hardly have lasted much longer. We might even speculate that these tensions might have been contributing to Cromer's stress – who knows? This state of affairs would not have come as any great surprise to Gorst, but he would have reflected ruefully on the trouble he had successfully taken, when he was Financial Adviser, to try and keep the peace between the Agency and the Palace.

One of Jack Gorst's good points was the solicitude he felt for his parents, siblings and extended family. He had scarcely unpacked his bags in Cairo when he found his brother-in-law, George Hunter, alone and unwell in his house at Gezira, his wife Hylda being on her way home to England with their children. The next day George was seriously ill with pneumonia. Jack at once telegraphed Hylda, who had just reached Marseilles, telling her to return to Egypt. George had been ill a year or two before in London and had come under the surgeon's knife. Regularly Jack had gone to visit him in his nursing home. Now he did the same again in Cairo. Happily George recovered well and by the time Hylda arrived back he was convalescent.

Cairo was in a state of some turmoil at the time of the Gorsts' arrival there. As Gorst later was to write:

> The political unrest and excitement which had been simmering throughout the winter boiled up again with the news of Lord Cromer's departure and threw the press, the authorities, and even the Agency into a state bordering on hysteria.[12]

In addition, a series of strikes starting in mid April among the numerous cab-drivers concerning an enforced police inspection of the state of their horses followed by strikes of carters and then of butchers must have added to the feeling of crisis. While Gorst did not wish to alarm Grey unduly,

he told him after Cromer had left Egypt how the place in April was full of 'absurd rumours' anticipating demonstrations and hostile crowds which would materialise when Cromer went both to the Opera House to deliver his farewell speech and to the railway station for his final departure from Cairo. There was as well a prediction of the massacre of Europeans, while the Egyptians were afraid that British troops would attack them.[13] Gorst's reaction to all this was phlegmatic disbelief, and, in the event, he was right, for nothing happened. True, the Opera House occasion was marred because the only three leading politicians attending it were the Premier Mustafa Fahmi, Riaz and the fairly newly appointed Education Minister the formidable Saad Zaghlul. The occasion would also have been marred for most Egyptians when they heard Cromer say in his speech that the British occupation was 'to continue for an indefinite period'. When Cromer finally proceeded to the railway station the streets were lined by soldiers with fixed bayonets behind whom stood silent crowds, though Gorst observed to Grey that they seemed to be good-tempered and showed no sign of disaffection. On the other hand, writing to his mother, the immensely loyal Boyle said the 'Lord' had left amid a scene of 'extraordinary enthusiasm'. Perhaps Gorst tactfully summed matters up for Grey by saying Cromer had a send-off 'worthy of the services he had rendered to his country'.[14]

Nevertheless, Gorst had taken nothing for granted. The British commandants at Cairo and Alexandria had assured him that no riots were being organised. However, the police, while making themselves inconspicuous, were kept on call ready to cope with any emergency. Rather against his will Gorst did agree to a route march by the military through Alexandria 'to allay excessive panic of lower class Europeans'. All this is interesting as it indicates that Gorst was already in charge of law and order. As far as the outlook went, Gorst, having taken soundings widely, told Grey that the fanatical feeling of the previous year had disappeared and that discontent, such as it was, was confined to the large towns, and was mainly due to economic causes. 'The nationalist agitation,' he considered, 'has not, so far, penetrated very far down.' As for the press campaign, he estimated there would be a lull in this. In the short term, Gorst's predictions were not inaccurate. Grey had suggested that the present military force in Egypt might be increased, but Gorst for the moment turned aside this suggestion saying he had not as yet formed a clear idea whether the present garrison was adequate to maintain internal security.[15]

There was one important development in Egypt of which Gorst had been very much aware as we have seen from the article he wrote on 'Egypt: the Old Problem and the New', discussed at the end of the last chapter. This

was the rise of nationalism, a subject that Cromer had been inclined to sweep under the carpet. How was it nationalism and nationalist agitation had now come to the fore and of what did it consist? To give answers to these questions we must retrace our steps.

## THE NATIONALISTS

After the failure of the Urabi revolt, there was no real manifestation of a nationalist spirit among the Egyptian people for a decade or so. As Wilfrid Blunt, writer, rebel and wager of crusades for freeing Egypt, India and Ireland from alien British control, observed: 'The condition [of the nationalists in Egypt] was one of patriotic torpor or as a party they had ceased to exist being without leaders without organization.'[16] The revolt against the Khedive of 1882 had of course been spearheaded by army officers who had not combined to form any political party as such. The Egyptians would have to wait for 25 years before the arrival of full-blown political parties in their country.

In the meantime Arabic newspapers and Egyptian culture flourished. Books were written and poetry produced. Available for the reading public were the prominent and pro-French newspapers *al-Ahram* and *Le Bosphore Egyptien*, the latter catering for a French-speaking minority and being critical of Cromer. *Al-Muqattan*, well disposed to the British and *al-Muayyad*, the anti-British voice of the Egyptians, both appeared in 1889. The nationalist paper of Mustafa Kamil, *al-Liwa*, was not, however, published until 1900. Specifically in terms of culture there were intellectual discussions on the questions of the day, be they on politics, literary matters, or religion in the private salons. Apart from the salon of the often mentioned in these pages Princess Nazli, salons were held by other leading Egyptian notables: for instance by Muhammed Sultan, who was once the President of the Assembly of Notables, by the ubiquitous Premier Riaz and by Ali Mubarak, a writer who trained as an engineer and became a minister.[17] These salons provided meeting grounds for young men with ideas who might wish to let off steam about the British occupation and the apparent lack of political progress in Egypt. Some of them became in due course influential leaders. Among them was Shaykh Muhammed Abduh, a moderate nationalist and journalist who had been sentenced to three years exile for his part in Urabi's rebellion. During this time he had travelled, visited Britain where he had met and talked with Lord Hartington,[18] then Secretary of State for India. When he was allowed to return to Egypt by the Khedive he became a university teacher, then a reforming judge and was finally appointed Grand Mufti in 1899. It was Abduh who inspired Ahmed

Lutfi al-Sayyid, another moderate nationalist who was a defence counsel at the Dinshawai trial and then became an important newspaper editor and thinker. Qasim Amin was in rather the same mould as Lutfi and wrote a controversial book attacking the backwardness of Egyptian institutions and traditional attitudes. Shaykh Ali Yusuf founded *al-Muayyad* and then in due course a political party.

The sudden death early in 1892 of Khedive Tawfiq and the arrival on the scene of the new Khedive, his son Abbas Hilmi, brought a change in the political climate of Egypt. The youthful Abbas Hilmi was not, like his father, compliant to the wishes of the occupying power. He wanted to rule his country himself, and had as his hero his grandfather Khedive Ismail. He strongly resented the position acquired by Britain in Egypt and especially that of her dominant Consul-General, Lord Cromer, who, he considered, had usurped the Khedivial authority. These two men, both strong personalities, were autocrats by nature and were to clash repeatedly, twice famously as already recounted. The first time was in 1893 when Abbas Hilmi tried to appoint his own Premier without reference to Cromer, and the second a year later on the occasion of the so-called 'frontier incident' when he was critical of the army. Both times the Khedive was forced, humiliatingly, to climb down in the face of demands by Cromer backed by the British government in London. Nevertheless, the Egyptian people regarded Abbas Hilmi as a patriot struggling to rid his country of the alien occupying power. Undoubtedly Abbas Hilmi saw himself during these Cromer years – and this is clear from the Khedive's memoirs[19] – as a nationalist: both as a figurehead of a reawakened nationalist movement, and as a supporter, even leader, of elements emerging among the nationalist forces at the end of the century. There were occasions when he might act in a covert role. Thus he secretly recruited young men into forming an articulate opposition to the British through the use of the press. For this exercise he provided funds. He also tried to promote the Egyptian cause abroad and encouraged a secret French committee for Egyptian independence.[20]

The battle, for such it was, between Abbas Hilmi and Cromer was won in effect by the latter. In the circumstances there could hardly be any other result. The now all-powerful Cromer, regarded Abbas Hilmi as an inexperienced and 'foolish youth', as he would sometimes describe him, and someone who mistakenly tried to interfere with the running of a increasingly prosperous and well-administered country. Some historians have seen the Khedive as becoming frustrated by the political turn of events, and his main interest consequently being transferred to acquiring land and making money. This venal side to Abbas Hilmi's character put off

some supporters, such as Abduh, who accordingly distanced themselves from him.

Gradually the leadership of the nationalist movement, still confined to the educated middle classes, passed from the Khedive to a rising young graduate of the Cairo Law School who had also studied at Toulouse University in France. He was the charismatic Mustafa Kamil born in 1874. As a journalist Kamil openly denounced the British for their rule in Egypt and for impairing the Khedive's authority. His aim was to see an autonomous Egypt within the Ottoman Empire. But Kamil's strength lay not so much with his ideas as with his zeal and ability as a propagandist and orator. In 1900 he founded *al-Liwa*, which came to have a daily circulation of some 10,000 copies, becoming the principal organ for nationalist agitation. Kamil worked hard to achieve support for his programme in France, but his hopes were somewhat dashed, as were the Khedive's, by the failure of the Marchand expedition and then by the signing of the Anglo-French Entente in 1904.

Cromer together with most British officials continued to be dismissive of the nationalist press. For instance he totally ignored it and its writings when, in his Annual Report for 1903,[21] he for the first time ever wrote a paragraph on the press in Egypt which mainly gave his views – to his credit liberal ones – for allowing a free press in the country. Several years later he wrote that he had never read in the nationalist press 'a single accurate, well-argued or useful article on such matters as finance, education or the working of the judicial system'. As for the nationalists themselves, he considered that they had no grievance against Britain and that they represented only a thin veneer of Egyptian society and that they had not penetrated yet to the masses.[22] There can be little doubt that Cromer attributed much of the responsibility for the rise of nationalism to the Khedive, all of whose works were anathema to him.

It is well to bear in mind that Egyptian nationalism as it was manifested at this time could be the expression of two ideals: one of Pan-Islamism and the other of purely national aspirations. By the former is meant the combining of all Muslim countries and the importance of subservience and loyalty by them to the Ottoman Sultan. The Khedive, unlike Kamil, was not an adherent of Pan-Islamism, yet was ready to support all those opposed to British rule.[23]

It would probably not have come as a surprise to Gorst that the year of his arrival back in Egypt saw the establishment there of three political parties. The first of these, founded in September 1907, was the moderate *Hizb al-Ummah*, or People's Party, composed of mainly well-to-do landowners

and which was therefore well-represented in the Legislative Council and General Assembly. Its programme was to work in cooperation with the British, to liberalize the administration and to obtain a greater degree of self-government for Egypt. The party's newspaper, *al-Jarida*, was edited by Ahmed Lutfi al-Sayyed. Two other parties emerged hard on the heels of the *Ummah*.

Mustafa Kamil's much more radical Nationalist Party, or *al-Hizb al-Watani*, was launched in Alexandria a month later before a crowd of 6,000 people. Through Kamil's magnetism it had an appeal to a new generation of the professional and middle classes, and to students. The party's programme demanded a wide number of political changes, in particular: Egyptian autonomy with a government responsible to an elected parliament and one which would receive advice and not orders from its British Advisers; the replacing of foreign officials by Egyptians; the strengthening of ties between Muslims and Copts, and the reform of the Capitulations. In terms of numbers it was the largest and most influential of the political organisations. Kamil's approach to politics was aggressive and his party did not rule out the use of violence. His newspaper too reflected this approach and claimed Cromer's resignation had been caused by nationalist agitation.[24]

Finally, at the end of the year, Ali Yusuf founded his Constitutional Reform Party representing the interests of the Khedive and his court with a programme having some similarities to Kamil's Nationalist Party. However, Yusuf never attracted a real following. All these parties were opposed in varying degrees to the British occupation. For instance the *Ummah* looked upon independence as only a distant goal. The Nationalist Party, on the other hand, considered that military evacuation by the British was for them a first priority and that their departure would lead to reforms. The *Ummah* and Reform parties, more moderate, believed conversely that reforms would lead to evacuation. The position of the Khedive in the parties' scheme of things differed according to their programmes. Was he or was he not an impediment to reform? Kamil had once supported Abbas Hilmi but now saw him as an obstacle to progress. Only Ali Yusuf's party continued to support the autocratic rule of the Khedive.

This then was briefly the position of the political parties as Gorst came to settle into his new post. But he would not be able, even if he had wished to, to ignore their existence nor their aims.

When Gorst took stock of the situation he had inherited from Cromer as regards the governance of Egypt he was distinctly worried by what he saw and found – this is plain from reading his autobiographical notes

for the year 1907 (written in the following July). Overall he believed in terms of the political, economic and administrative management of the country that matters had all gone from 'bad to worse'. There is no reason to believe that Gorst was unduly exaggerating – on the contrary, despite his occasional cynicism, he tended to be an optimist. Cromer's biographer Professor Owen tellingly entitles his chapter on his subject's last days in Egypt 'Things Fall Apart: 1904–1907' (the precise dates incidentally when Gorst was away in London).

Gorst's diagnosis of the state of Egypt was shrewd. The main problems he identified were as follows. First, he saw that government depended on one man, Cromer, who had 'lost his nerve and could no longer keep his team in hand'. This had resulted in 'administrative anarchy'.[25] Three ministries, Finance, Education and the Interior, were not functioning satisfactorily. A key figure, Vincent Corbett, the Financial Adviser, the man who had succeeded Gorst, was described baldly by him as 'incapable and disloyal', a powerful indictment of the man. When Gorst soon after his arrival tried to bring some order into the financial administration, he came into conflict with Corbett. Luckily for Gorst, Corbett decided he did not want to stay on in Egypt and to Gorst's evident relief resigned, to be replaced in due course by the highly competent Paul Harvey. Second, Gorst thought that Cromer's 'local policy' had gone off the rails. The growth of the 'nationalist spirit' had made Cromer antagonistic towards Egyptian Muslims and he had consequently tried to compensate for this by leaning towards the various groups of Europeans and towards the Christian element in Egypt. This, Gorst felt, was an unwise move, and had contributed to strengthening the influence of extreme nationalists over respectable educated Egyptian Muslims who had at the same time been alienated against foreign rule. This was a state of affairs exacerbated by the feeling aroused by the Dinshawai trial. Third, the Anglo-Egyptian officials had become anti-Egyptian with the result that

> A rein was given to racial antipathy and caste prejudice. The English invasion had been increasing rapidly during the last few years and the Egyptians saw themselves being ousted from the posts which had still remained to them in the government service.[26]

This, Gorst considered, was especially evident in the Education department which had been over-anglicised and in which English had supplanted Arabic. Fourth, the financial reserves had been used up at a great rate over the previous three years owing to, in Gorst's view, probably the correct

*17. Eldon Gorst as Agent and Consul-General in Egypt, 1907.*

one, prodigal mismanagement. While projects were sound enough, not sufficient thought had gone into finding funds for their completion. Fifth, the economic situation had been complicated by a severe financial crisis coming at the end of a period of great speculative activity. It would take Gorst and Harvey several years during which expenditure had to be cut back to restore financial stability.

There were not many weeks left to Gorst before the summer leave season arrived. His main preoccupation was now to try and dampen down the past wave of political excitement and agitation surrounding Cromer's departure so as to bring about 'normal conditions'. He would avoid polemics and emphasise that the policy of the British government had undergone no change with the appointment of a new Consul-General. For these first months it was to be business as usual.

It would have given Gorst particular pleasure to have received a letter of congratulation on his new appointment from Milner. He wrote back thanking him 'a thousand times' for his offer of assistance should it be needed, and commented on how great a responsibility it was to be entrusted with carrying on Cromer's work. He expected there to be difficulties ahead and hoped there would not be 'well-intentioned but misguided interference' from those at home and that he would be allowed to quietly

paddle his own canoe.[27] But he was realistic enough to know this would be unlikely.

He attended of course to a good deal of routine and other business. For instance he saw the Khedive about once a week. He began to hold regular meetings with the British Advisers, who constituted in a sense the Consul-General's personal cabinet. He had a meeting with Wingate about the Sudan. He spent much of one week in mid May thrashing out the programme for the Education department – here he was being proactive – with the Minister, Saad Zaghlul, and the Adviser, Douglas Dunlop, an obstinate and rather narrow-minded Scot, who did not seem to hit it off with the Minister. At any rate Gorst got agreement on the following points:

> (1) all subjects in secondary schools should be taught by English teachers in English except for maths which should be taught in Arabic;
>
> (2) in the examination for the secondary certificate candidates would be entitled to answer questions in Arabic if they so wished;
>
> (3) the training college for native teachers should be enlarged;
>
> (4) an increased number of Egyptian teachers should go to train in England in the autumn;
>
> (5) there would be improvements in technical education.[28]

Early that summer, there had been a small military incursion by Turkey into Egyptian territory near Sollum in the western desert. This was firmly but decisively dealt with in a carefully couched telegram which the Khedive sent to the Porte; the message was drafted by Gorst and one sees here an early example of Gorst working tactfully and harmoniously with the palace. Abbas Hilmi also showed himself supportive of Gorst's efforts in these early days to see that poorer soldiers could find the means to buy themselves out of military service, as the better off were able to do, and in addition to be able to claim exemptions from military service.[29]

There is one question which has caught the notice of some historians arising from Gorst's assumption of his new duties. What precise instructions on British policy in Egypt did Gorst receive from the home government? The new Liberal administration was known to take a rather different view to its predecessor's on what steps should be taken in preparing imperial

or colonial territories for self-government. India was a case in point, and John Morley, the Secretary of State, would in the following year be taking measures leading to greater Indian participation in government on the sub-continent. Would this happen too in Egypt? Certainly, there is no known evidence to show that Gorst had *written* instructions from Grey. Cromer himself, who only received the briefest of instructions from the British government in 1883 (these being based on the Dufferin report), volunteered that he was unaware whether the programme of reforms to which Gorst committed himself was dictated by the Foreign Office.[30] Another contemporary, Vansittart, wrote that Gorst had been sent to Egypt 'with a woolly mandate to "liberalize" the Administration'. While the historian Marlowe believes Gorst had no detailed instructions, Lord Lloyd, on the other hand, High Commissioner in Egypt in the 1920s, thought Gorst had been specially selected by the Liberals for the purpose of introducing 'a new spirit and a new practice into Egypt'. And moreover for this he had received definite instructions from Grey, a view, he asserted, which had been generally held for many years.[31]

Certainly, Gorst does not mention in his writings any particular remit either in writing or oral. Probably Vansittart came nearest to the truth with what he said about Gorst's mandate. And most likely the government would have been, pragmatically enough, ready to leave it to Gorst as the man on the spot to deal with the practicalities while keeping the Foreign Office informed of what was in the wind, and trusting to his good sense to seek guidance as necessary.

For Doll, public and private duties would now constantly overlap, her family life often having to give way to her official one. She was now a part of Jack's proconsular persona. Thus she accompanied him to the palace for luncheon with the Khedive, and went with him to a tea party given in their honour by the influential landowner Boghos Nubar. On the whole her introduction to life in Cairo as the wife of the Consul-General was a gentle one and she was required in that first month to do no lavish entertaining before she left Egypt to return home with her sister-in-law, Gwen Herbert, early in June. As for Jack, he rode and played tennis much as usual, renewed his acquaintance with the Greek community and on Sundays would usually go to church (something of a new departure). Then, part of the job, he was elected President of the Turf Club. Possibly on account of this he bought a horse, Valdor, for £50.[32] Jack followed his wife home a month later, but not before he had entertained at the Consul-General's summer residence in Alexandria the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean fleet and his officers.

CHAPTER

# 15

# THE LIBERAL EXPERIMENT BEGINS

To recount what Jack Gorst did in the first few weeks of his leave in 1907 almost takes the breath away. To list just some of his activities: he saw Cambon, the French ambassador, about appointments in Egypt; met Cassel for a business discussion and later twice dined with him; talked to Chirol of *The Times* about Egypt; attended an Imperial Defence Committee meeting and then corrected proofs of his evidence; dined tête-à-tête with Grey and followed this up with several further meetings with the Foreign Secretary; tried his hand at squash rackets a number of times; attended two weddings (one was Dumreicher's); went down to Castle Combe twice on short visits where he fished and shot three buck; dined at the Italian Embassy; was received by the King at Buckingham Palace; heard the great tenor Caruso sing (the double-bill performance of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci* he described as 'superb'); spent with Doll four days with friends in Ayrshire where he met the Cromers and on his return to London recruited Paul Harvey as his new Financial Adviser. All this happened before he went up to Scotland with his family to spend six uninterrupted weeks on the Rudd estates in the magnificent scenery of Argyll. He recorded that in this time he went stalking nineteen times and shot nine stag.

On his way back to London en route for Egypt at the end of September we find Gorst stopping off at Newcastle station. There he had at midnight,

presumably in the huge and well-appointed Station Hotel, 'an hour and a half's talk with Sir E. Grey. Left at 2.30 a.m. by night mail in which rest of family came.'[1] The conversation must have been an important one and we hazard a guess later as to one of the reasons for it.

It is no wonder that many years later Abbas Hilmi, then the ex-Khedive, wrote 'Gorst never rested.'[2] Ronald Storrs, who became Gorst's Oriental Secretary, gives an admirable pen-picture of his chief as he was at about this time:

> He was fiercely capable, and achingly ambitious. He could not bear fools gladly: he could hardly bear them at all. No less unsparing of his own body and brain, he knew not the meaning of repose. In his life were no intervals. He would gallop his racehorses before breakfast, work with swift concentration until luncheon, 'relax' his mind in some abstruse scientific work until it was time to play three sets of tennis, straining for every stroke with companions twenty years younger than himself. He would submerge himself in interviews until 7.15, when he would pedal out sonatas on his pianola. By eight he would have plunged into the maelstrom of an official dinner ... When he bathed, he swam until he was tired – no splashing or floating – and then got out – to plunge immediately into some other exertion. Not for nothing had he been described as 'a locomotive on the point of starting, with steam up'.[3]

When Gorst returned to Egypt in early October (Doll and Kitty followed later), he was destined to have nine months with virtually no respite. It was for Gorst full speed ahead, though this was what he liked. He had by now worked out in his mind the general lines of policy by which he proposed to guide his actions as Consul-General in the years ahead. This policy we can safely say accorded with what the British government was expecting of Gorst. He has left us a record in his autobiographical notes of just what this policy in outline was, and it is worth quoting what he wrote:

> 1. While outwardly proclaiming that Lord Cromer's policy was unchanged, to apply the precepts laid down in his annual reports rather than to follow the actual practice of recent years – in a word to carry into execution the many excellent practical and statesmanlike maxims which abound in Lord C's writings but which had remained in the stage of 'pious opinions'.

2. To avoid stirring up contentious questions or providing new points of attack for the nationalist party in Egypt or hostile critics in the House of Commons.

3. To render our rule more sympathetic to the Egyptians in general, and to Muhammedans in particular, by restoring good feeling between the Anglo-Egyptian officials and the natives of the country, and preventing the British element from riding roughshod over the Egyptians, by putting a check on the annual British invasion of new recruits, by giving greater encouragement to the Egyptian official class, and last but not least, by giving a more national character to the educational system.

4. To resume Lord Cromer's original attitude of hostility to European privilege and to try and unite English and Egyptian interests by the policy of one and the same law for all denizens in Egypt.

5. To cultivate good relations with the Khedive so that his influence and prestige – whatever they may be worth – may be an asset on our side of the account. My trump card for this purpose was to hold out to H.H. the prospect of a reconciliation with the King and British Royal Family provided he behaved well in local matters.

6. To settle quickly and definitely various questions regarding the pay and pension of officers and officials which had been allowed to remain open for the last year or two, thereby creating much perturbation and discomfort among those classes.

7. As regards the Sudan, to supervise its administration on the sound lines laid down and practised by Lord Cromer, namely to push on its natural development as funds permitted, to keep a tight hand over the expenditure, but to interfere with the man on the spot as little as possible in regard to matters of detail.[4]

It can be detected from a reading of these principles – eminently worthy ones as we read them today – that Gorst was in practice aiming to take Egypt along a rather different path to the one Cromer had been following in the last years of his rule. This was in fact to be 'The Liberal Experiment', a main object of which was to give the Egyptians greater participation in


*18. Eldon Gorst the High Wire Artist: Gorst is shown walking a tightrope between the Khedive's Abdin Palace and the British Agency.*

the government of their country.

On aim 5, Gorst was almost home and dry. He had always treated the Khedive with civility and respect. Now he was going to consult Abbas Hilmi on the business of government as if he were a partner in the exercise. The Khedive's status and role in the government machine was to be elevated and thus transformed into something rather more like the position which he had, somewhat unrealistically, expected it to be on his accession in 1892. Of course Gorst, normally cautious, was at his elbow counselling and ensuring that British interests were being served. The Khedive responded readily to this approach by the new Consul-General. He had always liked Gorst, and their relationship would remain with their frequent and friendly meetings a cordial and fruitful one. So regarding this policy aim Gorst was successful. As he had already foreseen, there would arise a by-product from the alliance between the Palace and the Agency. For this combination would, so he at first thought, help to counter the nationalists insofar as certain of those elements were to distance themselves from the Khedive on account of his good relations with the Consul-General. Nevertheless, throughout his term of office the extreme nationalists were to Gorst a source of constant aggravation through their hostile, and sometimes inaccurate, propaganda which undoubtedly gained them political influence.

As for Gorst's policy aims 3 and 4, he was troubled by both the greatly expanded number of expatriate officials coming to Egypt and by the apparently hostile attitude of some already in the public service towards their Egyptian colleagues. This would not do. Was, Gorst asked himself, the present task of the British in Egypt clearly understood? In Gorst's view the essential reason for the British presence had not changed since the early days of the occupation, but this had been increasingly lost sight of in the desire to improve the efficiency of the government and to provide the Egyptian people with a greater degree of prosperity. Then there was another aspect to this question. In the future because of Gorst's new policy of giving the Egyptians more responsibility in governing their country British officials would now be required, as occasion demanded, to make way for Egyptians. This was a matter that needed to be addressed with some urgency and Gorst accordingly decided to move without delay. He would call the officials together, and remind them *why* the British were in Egypt and *how* the policy of the government should be carried out. So he carefully prepared a speech which would last a little over half an hour and summoned some 200 senior British staff to the ballroom of the Agency at 6 p.m. on Saturday 2 November to hear what he had to say. The text of his speech has been preserved[5] and is important enough to comment on. The two principal objectives of British policy in Egypt, Gorst told his audience, had been laid down by successive British governments. The first was 'not to rule the Egyptians, but to teach them to rule themselves' – Cromer's own words, he emphasised. The second was to see that 'an enlightened and just administration is maintained, using to accomplish this purpose a system of British Advisers and heads of departments in Cairo, and inspectors in the provinces. He admitted these objectives could be divergent and that a path had to be steered between 'the Scylla of administrative inefficiency and the Charybdis of Anglicization', the last word, he threw in, being 'barbarous' but expressive. In carrying out this policy he referred to the then popular catch-phrase: 'English heads and Egyptian hands', meaning that the administrative measures were developed by English officials but were promulgated by Egyptian Ministers.

Gorst stressed the primary duty of training young Egyptians for the technical posts needed for performing the various functions of government. As the years went by, more and more Egyptians would be qualifying for these posts. Consequently there would be less and less recourse for outside help.

He went on to touch on the difficulties encountered by the people of one race or religion endeavouring, as in Egypt, to rule those of another

race and religion. Government was rendered more palatable in these circumstances when carried out in the name of the Khedive and his Ministers. The fact that British officials worked alongside their Egyptian colleagues should promote cooperation and understanding on both sides though he singled out the discontent that was experienced among some of the ruled when they saw so many key posts occupied by foreigners which they would otherwise be occupying themselves. Teaching Egyptians to rule themselves, he pointed out, could only be accomplished by allowing them as large a share as possible in the administration. This obviously meant they needed to be trained to occupy the higher posts.

Making the most of his opportunity, Gorst could not forebear from sketching out some 'practical maxims' as a guide. First, if reforms were to bear fruit the people must favour them; reforms must not cause discontent. Second, 'beware of over-government, and of too much regulation,' he cautioned. Liberty should be the rule and the onus of proof lay on the administrator who wished 'to prohibit or regulate human action'. Third, the more the English official was content to remain in the background the less resistance to his proposals would be experienced; here the job was 'to persuade and convince – not to ride roughshod'. Fourth, an official should not expect perfection but be content with improvement. Fifth, administrative reform should be simple, for simplicity facilitated control, and control prevented corruption. Also, considered Gorst, simplicity made it easier to employ Egyptians. A key part of his address was perhaps reached with the following passage:

> When vacancies occur, it is not sufficient to say that an Englishman will do the work better, or that no competent Egyptian can be found to fill them. Our business here is to train Egyptians beforehand for any posts for which they may possibly be eligible, and, wherever possible, preference must be given to the natives of the country, even at some loss of efficiency ... It is a confession of failure, if it is necessary to bring Englishmen into this country to perform duties for which Egyptians might have been trained.

He warned too of incompetent fellow countrymen – there was no place for them in the Egyptian service. He realised, as he put it, that he had degenerated into giving a sermon, but this did not prevent him from listing some of the qualities looked for in the British official. This paragon should have an understanding of and sympathy with the Egyptian, should have infinite patience, have a knowledge of Arabic, be tactful, show public spirit

and display zeal. Lastly Gorst stressed the need for 'unity amongst all the English ... the cooperation of all, from top to bottom', and made an appeal for the 'loyal assistance' of his countrymen. With a slightly avuncular peroration, which might not quite have fitted his style, he promised that everyone would find him just as ready as Cromer had been to help and advise over daily work. It may have been to try and reassure his audience that he was essentially carrying on his predecessor's work that he mentioned Cromer by name no fewer than nine times in his address.

What would his audience have made of Gorst's discourse? For a start they would surely and inevitably have compared him to Cromer. Physically Gorst did not have Cromer's presence. Even if not tall, Cromer was bulky and broad-shouldered with a commanding air of authority. Gorst, on the other hand, was small, round-shouldered and described by some as insignificant-looking. But even if not in Cromer's mould, Gorst's demeanour gave an impression of determination. Optimistically he recorded his view that his 'speech seemed to make a good impression'.[6] Elgood, one of the officials present, recalled the address was 'no more than a gentle reminder to the audience of Britain's earlier pledge on the subject of the occupation'. Storrs, then quite junior, was another who was in the ballroom. He commented that the speech was plain and that, although it contained nothing new, was instructive.[7] Two others also present did not quite see Gorst's discourse in such anodyne terms. Coles, a senior official, said that judging by the conversations in the Turf Club that evening he had the feeling that people thought their prospects and careers were going to be blighted, something which, if correct, was not exactly calculated to make Gorst popular with his fellow countrymen. Boyle of the Agency who realised the implications of what Gorst had been saying recounted how the officials left the ballroom in complete silence as if stupefied. When they had all gone, Gorst said to Boyle: 'How do you think they took it?' To which Boyle replied: 'They have not grasped it all yet – they are in a state of general paralysis'. At this, Gorst apparently chuckled and said: 'Well, they have got to recover'.[8]

Besides telling the Foreign Secretary about the speech, Gorst also wrote to Cromer to point out that everything he had said had been laid down in Cromer's own Annual Reports, and that he, Gorst, was keen to 'drive' home the message.[9] It was as if Gorst was anxious to reassure Cromer that he was not following some novel radical line. The new Consul-General was obviously alert to the necessity of having to carry with him the Anglo-Egyptian officials, not an easy team to lead, if he was successfully to undertake the reforms he had in mind. He had years before written to Milner (see p 110) about the need for 'keeping the English in order'. To

some extent it was going to be a question of leadership. So, had he been right, tactically, to deliver that November evening a homily to the officials whom he had wanted to win over to his point of view? The evidence points to Gorst having rather misjudged the effect of his speech on his subordinates, who would not all be convinced with the policy of Egypt for the Egyptians now to be pursued by the Agency, especially as it affected their careers. Perhaps there had been too many years of cosy paternalistic rule by Cromer which had induced the British to feel they were in Egypt for ever. Gorst had stirred the pot, and for some there was going to be a rude and unpopular awakening.

The Foreign Secretary, pressured by the volume of questions on Egypt in the House of Commons that summer, had shown himself earlier in the year to be agitated about the heavy sentences passed on the Dinshawai prisoners in 1906. In mid September, Grey received the opinion of the Lord Chancellor, Lord Loreham, whom he had consulted on the matter. It emerged that Loreham felt strongly that none of the sentences should have been more than 18 months.[10] This, if nothing else, convinced Grey that some action needed to be taken. Grey and Gorst had almost certainly discussed the issue when the latter returned to London for his leave but before Loreham's views were made known. Grey also wrote to Cromer to tell him that he, Grey, wanted to announce a large remission in or reduction of the sentences before Parliament next met[11] and that he would be discussing the matter with Gorst. At this moment Gorst was stalking deer in Scotland, but was soon due to return to London en route to Egypt while Grey was going north on holiday. Thus it was arranged that the Foreign Secretary and the Consul-General should met at Newcastle on 30 September in the middle of the night with, it cannot be doubted, the Dinshawai prisoners top of the agenda. One particular point Grey made was that the clemency to be shown should be seen as an act of the Egyptian government and not as one arising as a result of pressure from the British government. Later the government in London decided they wanted all the prisoners released after serving 18 months[12] – the details of how this was to be achieved Grey was content to leave to Gorst.

In Egypt on his return from London and having discussed the matter with Malcolm McIlwraith, the Judicial Adviser, Gorst decided it would be best if, rather than having the sentences remitted or reduced, all the prisoners were to be pardoned by the Khedive. This could conveniently be done on 8 January 1908, the anniversary of Abbas Hilmi's accession and a time for the announcement of honours and of matters connected with clemency. Grey agreed and this is what happened. One other issue

raised concerned the special tribunal used to try the Dinshawai accused. It was Gorst's view that the Decree setting up the tribunal should not be abrogated, as had been mooted, but in future similar offences should be tried by the ordinary courts.[13] This was accepted.

Keeping Cromer in the picture, as he often did over important happenings in Egypt, Gorst told his predecessor what had been decided – Cromer, it turned out, had also concluded that clemency should be the order of the day. For tactical purposes Gorst did not tell the Khedive what was being proposed until 23 December – obviously his agreement was needed for the pardons to be effected. Although at this very moment there was a leak about the plans of the two governments – attributed by Gorst to the London end – Abbas Hilmi was very pleased at the turn of events and in his memoirs makes a point of praising Gorst for his efforts over the release of the Dinshawai prisoners.[14]

Like Cromer, Gorst was highly conscious of what was being said about the government and Consul-General in the local press. The former, however, had been able to rise above the intense public criticism he was regularly subjected to. Gorst was more sensitive. Although appearing confident and at ease, he was inevitably at the start of his term of office still feeling his way and quite soon, as we shall see, he began to seek ways of curbing the excesses of the nationalist press. This is what he wrote on leave in July 1908 about his first year as Consul-General:

> Both at home and in Egypt I had the usual experience which awaits the man newly appointed to an important post. After starting with the customary chorus of praise due to the public's childish delight in anything novel, the inevitable reaction followed as soon as it became clear that miracles were not forthcoming. In the present instance the normal tendency to find fault was rendered more acute by the general suffering due to the financial crisis, and the refusal of the Egyptian government to place two millions at the disposal of the mortgage banks provided the chief stick with which to beat the culprit responsible for all this misfortune. By the end of the year whatever course the government adopted in regard to the different matters that required decisions they could always rely upon a 'bad press' all round, coupled with injurious reflections on my conduct of affairs as compared with that of my predecessor.[15]

About the 'two millions', the business community had twice appealed to the government for help during the financial crisis of 1907. In June that

year the government had assisted by not calling in the sum of £E500,000 due to be paid by a bank to the Treasury on account of the liquidation of the Daira estates. But six months later the government refused the request referred to by Gorst above on the grounds first that available government funds had been earmarked for certain other purposes, and second that insufficient cause had been shown for government intervention. While this was an example of Gorst and the new Financial Adviser, Harvey, taking a tough stand on finance, this line did not endear the government to expatriate businessmen. The hostility of the financial community, and this included London, was not unhappily a temporary one, and Cassel came to be active in his criticism of Gorst's administration.[16] There is some reason to believe that Gorst's personal relations with Cassel cooled off during his time as Consul-General. For instance after 1907 he saw him on his leaves far less often than he had done in earlier days.

On the social side, Gorst and his wife, as he put it, 'endeavoured to revive the departed glories' of the Agency as they were in the days of the first Lady Cromer (she had died in 1898). The couple certainly started off in great style. On the King's Birthday on Saturday 9 November they held as a 'sort of house-warming', and this, it should be noted, after an initial banquet for 32, a huge evening reception for about 600, mostly British, for which occasion the gardens were illuminated and the band of the 60th Rifles played. This was followed a few days before Christmas by a dance for 450, judged by Gorst to have been successful but for the ballroom floor being sticky. In parallel with these huge gatherings the Gorsts had inaugurated every week or so throughout the winter season a regular round of dinner parties for 20 to 30 who usually sat at three tables. According to Storrs, the Gorsts took the utmost trouble at their parties over the food served and the placing of guests.[17]

To furnish the Agency, the Gorsts had brought out from London about £3,000 worth of furniture. The appearance of their staff was important to them and their servants were dressed in a livery of chocolate and yellow. In running his household, money was not of much significance to Gorst owing to the continued generosity of his father-in-law. We can obtain something of a first-hand account of the Gorsts' entertaining from Harry Boyle who acted at the Agency as a kind of Lord Chamberlain in charge of social functions, quite a demanding job in view of the numbers of visitors passing through the portals. He described how

> Gorst's establishment was conducted on a far more lavish scale than even Cromer's. The chief of his two cooks – Monsieur Seignoud –

> who had been Chef to Baron Alphonse Rothschild and who played the violin like a real artist – received £500 a year. Besides his horses, Gorst had two cars, a great luxury in those early days of motoring, and he also added considerably to the number of expensive European servants employed at the Agency. The establishment comprised altogether well over 70 servants. He entertained more than generously.[18]

If Gorst found the constant merry-go-round of receptions, dinners and balls a bit of a strain he never showed it. Probably he enjoyed it all. He was not a man to stand on ceremony, nor was he pompous or overwhelmed by his position. Vansittart said he had no small talk, yet a local periodical, *The Onlooker*, described him as a 'witty conversationalist and a man with a sense of humour who never seemed to take himself too seriously'.[19]

As for Doll, she was described as being a 'hostess of great distinction and charm of manner [and] able to hold her own among the most beautiful women whom the Cairo season may assemble'. She had apparently as a young woman in South Africa acted as a hostess to her widowed father so she had not quite been thrown in at the deep end. Nevertheless, she did confess to Boyle that she was rather frightened of all that lay before her.[20]

Not everyone was pleased by the social side of life to be found at the Agency. One of the discontented was Lord Edward Cecil who complained that Gorst's house was 'full of Greeks and second rate people from home'.[21] Gorst had always liked a good mix of people and indeed had many friends in the Greek community. This prompted someone to criticize his hospitality with this classic, and insular, exchange. First man: 'Where you at the agency last night?' Second man: 'No, but you see I am not a foreigner; I'm only British.'[22]

Gorst was still enjoying his riding, motoring and racing. One Sunday morning in the spring of 1908 he and Doll attended a race meeting at the Alexandria Sporting Club, something which caused a raised eyebrow from a critic who complained that this constituted an attack on the English Sunday. This point was made notwithstanding that most of the racehorse owners were Muslims or Jewish. Gorst's critics – and there would always be plenty of them – sometimes liked to take a swipe at the way he could disregard his proconsular dignity. What they thought of the new Consul-General attending a moonlight paper-chase on donkeys, in which he, Jack Gorst, was one of the hares, we can only guess at! As for motoring, he enjoyed on occasions driving his own car. Sometimes he needed in the streets of Cairo to shout at pedestrians, in Arabic of course, to move out of

his way, unconventional behaviour for a Consul-General which may not have endeared him to all his compatriots.

Gorst was usually ready to tell a story against himself. Once he had gone off on a tour of the Delta provinces to refamiliarise himself with how the fellahin were faring. At one stopping place he left his vessel tied up on the river bank and strolled anonymously into the adjacent village unaccompanied by staff. There he got into conversation with a friendly Arab who quickly enlightened him as to the popular estimation in which he and his office were held. The Arab referred to the arrival of the boat carrying the Consul-General. 'That boat,' he observed, 'belongs to Gorst, the new Inspector of all the English.' 'And what is he like?' asked the amused Gorst. 'Gorst?' was the reply, 'he is as another. Allah sent Cromer and has mercifully removed him. Allah has now sent Gorst and we trust in his mercy will soon remove him also!'[23]

CHAPTER

# 16

# POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

Early in 1908, Mustafa Kamil, who had been unwell for some time, died at the age of 34. Some 50,000 people were said by Reuter to have attended his funeral, including students from all the secondary and higher schools in Cairo who, Gorst reported to Grey, marched in 'an orderly procession to the grave'. But, in a letter to Cromer describing the event, Gorst wrote that most of the boys had left their schools without permission and that he feared the British masters had 'no hold over their pupils. We seem to be in fact manufacturing a class of young men who will give us a very great deal of trouble in ten or fifteen years time.'[1] Gorst was both right and wrong. The students were indeed to give the police trouble on the streets of Cairo but much sooner than he anticipated. Kamil was succeeded by Muhammed Farid, who did not have the charisma and personality of his predecessor. Nevertheless, the party's newspaper, *al-Liwa*, continued with its strident campaign against the government and Gorst.

Later in July that year, an event occurred in Turkey which was to reverberate round Europe and the Middle East, when the Young Turks carried out an armed but mainly peaceful revolt against Sultan Abdul Hamid from their base in Macedonia. As a result, the Sultan was compelled to reinstate the constitution, which had been briefly in existence 30 years before and which provided for parliamentary government.[2] Gorst's opinion was that, had the attitude of the Khedive and some others still

been as hostile to the occupying power as it was earlier, it would have been difficult to avoid serious trouble and even bloodshed in Egypt.[3] As it was, the revolution by the Young Turks had a profound effect. In October, Bulgaria declared its independence from the Ottoman Empire while Austria-Hungary coolly annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina. Naturally enough, the arrival of parliamentary government in Turkey gave a fillip to the Nationalist Party in Egypt and caused them to call for constitutional government at home with increasing clamour.

In the meantime, Gorst had his own plans for giving Egyptians a greater share in the government of their country. He broadly saw his policy as being one of 'conciliation' and 'moderation', although he recognised that this did not appeal either to many Egyptians or to local Europeans, being, he wrote:

> characterized as weakness, and it required very strong determination to stick to the path, which I considered the only sound one in the long run in spite of provocations from all sides. The one administrative quality which the 'man in the street' is capable of admiring is the adoption of 'strong measures', and he is too stupid to understand that patience and conciliation are not incompatible with firmness and decision.[4]

Gorst, however, was not to be deflected from his purpose. The method he favoured was to stay behind the scenes as far as possible and in a sense to accomplish his aims by stealth. Midway through 1909, he must have thought he was meeting with success when he avowed

> the system of pulling the strings in the background and letting others do the shouting, provided I had my own way, was so thoroughly and successfully carried out that it deceived even those who should have known better. The Egyptians complained that the Khedive was allowed too much power and the English that everything – themselves included – was being sacrificed to the Egyptians.[5]

Working in the background may to an extent have suited Gorst's personality, but his desire for self-effacement did not appeal to his compatriots in Egypt, who had become used to Cromer's high-profile and no-nonsense approach to British rule. The influential Chirol of *The Times*, who knew Gorst well, was later to write that he

> effaced himself deliberately – perhaps more than any new man could afford to do or than it was safe for any British representative in Egypt to do under existing conditions. Lord Cromer not only carried immense personal weight but made it always definitely felt. With Sir Eldon Gorst not only was the pressure of British control relaxed to a greater extent than in the later days of Lord Cromer, but it appeared to be almost entirely withdrawn and though this was not really so, a change of attitude and methods came to be regarded as a complete change of policy.[6]

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In terms of reforming the machinery of government, Gorst had to consider whether he should make any changes in these two central semi-representative bodies, both established under the Organic Law of 1883. Both institutions were consultative in function; neither had the power to initiate legislation, which was a task left to the Khedive and his Council of Ministers. The Legislative Council was composed of 30 members. Of these, 14, including the President, were nominated by the government (the Council of Ministers). Of the remainder, 14 were elected by the Provincial Councils (see below) and the other two by Cairo and the towns. No new law could be promulgated without first being submitted for their comments to the Legislative Council. The government, however, was not obliged to take account of the Council's views, though reasons had to be given if these were discounted. Also the annual budget had to be considered by the Council, though again the government could ignore what they said. Ministers were entitled to take part in the Council's discussions but in practice, until Gorst's arrival on the scene, they did not bother to do so. The proceedings of the Council, which met regularly, were not open to the public or to the press.

The General Assembly was a larger and more representative body than the Council but only met about once every two years. In 1910, it was destined to play an important part in Gorst's story. The Assembly consisted of 82 members, comprising six ministers, the 30 members of the Legislative Council and 46 elected members, of which 11 came from the principal towns and the rest from rural districts. The election of members was indirect, that is to say the electors on the register elected delegates who in turn elected members to the Assembly; the latter had to be 30 years old, able to read and write, and to have paid an annual tax of £E30. All adult males in Egypt had the right to vote. The principal function of the

Assembly was to approve any new tax the government was proposing to introduce. It was also required to be consulted on matters such as loans and the construction of canals and railways and could pass resolutions on certain issues of public interest. Once again, as with the Council, the government was entitled to ignore the Assembly's views.

At the end of 1907, Gorst had noted the low level of interest in the elections to the Council and Assembly among electors. For instance, in Cairo, of some 134,000 adult males entitled to vote, only some 34,000 had registered as electors. And of this number only 1,500 – or 4.4 per cent of those registered – had actually voted. In the provinces, the figure for those voting was very much lower,[7] though Gorst pointed out in all fairness that much more interest was shown in the second stage of the elections. Be that as it may, he was hesitant to significantly expand the powers of the two institutions, arguing that 'the great majority of the upper and middle classes – that is to say the people who have a stake in the country – do not wish to see any extension of self-government at the present moment and would be the first to admit the country is not ripe for it.' It is a nice point just how justified Gorst was in making this assumption. As if to qualify his remarks, he added that he did not underrate the 'utility' of these bodies and was not opposed to their gradual development if they exercised the powers which they already possessed 'wisely'.[8]

A year later, Gorst had to admit to being disappointed with 'the general attitude of the Legislative Council and its record as a consultative body'. This was essentially because of the tardy way the Council attended to its business. He pointed to how it had taken them seven and more months to provide their views on three routine draft laws concerned with the courts and pensions; on the important new law on Provincial Councils they had yet to furnish any comments although they had had the draft text for some nine months. Nevertheless, there was some progress to report when, in due course, Gorst persuaded ministers to attend sittings of the Council, and then ministers themselves – probably egged on by Gorst – decided to consult the Council on educational legislation, a new departure. Better still, the Council was to have much more fruitful sessions in June and November 1909, when no fewer than 24 draft laws, many of which had been before the Council for sometime, were, in Gorst's words, 'carefully and thoroughly' discussed by members with ministers being present and giving, as necessary, explanations to questions put.[9] The government was apparently able to accept nearly all the amendments proposed. A useful constitutional change was also effected, whereby it was agreed that the Council would in future be in permanent session from mid November

until the end of May. The improved performance by the Council was undoubtedly partly accounted for by the presence of the new and active President, Prince Hussein Kamel, Abbas Hilmi's uncle and a man noted for his interest in farming. Unfortunately, there was some backsliding by the Council and the Prince, to Gorst's frustration, resigned his position in 1910 due to the unruly conduct of the Council's members.

## PROVINCIAL COUNCILS

Cromer had always felt that these Councils might have their scope expanded but had done nothing about it. Gorst at once saw an opportunity here, and resolved soon after taking up his post as Consul-General that he would concentrate on developing these neglected organs of local government and give the people at this level a chance to show their paces.

By early 1908, a draft law on Provincial Councils had been prepared and was soon submitted to the Legislative Council for their comments. As we have seen, these were slow in being formulated and it was not until June 1909 that the law expanding the functions of these councils was passed. The councils had originally also been set up by the Organic Law of 1883, one in each of the 14 provinces and comprising three to eight members in each council under the chairmanship of the mudir. All told, there were just 70 councillors in the country all elected locally. However, the councils had no real powers except to vote the cost of agricultural roads and to pass on certain irrigation matters. Nor had they ever been encouraged to exercise any kind of local advisory function.

Gorst changed all this, and found an ally in the Legislative Council, which much favoured his proposals. The new law was quite comprehensive. Membership of councils was increased to between six and 20; candidates for membership had to have paid £E50 a year in tax, and to have satisfied a five-year residence qualification; if elected, they served a six-year term. The mudir called meetings in accordance with standing orders, and was forced to hold a meeting if one-third of members desired one. The councils were given special powers in regard to authorising markets; fixing the numbers and pay of ghaffirs; constructing outlying hamlets; and administering elementary and trade schools. Here they had powers to establish and to take over new and existing schools respectively. Further, they could also make by-laws. On finance, they could raise money on a small scale and apply these funds for projects approved of by the Ministry of the Interior. They were also enabled to make representations to central government on provincial needs covering, for example, agriculture, communications, public security, health and other aspects of education. They could, in

addition, be consulted by both central government and the mudirs on a range of local matters. The Legislative Council, reported Gorst, had wanted to give them even more powers. But given that the councillors were inexperienced in administration, a halt, as it were, had to be called. To allow time for the arrangements to be made for the setting up of the councils and for the elections to them to be held, the new law was not introduced until 1 January 1910. The interest aroused by the new-look councils was demonstrated by the fact that 247 candidates contested the 83 vacancies for membership of the councils. Further, as many as 2,194 out of a possible 2,480 electors voted for the candidates.[10] This must have afforded Gorst some gratification.

Throughout the first year of their revived existence, the councils held frequent meetings. They showed zeal in exercising their money-raising powers and in the first place directed most of the money at their disposal towards educational programmes, especially in the elementary schools as well as in agricultural and trade schools.[11] Gorst's reform of Provincial Councils had got off to a sound start and may be regarded as a bold and successful innovation.

## NEWSPAPER INTERVIEW

In the autumn of 1908 Gorst gave an interview to Faris Nimr, a Syrian who was editor of the pro-British Cairo newspaper, *al-Muqattan*. The interview, which was widely reported, took the form of a series of questions and answers. In submitting to this friendly interrogation, Gorst obviously thought that he could not then be criticised for concealing current British policy in Egypt. He may also have thought he was countering nationalist newspapers, which were dubbing him 'The Silent Man'.

> Q: Was there truth in rumours that Britain was shortly to proclaim a protectorate over Egypt or annex the country?
>
> A: There was absolutely no truth in this.
>
> Q: Had the British government as a result of events in Turkey requested Gorst to introduce a constitutional regime in Egypt?
>
> A: This rumour was also without foundation. Egypt already had a constitution, the Organic Law of 1883. Further conditions for the establishment of unrestricted parliamentary government did not at present exist and it would be absolute folly to think of introducing a

change of this revolutionary character.

Q: Would progress therefore towards self-government be by the development and improvement of existing institutions?

A: This was so. The proposal to expand the powers of provincial councils was an example. If this was a success then the time would have come to enlarge the powers of existing elective bodies.

Q: Did he agree that the only way to prepare Egyptians for self-government was to let them experiment with it in practice?

A: No, this would lead to bad government and loss of credit abroad.

Q: What was recommended for those who wanted self-government as soon as possible while preserving the benefits already acquired?

A: These people should have confidence in the intentions of the British and cooperate in making institutions like the new provincial councils work.

Q: Did he think that the various political parties that had sprung up would promote the desired end?

A: He did not. Indeed the 'wild and foolish utterances in the local press' would only serve in Britain to confirm that Egyptians were not ready for self-government.[12]

In this interview, Gorst had made his views on autonomy pretty clear. No wonder he was so disliked by the Nationalist Party.

## A NEW GOVERNMENT

A major change took place on the political scene in Egypt soon after this interview. On 10 November 1908, the Premier, Mustafa Fahmi, decided, after 13 years at the helm of the Council of Ministers, to retire on health grounds, a move agreed by him and Gorst the previous month. This is certainly what Gorst wanted, for he regarded Fahmi's ministry as a 'Cabinet of Dummies'. The new government, headed by the 62-year-old Boutros Ghali, a Copt, was chosen by the Khedive and Gorst together. They had, Gorst observed, practically no difference of opinion over the choices made. Boutros had had long experience of politics and had worked well with the

*19. Boutros Ghali Pasha, Premier of Egypt, 1908–1910.*

British. Gorst liked him, and the two men had over the years often met socially and enjoyed dining together. He was clever, rich and respected, but Gorst, nevertheless, was a bit worried about choosing a Christian Premier. The Khedive, however, reassured him that Boutros would be acceptable to Muslims.[13] Of the six ministers appointed – all of them new to office except for Boutros and Zaghlul – four had law degrees and one an engineering diploma. Thus the ministry represented the new professional classes as compared to the previous government, which had been drawn from the old landed ruling class.[14] One, Mohammed Said, the new Minister of the Interior, was a moderate nationalist and was quite close to Abbas Hilmi.

The ministers, Gorst reported home, had earned, through their administrative experience, efficiency and ability, their promotion to ministerial rank.[15] It was hoped that they would use more initiative and assume a greater responsibility in government than their predecessors had done, thereby exercising a beneficial influence over their countrymen. It was given out for tactical reasons that the Khedive had personally chosen the new Council of Ministers, and this gave him some popularity with the local press, who commented favourably on the Council's composition, except that *al-Liwa* criticised Boutros for being too subservient to British policy. Gorst told Grey that the new government was seen by the public

as an earnest of the British policy of giving Egyptians as large a share as possible in the government of their own country.[16]

## STAFF AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES

We turn from political to administrative aspects of government, and therefore to a field in which Gorst had in the past shown his strength. He was determined from the start to cut away dead wood in terms of senior staff not pulling their weight and of course in reducing wherever possible the European element. He had already successfully substituted Paul Harvey for Vincent Corbett at Finance. The spotlight now fell on the Interior, much in need, in Gorst's view, of reform. By the end of 1908, Gorst was able to ease out of his post Percy Machell, the Adviser at the Interior for ten years, a man who in Gorst's estimation was not in tune with the spirit of reform and whom he described as being a 'failure' at work. Machell was encouraged to go and, to Gorst's evident relief, there was no unpleasantness involved. At least in his Annual Report for 1908, Gorst could pay his old friend a handsome tribute. Machell was replaced by Arthur Chitty, who had made his name as the Director-General of the Customs Department and who was regarded by Gorst as being very much in sympathy with Egyptian aspirations. Interestingly, efforts were made from London to poach both Harvey and Chitty away from Egypt, overtures stoutly and successfully resisted by Gorst who told Grey – reminding us of Cromer – that he could count 'on the fingers of one hand the Englishmen who are of any real use to me'.[17] One was Harvey.

Gorst was also at this time able to secure the retirement of the Procureur-Général, Eustace Corbet, another official who had served a long period in his post, replacing him with Abdul Khalek Sarwat, a youngish and able Egyptian. Sarwat had had judicial experience and had done well as mudir of a large province.[18] Here was an example of Gorst being true to his word and bringing in a competent Egyptian to fill a senior post previously held by a Briton. One place where the reduction of British staff would be particularly felt was at the Ministry of the Interior, because so many of the inspectors in the provinces were British. Gorst's approach to the system of inspection is reflected in the following passage, which he wrote when he was stressing the need for 'native agents' in the Ministry's daily contact with the population at large. The role of the European, he stated, was found in exercising a general control at headquarters and in obtaining accurate information of what was happening in the provinces. For the latter purpose

> an efficient system of European inspection is required, and the danger of such a system is that, unless it be applied with great discretion, the Egyptian official is apt to lean too much upon the European inspector, and thus lose his sense of responsibility and authority. The inspectors should, then, be few in number and very carefully chosen, well acquainted with the language and the people, and able to keep in touch with what is going on without interfering in the conduct of the local administration.[19]

The quality of some of the mudirs, officials seen by Gorst as linchpins in the local government machine, left much to be desired in his opinion. So he struck a prudent bargain with the new minister, Mohammed Said. There would be a decrease in the British inspectorate provided there was a visible improvement in the quality of mudirs.[20] The task of overseeing this work was entrusted by Gorst to the new Adviser, Chitty, who reportedly gave the Minister a largely free hand, especially over appointments, to the dismay of his British subordinates, who were now inevitably tending to take more of a back seat. One result was a deterioration in the standard of administration with, in the view of Elgood and Coles, both senior British officials, some corruption creeping back into the public service.[21]

In the comparatively short time he spent as Adviser (he was forced to retire prematurely on health grounds), Chitty had his hands very full. Apart from the question of the inspectors, he was involved in reforming the Department's internal organisation, preparing for the advent of provincial councils, introducing the Police Supervision Law and reorganising the ghaffir forces (the last two matters will be explained below). Gorst seemed to be content with the progress made at the Interior when reporting to Grey in the spring of 1909 on the improved state of public security and of general administration in the provinces.[22]

With the filling of more administrative posts with Egyptians, Gorst felt he had now to address – though without much success we believe – the concerns of the junior ranks of Anglo-Egyptian officials, on account of the uneasiness they might be feeling about their careers and prospects of promotion, and of potential recruits for the service. He wrote:

> There can be no doubt that a considerable number of higher posts must inevitably be filled for many years to come by Europeans, thus providing promotion for the existing generation. It is true that in proportion as the quality of the younger Egyptians in the service improves there will be less need for new recruits from Europe. This,

> however, will not affect the position of those already employed, and a reduction in the number of Europeans to be taken in future will ensure that the few who are selected can be sure of opportunities for making a satisfactory career in this country.[23]

## POLICE SUPERVISION LAW

While he had been Adviser to the Ministry of the Interior, Gorst had been closely involved, as we saw in Chapter 7, with the work of the police and the parquet. Now, as Consul-General, he was disappointed to find that the results of criminal investigations conducted jointly by these two bodies were unsatisfactory. More than half the perpetrators of serious crime went unpunished.[24] Various suggestions had been made with a view to improving the security of life and property in the provinces. One idea finding some favour, particularly among the well-to-do, was to give local officials some kind of power to send into exile 'dangerous characters'. At first, Gorst was loath to go outside the normal legal process. He seemed content just to have instructions issued early in 1908 that the mudirs, who controlled the police, and the local parquet should work more closely together to bring offenders to justice.

But when, a year later, the crime statistics revealed an increase of serious crime of ten per cent over the previous year, especially in regard to murder and attempted murder, and it was pointed out that there was an increasing reluctance on the part of the rural population to give evidence in court, Gorst decided something had to be done. It took time to devise a suitable scheme to cope with the problem, and the Police Supervision Law, sometimes referred to as the Relegation Law, judged by Gorst to be one of the most important measures of the year, was not passed until July 1909. The nub of the scheme was that powers were given to the government to place under police supervision in a place of exile those persons falling into the category of known 'dangerous characters' without their having been tried and convicted by a court of law. The punishment handed down to them was, therefore, a form of administrative detention and could last for up to five years. Those so exiled, principally brigands and those terrorising villages to the extent that no one would testify against them, were sent to a penal settlement in Kharga Oasis, in the central Egyptian desert 125 miles west of Luxor from which escape was said to be virtually impossible. There they were allowed to have their families with them and, if they so chose, to earn their living.

Originally there were 12,000 names of dangerous characters on the

lists prepared by the omdahs. These were successively pruned down to 1,200 and then further to a mere 283, of which 236 had previously been prosecuted for or convicted of serious crimes. Each case was heard by a special commission, and there were various safeguards built into the process such as rights of appeal and review. The drafters of this law in Cairo had undoubtedly been influenced by rather similar Italian legislation passed some 29 years before allowing for compulsory 'domicil orders' awarded by administrative commissions, not courts, for classes of habitual criminals.[25]

The law was badly received in Britain by the Foreign Office, the press and Parliament, and was dubbed as 'un-English'. In Egypt, too, the press was severely critical. Nevertheless, and, perhaps surprisingly in view of the legislation's essentially illiberal character, Grey gave Gorst his support over it though Gorst was required to keep the Foreign Office posted on how the law was working. The effect of the law was undoubtedly to reduce serious crime in the short term.[26] Gorst's own response to the working of the law seems to have been equivocal. On the one hand, he believed that it was justified by the results it achieved. On the other, he wrote in 1911 that the detainees were engaged in 'congenial agricultural pursuits' – he paid a visit to Kharga himself – and had their families with them as permitted; he almost made it sound as if they were too comfortable. Gorst concluded that the law had served its purpose and, while the government should be ready to apply it to any province, 'no further general application of its provisos will be necessary.'[27] When Kitchener succeeded Gorst, the operation of the law was ended.

## THE GHAFFIRS

This large force of village watchmen – some 45,000 strong – had been reformed in the mid 1890s when Gorst himself had been at the Interior (see Chapter 7). It was now, a decade later, regarded as being in need of further reform. Its size was cut and it became a volunteer force with rates of pay fixed by provinces. There was instituted a special training course run by the army for all recruits at the conclusion of which members of the force would be armed with Remington rifles. In this way, it was hoped by Gorst that a disciplined and efficient body of men would be created who would act in support of the police and help improve public security in the provinces.

The whole scheme was being carried out under the supervision of a special department of the Ministry of the Interior composed – rather against the trend of Gorst's policy – of six British inspectors. One man closely involved with reorganising the ghaffirs was André von Dumreicher, who had been transferred from the Coastguards to the Ministry of the Interior.[28]

## THE PRESS LAW

In the spring of 1908, following the murders of a British Inspector and a Sudanese District Head, there was a rebellion in the Sudan, which we discuss in the next chapter. *Al-Liwa* carried a report that 70 rebels had been executed by the Sudanese government. This was totally untrue; only one man had suffered the extreme penalty. At least partly as a result of this episode, Gorst felt moved to take action against the press. Sheikh Shawish, a Tunisian, who was acting editor of *al-Liwa* at the time, was prosecuted under the Penal Code. The court convicted the accused on a minor count of libelling the Minister of War but acquitted him on a technical point on the main charge of publishing false news. On appeal, Shawish was also acquitted of the first charge.

Gorst concluded that the law was inadequate as it stood, and decided that the Press Law of 1881, which had been allowed to fall into disuse by Cromer, a man willing to ignore the effusions of the press, should be resuscitated. Under this law, registration of newspapers was obligatory and by Article 13 the Minister of the Interior was empowered to suspend or suppress a newspaper after two warnings; the Council of Ministers could also make this decision. Each warning could be accompanied by a fine. If a newspaper continued to appear, the printing press used to produce it could be closed.[29] While in London during the summer, Gorst discussed the matter with Grey and in due course received the agreement of the British cabinet for his proposals, provided there was a reference to London before any action was taken against a paper. In a long letter, Gorst gave formal notice to Grey in February 1909 that he was supporting the decision of the Egyptian government to reimpose controls on the press, giving as a main reason that the spreading of false news had greatly added to the difficulties of administering the country.[30] Gorst was not alone in wanting a restraining hand placed on the press. For some years before, both the Legislative Council and General Assembly had wanted something done about its increasing unruliness.

The Press Law was seen in Britain as repressive legislation and offended people, while in Egypt both Gorst and Boutros were violently attacked for the law by the press itself. Since the law was approved by the Council of Ministers it is odd to read in Gorst's diary entry for 21 March: 'saw Hussein Roushdi [the Minister of Justice] and pacified him with regard to the revival of the Press Law which is greatly agitating him and some of his colleagues'. Four days later the law was reactivated.

Partly because ministers, when attacked in the press, were reluctant to fall back on the Act, Gorst considered the new measure was applied

too moderately. Nevertheless, prosecutions were made: two papers were 'warned', one paper was suppressed by the courts, and an editor was sentenced to 12 months' imprisonment. Shawish, in trouble again, was sentenced too to three months for a libellous article.[31] All the same, the new law was robbed of some of its effect when proprietors of newspapers found themselves able to circumvent the provisions of the Act by publishing the paper under a new name and, if they could, by introducing a foreign element into the paper's make-up, and sheltering behind the Capitulations.[32] Gorst did not give up and, in 1910, a further law was passed spelling out just who might be the subjects of prosecutions.

By the summer of 1908 Doll was not well. She was suffering from depression. Jack wrote:

> As a result of the prolonged winter strain, followed by the heat of the summer, my wife developed a species of melancholia which at one time caused me a great deal of domestic anxiety. Happily, by the end of the year, matters in this respect had taken a great turn for the better.[33]

As soon as they reached London that July, Jack consulted Dr Addinsell about Doll's depression, and explained the problem to her father who was sympathetic. Mrs Playfair came to stay and took Kitty off Doll's hands. In Scotland in August, Jack confided to his diary: 'Matters go from bad to worse and I begin to fear it will be impossible for her [Doll] to come out to Cairo this winter,' and said as much to his wife. Whether Doll's illness had affected the state of the couple's marriage is hard to say, but at the end of August, as he and Doll went together to join Mrs Playfair and Kitty at Shielbridge, he wrote 'D and I resolved to make another trial.' On their return to London, Jack took Doll with Dr Addinsell to see Victor Horsley, a leading neurosurgeon. Perhaps these medical consultations helped, for Doll and Kitty arrived back in Egypt in early November.

Although Doll was ill that winter with bronchitis, her sister-in-law, Hylda, officiating for her at a dinner party, there was no mention in Jack's diary of a recurrence of any mental problems. Yet all was not well and in the summer of 1909, while in Scotland, Jack noted after a day's stalking: 'Returned to Shielbridge where I found D in a more impossible mood than ever.' The next day, a Saturday, the entry read: 'In view of recent worries decided to leave here on Monday and arranged to stay with the Sykes.' A week later, after his abrupt departure from Scotland and while he was with

his sister Edith in Yorkshire, he 'wrote a letter to D on the situation'. Soon after, he was lunching in London, apparently happily, with Doll and Eva before visiting Marga, whom he had not seen for two years and whom he found much grown and greatly improved. There was another cryptic diary entry in March the following year, when he wrote 'D very tiresome all the afternoon and evening.'[34] Doll's health and the exact state of the Gorsts' marriage will always remain something of a mystery.

Jack's own health during his years in Egypt had not always been good. He not infrequently felt unwell – or 'seedy' as he put it – sometimes retiring to bed with headaches or low fever. But we hear of no serious illness until early in January 1909, when he felt 'very ill' with fever and a high temperature. This did not stop him from travelling for a break to Luxor with Doll, his mother and Eva, but the trip had to be aborted and a doctor suspecting typhoid sent him back to Cairo, where blood tests confirmed the disease. He took some time to fully recover, for instance being unable for many weeks to take his usual early morning ride. He also was suffering from boils, a complaint that was to plague him for months. His health though did not affect his work nor, seemingly, his social duties. Somehow he managed to attend a ball for 500 at the Agency at the end of January. The same week, he went racing no fewer than three times, and gave lunch to the famous actor Beerbohm Tree. He was probably beginning to feel better at the end of March, in time for a great lunch party given by the Khedive for just the Gorst family. The guests present were Jack and Doll, Jack's father and mother, Eva, the Hunters and the Herberts.[35] Abbas Hilmi is unlikely to have done this for any other Briton.

That evening, after the lunch party, Jack and Eva embarked at Port Said for a short holiday in the Levant. Eva could not avoid being jealous of Doll, who had in a sense stepped into her shoes some years before, but now she would have her brother to herself for seven uninterrupted days. The pair visited Jaffa and Beirut and then stayed for a few days at the Hotel Bonfils in Broumania, high above the Mediterranean in the mountains of Lebanon among pine groves. The visit was of course a purely private one designed no doubt to put Jack properly back on his feet. This did not prevent some local papers speculating that there was some political purpose behind Jack's stay. One reported he was travelling in disguise round the cities of Syria and having secret interviews with politicians. Another declared that Gorst was preparing a huge report about Syria before the British took over the country, something apparently Syrians were eagerly looking forward to![36] Exploring Lebanon and its mountain villages clearly appealed to Jack, and after the break he obviously needed he was back in Cairo restored to health.

Not long after returning from his jaunt, he learnt of the death of his uncle, Edward Lowndes. Jack's father was now the owner of Castle Combe.

Regarded by many as an eccentric, Boyle had long been in Cromer's service, latterly as his Oriental Secretary, in which position he had been a powerful figure behind the throne. Originally an interpreter in Constantinople, and thus a fine linguist, he had known Gorst for 20 years, though the two men had, in Boyle's words, a 'very curious relationship', involving clashes of opinion from time to time. While Boyle's general outlook that Cromer could do no wrong may, we guess, have irked Gorst, the two men remained on friendly terms. When Gorst became Consul-General, Boyle disliked his new chief's alliance with the Khedive and disapproved of his policies of giving the Egyptians greater responsibilities, thinking these undermined Cromer's work. Gorst for his part downgraded Boyle's place on his staff, using him essentially as a kind of household major domo and not as a personal adviser and in an intelligence role as Cromer had done. Nevertheless, Gorst once asked Boyle, in April 1908, a frank question: 'Do you think there is any section or subsection of society here, British, or foreign or Egyptian, which has a good word for me and my policy?' To which Boyle answered, 'Not one.' At this Gorst apparently grinned cheerfully.[37]

Malcontents made constant efforts to rally round Boyle trying to make him the centre of opposition to Gorst. But Boyle felt a certain loyalty to his new chief, who had treated him well, and did not respond.[38] It was, however, a false position for Boyle and, though Gorst seemed in no hurry to see him leave Cairo, eventually he succeeded, helped by the good offices of his chief, in getting a transfer to the embassy in Berlin. He left Egypt towards the end of 1909.

Boyle never had any doubts about Gorst's high talents. Interestingly, in his memoirs (transcribed by his wife Clara, whom he married after his days in Egypt), he recorded that Cromer had often told him that he had no intention of proposing Gorst as his successor but that as his health deteriorated he was only too glad to have the burden lifted from his shoulders. Boyle once received another confidence, this time from Gorst. He related how Gorst had once said to him that his ambition was 'to preserve a tranquil Egypt for some three years, then to be transferred to Constantinople, thence to Paris, after which to enter politics in England with Cabinet rank'.[39] Phew!

As a parting gift, Gorst gave Boyle a handsome fur coat, which Boyle had frequent occasion to wear for his first cold winter in Berlin.[40]

CHAPTER

# 17

# LAW AND ORDER IN THE SUDAN

Sudan is a vast country, its 967,500 square miles making it the biggest in the African continent. As the crow flies, the distance from its northern border with Egypt to Uganda in the south is 1,200 miles, while the distance from the Red Sea in the east to its western border at the broadest point is some 900 miles. In all, it has some 4,000 miles of frontier. By 1910, the population of this great tract of territory, recovering well from its Mahdiyan period, was estimated to be about 2,600,000, of which 4,000 were Europeans and 17,000 were Egyptians, Abyssinians and Indians. Despite its size, the Sudan was a very poor country economically; for instance, its revenue for the same year was £E1,490,000, compared to Egypt's £E15,965,000.[1] Expenditure was usually in excess of revenue and the country had to rely on Egypt to balance its books.

Under the condominium agreement of 1899, so unpopular and resented in Egypt, the administration of the country was undertaken jointly by Britain and Egypt. In practice, however, the government of the Sudan was firmly in the hands of the British Governor-General at Khartoum, who was responsible to the Consul-General in Cairo for carrying out the policy of the British government in the country. In enunciating the principles which would guide his actions in the Sudan, Gorst had broadly directed himself to interfere with the running of the country as little as possible. While he took a keen interest in its affairs, especially concerning the operation of

its finances, he kept his word and was mainly content to leave day-to-day matters to Wingate, whose spell as Governor-General would run from 1899 to 1916.

In the winter of 1907–1908, Gorst decided to travel down to Khartoum, which he had not visited for seven years, to see for himself what progress had been achieved in that time. Accompanied by William Garstin, soon due to retire from the Egyptian Service, he arrived there on the last day of the old year. 'I was received,' he later wrote, 'with the customary Wingate pomp and circumstance.'[2] Gorst was probably a touch impatient with Wingate's love of ceremonial. Wingate, a Lowland Scot and an extremely conscientious man, was nothing if not conventional and liked to get things absolutely right. Before Gorst's arrival, he had been making rather heavy weather in a longish letter to Gorst seeking his 'views and wishes' about what flags and standards should be flown first for Gorst's visit and then in the following February on the occasion of the inspection of the country by the Duke of Connaught, then High Commissioner and Commander-in-chief, Mediterranean. These of course were not the kind of questions which would have much excited Gorst's interest. For the Duke's visit, Wingate gave three distinct options about flags etc.; the laconic answer went back indicating none of the options would do, for the Duke would fly his own standard.[3]

His first day in Khartoum after his arrival there at 11 a.m. was for Gorst one of intense activity. He went from the train to a reception in his honour given by the Sirdar (the other hat Wingate wore), this being followed, still in the morning, by a second reception at the Governor-General's palace when Wingate gave an address to which Gorst had to reply. In the afternoon, there was a garden party for male guests, during which Gorst reckoned to have shaken hands with about 1,000 people. At least he was able, after the customary dinner party, to have his usual game of bridge. Gorst's visit continued with reviews of troops, inspections of Gordon College, the military hospital and a government farm, discussions with various officials and attendance at a tea party at the Egyptian Officers mess. Time was found for some fishing, and Gorst landed a 52 lb Nile perch after a 1¾-hour struggle with the fish.[4] His journey north back down the Nile was made via Erkowit, the site for a projected hill-station in the north-east of the country, 4,000 feet up in a range of hills through which the railway was being built from Atbara to the new port at Port Sudan. A serious problem exercising Gorst's mind, and Wingate's too, was the health of Europeans working in the harsh climate of the Sudan. It was important to find a suitable hill-station to provide the necessary rest and recuperation for them. In company with Wingate, Gorst was also able

to visit Dongola province before arriving at Wadi Halfa, where he found Doll and Kitty waiting for him. Easily the most interesting item about this trip was his enthusiastic letter to Grey written at its conclusion. He had travelled nearly 3,000 miles and his first favourable impressions had been completely confirmed.

> The whole atmosphere of government is so refreshing after Cairo, the English officials, mostly officers, pull so well together and show so much common sense and sympathy in their dealings with the native population, the various sections of the people seem so contented with their foreign rulers that I feel with a pang at having to return to the complicated and controversial issues that are awaiting me in Egypt. You doubtless have the same sensation when the session [of parliament] begins. I do not think that even Mr Robertson [an independently minded MP] or Mr Keir Hardie if they could really understand what is being done here would be able to discover much with which to find fault. Indeed, the only criticism which a Radical of the old school could pass would be that we are doing little or nothing to instil into the people that "divine discontent" which in their idea is a necessary precursor of progress.[5]

On law and order problems, he commented on the wild and semi-nomadic tribesmen found in western and southern districts, who were always liable to give trouble. The current policy, Gorst explained, was to interfere with their internal affairs as little as possible, but to come down heavily on them if they showed signs of hostility affecting others. Security, he wrote, 'must be the first consideration', and he saw the extension of the railway to El Obeid, the capital of Kordofan, as a priority requirement on this account. He clearly believed that railways would play as important a part in keeping the country secure as they would in developing it commercially. He then paid a handsome tribute to Wingate:

> The chief credit for the satisfactory state of affairs which I am able to report to you must be given to Wingate. He has known how to surround himself with capable and zealous heads of department, and what is perhaps more difficult, he has been able to make them work harmoniously together with a minimum of friction and jealousy. It is also satisfactory to reflect that the raw material out of which this administrative ability has been evolved has largely consisted of the much abused British officer.[6]

Reading between these lines, one wonders if Gorst was reflecting on the lack of goodwill between staff in Egypt.

Gorst's relations with Wingate over the years had not been as warm as they might have been. Two years or so before, the reliable Garstin had warned Gorst that Wingate was part of a clique working to prevent Gorst from succeeding Cromer. Certainly, Wingate could sometimes get things wrong, such as when he upset Harvey in Cairo and Gorst had to intervene. It was all to do with Harvey having spoken to the Khedive, presumably about some financial matter concerning the Sudan, without first clearing his lines with the Governor-General, as Wingate obviously thought he should have done. Gorst took Harvey's side and ticked Wingate off, pleasantly enough, yet quite firmly.[7] The matter seems to have been settled amicably when, as a result of Gorst's letter to Wingate, the latter wrote privately to Harvey.

Not long after this incident, Wingate got hold of the idea from some press report that his term of office was for ten years only, and he consequently wrote about this to Gorst, who at once refuted any such suggestion, saying he had never heard of such an idea. He added that he would deplore Wingate's departure and hoped the Sudan would retain his services 'so long as you have health and strength to go on',[8] stressing that both the British and the Egyptian governments had the fullest confidence in his administration. Certainly, we have no evidence that Gorst was ever dissatisfied with Wingate's performance in the Sudan.

Only a little over three months after Gorst had returned from the Sudan to his busy office routine in Cairo, news came through from Wingate on 1 May of the murders of two senior government officials. They were C. Scott Moncrieff, the Deputy Inspector of Blue Nile province and son of Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, a distinguished irrigation engineer, and Yuzbashi Sherif, the Mamur of Messellania. They had been killed by a group of villagers led by one Abdul Kader Wad Habuba of the Halowin tribe, a man prominent in Katfia, a small town 90 miles south of Khartoum.

It soon transpired that Abdul Kader, a strong supporter of the regime of the Mahdi and his successor the Khalifa Abdullahi, had been stirring up his followers and sowing the seeds of rebellion in the Gezira area of Blue Nile province. He had also been involved in a land dispute with his uncle, the Omdah of Katfia, someone who had been opposed to the Mahdi. All this had led the Mamur to summon Abdul Kader to explain his conduct. But the summons was ignored and consequently, after hearing Abdul Kader had collected 40 followers, Moncrieff and Yuzbashi Sherif went to investigate the matter on the spot. The two officials leaving, perhaps rashly,

their escort of two policemen a mile away, proceeded by camel to Abdul Kader's compound. They dismounted and entered the place to speak to him. Moncrieff began by asking him if he had any grievance against the government. He replied, 'I have no grievance against the government; that which I am doing I do for Allah and I will die for him.'[9] So saying, he struck down one of the officials (we do not know which of them it was). This gave the signal for the waiting crowd to rush in and hack both unfortunate men to death. It seems that Abdul Kader was also plotting to murder his uncle the Omdah and three of his own brothers as well.

Informed of the murders on 30 April, Major Dickinson, the Governor of Blue Nile province, responded rapidly, arriving at the scene of the murders on the evening of 1 May with a company of Sudanese infantry, a Maxim gun and some police on camels. At about 2.30 a.m., this force, while bivouacking close to Katfia, were without warning attacked by quite a large force of rebels led by a 'spy' and directed by Abdul Kader. After a very stiff fight, Dickinson's men managed eventually to beat off their assailants, but at a price. Two Egyptian army officers and 17 men were killed and many more wounded, including Dickinson himself and two other British army officers one of whom, Captain Logan, later died of his wounds. The rebels – one report estimated they were 300 strong – left 35 dead on the field and carried away their wounded. Reinforcements were at once despatched from Khartoum and a gunboat was sent to patrol the White Nile to stop rebels fleeing to the west. Abdul Kader was declared an outlaw and the people warned not to assist him. This had the desired effect and, on 4 May, Abdul Kader was captured by local villagers and brought before a civil court at Kamlin four days later. At his trial he was found guilty of murder and rebellion. On 17 May, his execution by hanging took place at Hillet Mustafa, the chief market place of the Halowin tribe. Many of his followers, including the other leaders of the uprising, were rounded up and put on trial too.[10]

In the meantime, and before he was aware of the results of the latest trials, Gorst was urging Wingate to see that 'there are not too many people executed among those still to be tried as we must not do anything to impair our reputation for being merciful'.[11] Gorst's message was not popular in Khartoum and to get his own way was not going to be easy. His diary entry for 30 May read:

> Sudan's court have sentenced 12 people to death for Blue Nile rebellion besides the ring-leader already executed. H.M.G. naturally object and I am advising Wingate to commute the death sentences to life imprisonment.

For Gorst and the Foreign Office, of course, the spectre of the Dinshawai affair had risen all too clearly. In addition, there appeared in *al-Liwa* the false report that 70 of those convicted in the uprising had been executed; the result of this report, that is the re-emergence of the Press Law, we noted in the last chapter.

Wingate himself must have been in two minds about the punishments to be inflicted on the 12 men sentenced to death, for Gorst was urging him on 2 June 'to stick to his original decision to let them off [sic]'. In the event, the death sentences for these men were commuted to varying terms of imprisonment. There had been naturally enough strong feelings displayed by Wingate's subordinates and among Egyptian army officers,[12] who wanted retribution for their dead and wounded comrades and accordingly for harsh treatment to be meted out to the rebels. When Slatin, Wingate' deputy, was confronted with the wishes of Gorst and the Foreign Office, his initial reaction was to resign, while Edgar Bonham Carter, the Legal Secretary, offered his resignation.

When writing to Cromer at the time, Gorst told his former chief how much trouble he had had in persuading Wingate not to hang the 12 convicted men. He added that when he next saw Wingate he was going to speak to him about the episode 'like a father'.[13] In fact, Gorst saw Slatin on 2 June (did he have a hand in making him withdraw his resignation?) and then later in the month Wingate, who was on his way home for leave. Looking back on the 'Kamlin' affair, as the rising came to be known, Gorst was to state: 'It required extreme firmness on my part to bring them into line and the violent and unreasonable spirit displayed [by officials in Khartoum] was rather disquieting.'[14] As a postscript to Kamlin, Wingate sent Slatin down to the scene of the rising to hold an investigation, and the latter concluded that the trouble was local, not general, and that sufficient punishment had been meted out, an interesting conclusion in view of the earlier stance he had taken.[15]

The Kamlin affair was not the only disturbance to occur in the Sudan that year. In November a fair-sized military expedition had to be sent into the Nuba mountains in Kordofan to suppress recalcitrant tribesmen who had repeatedly defied the government. On that occasion, an Egyptian army officer and six soldiers were killed and 30 men wounded, and a British inspector was wounded in the same province the following year. In 1910, the Egyptian army was called out in support of the civil power on no fewer than 15 occasions. Once, a hostile sheikh claiming supernatural powers created considerable unrest among tribesmen in a remote district in the far south, while in Berber a religious mendicant proclaimed himself a prophet

and attacked the police sent to arrest him. In the consequent disturbance, a policeman was killed and four were wounded. An added law and order problem arose from the incursions periodically made into the east of the Sudan by Abyssinian bands chiefly involved in obtaining slaves.[16] Gorst would not necessarily hear at once of every minor disturbance but he would have been very alert to the need to keep abreast of any incident which might blow up like the Kamlin one.

While home on leave in the summer of 1908, Gorst received a memorandum dated 8 August from Wingate, also on leave, about the state of security in the Sudan. Wingate concluded that to remedy what was an undesirable situation there were two possible courses of action:

> 1. to increase the military presence;
>
> 2. to improve the internal communications in the country by means of extending the railway system to give the present garrison increased mobility.

He argued in favour of the second, proposing that the British government should be approached for a loan.

It looks as if Gorst was expecting this memorandum, for within ten days he had submitted his own memorandum to Grey, attaching Wingate's and strongly supporting the second option.[17] No precise figure for the sum needed had been mentioned but it would probably have amounted to about £E1,000,000. Gorst explained that financial help from Egypt over this was not possible. Like the efficient bureaucrat he was, he attached as an annex to his piece a full note by Harvey, the Financial Adviser, on just why this was so. Already Egypt was providing the Sudan with an annual subsidy of some £E380,000 (soon to be scaled down by £E45,000); this included £E127,000 which was debited to the Sudanese government for the cost of maintaining forces of the Egyptian army in the Sudan.[18] In addition, a sum of £E3,500,000 had earlier been advanced by the Egyptians to the Sudan for railways and sundry works. Egypt itself had its own development programme, and on this account could not spare additional funds for the Sudan. Gorst also pointed out that, as Britain was ultimately responsible for the maintenance of order in the Sudan, it made sense for the British Treasury to borrow the necessary money for extending the railways; it could be stipulated that in these circumstances the Egyptian government should accept full responsibility for the payment of the interest on the loan procured for the Sudanese government. To ram home the message, Gorst saw Grey at the Foreign Office on 19 August.

The loan project did not find favour with the British, and Grey eventually wrote to Gorst in November to tell him that the cabinet had come to no decision about it, but that a loan would require legislation and the 'competition of other places for money for railways, notably Nigeria, is very severe ... I can hold out no hope at present'. All he could suggest was approaching the Turks for a loan, and, as a sop, he added that the War Office had managed to find the sum of £36,000 which could be used for 'giving increased mobility to the troops in Egypt'.[19] The business of the loan rumbled on into the following year when Gorst told Grey that the Egyptians were 'averse' to requesting a loan from the Porte. What they really wanted was the abolition of the existing Ottoman edict forbidding Egypt from borrowing money without their consent. Gorst had himself taken this up with the British ambassador in Constantinople and asked Grey to help over this as well.[20]

In the autumn of 1909, in the light of an improvement in the law and order position in the Sudan, Gorst suggested to Wingate that the time had come to end the regime of martial law in existence in the country. If this were done, Wingate thought that he should be given power by Ordinance to detain people without trial. Gorst was reluctant to agree to this, and so the matter rested. However, Gorst now put forward proposals to set up under the Governor-General a Grand Council for the Sudan, comprising four ex-officio members, including the Civil, Financial and Legal Secretaries, and two to four additional members appointed by the Governor-General to take the place of the informal council then used. The Grand Council would be empowered to vote on the annual budget and to exercise legislative and executive functions, all subject to the Governor-General's veto. The Foreign Office agreed with this initiative of Gorst's, and the necessary Ordinance was enacted to take effect from the start of the new year.[21] This development illustrates Gorst's interest in the efficient governance of the Sudan and his liking for tidy constitutional arrangements wherever possible. Certainly, the Grand Council contributed to the continuity and stability of the Sudanese government.

Early in the winter of 1909, Gorst decided to undertake another and longer inspection visit to the Sudan to see something of the extreme south of the country. Taking with him the young Robert Vansittart of the Agency, he set off for the south on 25 November and was away a month. He loved these expeditions – they were meat and drink for him after Cairo. In Khartoum, Gorst stayed with Slatin because Wingate had been ill and was still in Egypt. Baron Rudolf von Slatin was one of the most unusual of all the officers serving the British in the Sudan, of which country his

knowledge was unrivalled. He had begun his career as a cavalry officer in a smart Austrian regiment before joining General Gordon in the Sudan where he became Governor of Dafur in his twenties. To keep his troops loyal to the Khedive in the Mahdi's rebellion, he turned Muslim. From 1884, he was for 11 years a prisoner of the Dervishes in Omdurman before making a dramatic escape across the desert. A vivid account of these experiences is contained in the bestselling book he wrote.[22] He then served in the campaigns in which the Sudan was reconquered and was for 14 years the Inspector-General, a special rank, in Khartoum. He was described by some as a boon companion, but we do not unfortunately know how Gorst got on with this lively and colourful man; we may imagine they enjoyed each other's company.

Gorst began his journey south from Khartoum, travelling 80 miles to the railhead in Gezira where cotton growing was already beginning to flourish. Then he took a wood-burning steamer up the Blue Nile and going via Wad Medani and Sennar reached Roseires, 300 miles from Khartoum, the highest navigable point of the river, and not so very far from the Abyssinian border. He was accompanied throughout by the Governor or Chief Inspector of the province through which he was travelling. En route he took periodic pot shots at crocodiles from the steamer, killing two of them, one of which was dragged on board (was this because someone wanted the skin for handbags, or luggage?). On shore, he shot a roan antelope but did not record seeing elephant or giraffe, animals with a local reputation for damaging the telegraph lines being set up all over the country. At the towns and villages, he met the notables and other locals so that he was able to form an opinion of the people and their problems. Retracing their steps beyond Wad Medani, the party set out from Rufa'a on the Blue Nile for a long trek across country on camels until they reached the old river port of Dueim on the White Nile over 100 miles away to the west. Gorst was here accompanied by Major Dickinson, whom we have met before, and the escort was in command of Major Clement Smith V.C., who had won his award in Somaliland. At Dueim, they boarded another steamer which took them 320 miles upstream to famous Fashoda (later Kodok), which they reached on 18 December. This was the farthest point south ever travelled by Gorst. On his way back to Khartoum, he visited two remote mission stations, one American and the other Austrian, the work of both of which he described as being disappointing (he did not say why). He watched too – perhaps this was more to his liking – a great Shillok dance held in his honour.[23] In Khartoum, he found the Wingates once again installed at the palace after quite an absence in Cairo, and had

time there for a reception and discussions before boarding the night train north. He reached Cairo at 7 a.m. on Christmas Day. His family were well and he also recorded that he went to church, played tennis in the afternoon and gave a dinner party for 30 in the evening – situation normal, you might say. He wrote to Hardinge, the PUS at the Foreign Office, reporting on his trip, and, in reply, Hardinge said he agreed with Gorst that 'a benevolent despotism is the best form of government for that country'.[24]

The year 1910 was, as we shall presently see, a bad one for Gorst, and the affairs of the Sudan did not impinge very much on his workload. Major events in Egypt occupied him during the first six months and then he was ill during the second part of the year. But, in writing his report on the year, he noted with satisfaction the steady development taking place in the Sudan. For instance, the value of exports was up from £E265,000 in 1906 to £E978,000 in 1910. Somehow railway expansion was continuing and there were discussions about building a barrage across the Blue Nile, which would in the course of time be realised and which would facilitate the growing of cotton in the Gezira area on a huge scale. There would always be, one suspects, a special place in Gorst's heart for the great expanses of the Sudan.

CHAPTER

# 18

# THE SUEZ CANAL CONCESSION AND THE ASSASSINATION OF BOUTROS GHALI

The events of 1909 left Gorst, as he reflected on them a year later, in – for him – a sombre mood. The good results which might have been forthcoming from the political changes he had been effecting were, in his opinion, 'neutralised' by the increasing hostility and violence of the extreme nationalists. At the same time, the policy he had been pursuing was viewed with 'much ill-favour by the Anglo-Egyptian official class and the local European colonies'. Even some of the ministers were not working cordially with Boutros Ghali, Gorst's mainstay.[1]

There was a particular problem which had been exercising Gorst's mind for much of the year, partly due to his failure to obtain from the home government a loan to develop the railways of the Sudan. His review of the year continued:

> Throughout the latter part of the year there was considerable agitation and local opposition in connection with a scheme for the extension of the Suez Canal Co's concession which Harvey and I had negotiated and which with a good deal of difficulty I had persuaded H.M.G. not to oppose. The scheme which was cordially approved by Boutros and the Khedive but disliked by the other Ministers was

> such an excellent bargain for Egypt ... that I endeavoured to push it through without perhaps realising that it would give an opportunity to the Nationalists to arouse a really strong and universal feeling against us.[2]

Under the original agreement to build and operate the canal, the Suez Canal Company had obtained from the Egyptian government a concession for 99 years running out in 1968. As recounted in Chapter 4, in 1875 the British government acquired for £4 million 176,602 shares in the Company, out of a total of 400,000 shares, when Khedive Ismail sold his holding to them. After a slow start, the canal proved a great success, both as a waterway used by the maritime countries of the world and as a commercial venture by which the Suez Canal Company and its shareholders had become very prosperous, a prosperity in which Egypt itself did not share. For Britain, the canal was of incalculable strategic importance; of the volume of shipping using the canal in the first decade of the 1900s, some 70 per cent of the tonnage was British. Further, the total tonnage of British ships passing through the canal in 1912 was 20.25 million, four times more than the German tonnage which had second place.[3] The status of the canal was governed by the Convention of Constantinople of 1888 which provided for freedom of passage through the canal for all vessels.

In the scheme developed by Gorst, Harvey and the Company, an extended concession was granted to the Company in return for financial benefits including capital sums payable to the Egyptian Treasury by the Company. Of course Gorst had his eye on some of the funds obtained being used to finance projects like railways in the Sudan. The idea of extending the concession was not a new one. In 1899, the proposal had been put to Cromer who had rejected it. In constructing this scheme, Gorst seemed to have lost sight of two important elements in the equation. One was the Egyptians' inherent dislike of the foreign-owned Suez Canal Company, and the other was the reluctance of the Egyptians, ever resentful of the British position of dominance in the Sudan, to use Egyptian money to finance development in that country.

The first indication we have from Gorst's papers that he might have been interested in the idea of a concession comes from two diary entries in early October 1908. Immediately on arriving in London on 4 October by the night train from Scotland, he and his old friend Garstin had breakfast together. Garstin was by now one of the ten British directors (three of them were appointed by the government) of the 32-man Board of the Suez Canal Company. Two days later, Gorst told Garstin that he was 'prepared

*20. Sir William Garstin, irrigation engineer and administrator.*

to consider the idea of prolonging the Suez Canal concession'. It rather looks from these entries as if Garstin may have put the idea of an extension to the concession to Gorst on 4 October, whereupon the latter took a couple of days to think it over (and perhaps consult Harvey, who would also have been on leave) before coming to his decision. The initiative, therefore, probably came from the Company.[4]

The parties to the plan did not let the grass grow under their feet and early in the new year Gorst was meeting in Cairo three other Canal directors. In February, he and Harvey 'came to terms on most of the outstanding points' on a draft convention for the proposed extension of the concession.[5] By the scheme devised, the Company would apply for a further concession of 40 years which would thus run from 1968 to 2008. The proposals provided for the payment by the Company of a capital sum of £E4,000,000 in four equal instalments in the period December 1910 to December 1913 inclusive, and a rising share in the annual receipts from canal dues going up from four per cent in 1922 to 12 per cent in 1961. From 1968, the profits would be shared equally between the Company and the Egyptian government. Also from this time, the Egyptians would be entitled to three seats on the Company Board.[6] Gorst genuinely thought the scheme offered a good deal to Egypt.

With its 44 per cent shareholding in the Company and the weight of its presence on the Board, the British government now came onto the scene. Gorst obviously enough had to put his package to them for their approval; as things turned out, neither the British Treasury nor the Board of Trade favoured the scheme. The same applied to Cromer when he was consulted by the Foreign Office. The canal historian, Arnold Wilson, asserted that 'the proposal was undoubtedly profitable to Egypt, but it was even more profitable to the Company,' whose rights to charge as dues as much as the traffic would bear were not restricted.[7] Thus the Treasury considered the authors of the scheme had made 'too good a bargain', while the Board of Trade argued that the real need was for a reduction in the dues. The Treasury and the official British directors of the Company did not apparently keep their views to themselves, as Gorst thought they should have done, until the opinion of the British government as a whole was known. He complained strongly to Grey about this in quite a sharply worded letter.[8]

As we have seen, Gorst was a persistent man as well as being a skilled negotiator. While on leave in the summer of 1909, he produced a note for the British cabinet about the scheme, and this evidently helped to satisfy any general doubts the British government might have had, for they consequently gave Gorst their backing. Nevertheless, there must have been in Grey's mind some residual reservations, since he instructed the three British official directors of the Company to support the scheme 'somewhat reluctantly', and then only provided there were assurances given about a reduction in rates for shipping.[9]

When Gorst returned to Egypt in mid October, he found the local press had got wind of the scheme. The more moderate papers, he told Grey, had taken a fairly reasonable view of it, though the nationalist press was, as always, 'violently hostile'. The most potent point of attack on the scheme related to the suspicion, a well-founded one, that Egyptian money would be spent on the Sudan. There was one point, Gorst wrote, on which all shades of native opinion were unanimous. It was that the arrangement proposed should be submitted to the General Assembly before it was finally concluded. The Organic Law, he went on, laid down that the General Assembly had to be consulted on 'loans' and that the present proposal 'is, in essentials, of that character. I have therefore advised the Ministers to give way in regard to this matter.'[10] Although, as he was later to state, the government was not strictly obliged by the terms of the Organic Law to consult the Assembly,[11] he clearly thought they would put themselves in the wrong if they stood out against this course of action. And so the fateful decision to submit the scheme to the Assembly was taken, 'reluctantly', as

he noted in his diary; in fact it was made by the three key figures in the Egyptian government, Gorst, Harvey and Boutros Ghali on 31 October. Later on, Gorst regretted this decision, regarding it as a great mistake.[12] From Gorst's point of view, tactically speaking, he had probably allowed himself to be over influenced by a vociferous press. On the other hand, it was of course desirable from the viewpoint of the Egyptians for this representative institution to be permitted to express an opinion on an agreement significantly affecting their country financially and one which would for a period of another forty years deprive them of their sovereign rights over an important but small piece of their territory.

At first, Gorst was optimistic that ministers would toe the line over the scheme, but he was soon disappointed to find he was encountering great difficulties with some of them, who were hostile to what was being proposed, considering the inducements offered to Egypt were not enough. This caused Gorst to refer impatiently to 'Ministerial obstruction and stupidity'.[13] While ministers in Egypt were looking at the draft convention, Grey was making an announcement in the House of Commons that the scheme was to be put before the General Assembly in Egypt. Perhaps surprisingly in view of the considerable British interests involved, he took a firm stance against the Commons debating the matter until the Assembly had made its views plain. The shrewd Hardinge at the Foreign Office, who would be appointed six months later as Viceroy of India, commented to Gorst at this point that the Suez Canal business appeared to be 'in a pretty good muddle', not an observation calculated to please the frustrated yet still determined Consul-General.[14]

Somehow Gorst, probably refreshed by his winter visit to the Sudan, managed to get ministers into a more compliant mood and, on 27 January 1910, the Council of Ministers under the presidency of the Khedive, who had just returned from a successful Pilgrimage to Mecca, unanimously agreed the draft convention, subject to some minor modifications. At this stage, it remained for the officials to consider the contents of the Khedive's opening speech to the General Assembly due to meet on 9 February. This address was accompanied by some documentation on the Suez Canal scheme, including a long explanatory memorandum, which expressed the fear that Egypt's long-term interests in the canal and its potential value might be affected by certain adverse factors. Five were listed, among which were the anticipated reduction in canal dues by the Company, the diminished importance of the canal as a result of new scientific discoveries, and the competition from the Panama Canal (the last surely being a baffling point to raise). Arnold Wilson commented with some justification on the

memorandum that it was hardly surprising 'a proposal, however financially advantageous, supported by such arguments, should have been examined in a spirit of criticism, and ultimately rejected with contumely'.[15]

While he may for a passing moment have been distracted by a domino dance given by Lady Maxwell, wife of the general commanding British troops in Egypt, when Doll and Jack Gorst's three sisters Eva, Hylda and Gwen went in identical costumes,[16] Gorst contemplated uneasily the prospect of the General Assembly examining his scheme. One minute he was buoyed up and the next cast down: he wrote to Cromer in early February telling him he thought the scheme would go through, reiterating his belief in its advantages for Egypt; a few days later, he gloomily confided to his diary that he supposed the Assembly would throw the scheme out.[17]

When the General Assembly met on the due date, it at once decided to appoint a 19-strong committee to consider the scheme submitted and to report back. Gorst later saw this as a carefully orchestrated tactic by those members of the Assembly, led by Abaza Pasha, determined the scheme should fail, since the committee had been packed with those against it. In the event, it took the committee some five weeks to produce their report. Well before the result of their deliberations was known, disaster struck.

In the second half of February, Gorst, surrounded by his family and friends, was particularly busy with his Agency dinner parties and other social events. His sister Edith and her husband Mark Sykes were on a visit. One morning, Gorst took the latter to the Abdin Palace to present him to the Khedive. Gorst attended a horse show in the afternoon, before going out after dinner to a variety show for the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (this charity had been founded in Egypt by a group of distinguished people including Nubar Pasha and Kitchener). On another day, he and his sister Gwen rode out to Heliopolis to watch the antics of aviators with their newfangled flying machines, which were being shown off for the benefit of Cairene society, an occasion which was of course irresistible to Gorst with his love of anything new. Combining duty with pleasure one afternoon, he drove Lady Maxwell out of Cairo to give away prizes at a rifle club meeting. He was particularly friendly with the German consul and so went with Doll to celebrate the jubilee of the German hospital in Cairo. All this time his mother, who was staying with her various young in Cairo, was ill, happily not seriously, with pneumonia. Then, on 19 February, Harry Cust and his wife Nina came to dine and to go on with Gorst to the opera to see *Boris Godunov*. Harry, Storrs' uncle, had been at Eton with Gorst and was a terrific swell there, being Captain of

the Oppidans (something like Head Boy), but his career as a barrister and then journalist – expected to be a brilliant one – had never prospered. The next day, a Sunday, Gorst took the Custs, the Sykeses and Ronald Storrs out to nearby Sakkara to see the Step pyramid. On their way home, and Storrs takes up the story here, there suddenly appeared speeding towards them over the plain a figure. He turned out to be the local stationmaster, his face very pale, and with a telegram in his hand. It was for Gorst. Luckily he was riding an Arab pony – the others were on donkeys – and was able to gallop off with the messenger to the railway station without though having time to tell the others what had happened. The news in the telegram was bad. A special train was waiting at the station to rush him to Cairo,[18] because the Premier, Boutros Ghali, had been shot and dangerously wounded by a young nationalist. In Cairo, Gorst went straight to the Khedive's palace and learnt the full story.

Boutros had been standing on the pavement outside his office at 1 o'clock that afternoon waiting for a carriage to take him to lunch when a young man, one Ibrahim al-Wardani, had approached the Premier and shot him at point-blank range. Boutros had been rushed to hospital and was undergoing a critical operation. The assailant, who was at once arrested, was a pharmacist and shopkeeper. The attack had been made, it transpired, purely on political grounds. Wardani, a member of the Nationalist Party, gave four reasons for shooting Boutros: he had signed the hated condominium agreement with the British on the Sudan; he had presided at the Dinshawai trial; he had introduced the new press law; and his ministry had accepted the proposal to extend the Suez Canal concession.

After riding early on the Monday morning, Gorst hurried to the hospital where he was told that Boutros was dying. He had borne the agony of the operation with fortitude, but, alas, it had not been successful. On his deathbed, he told the Khedive: 'Dieu m'est temoin que je n'ai fait que du bien à mon pays.'[19] Shocked as he was by the death of the able and upright Boutros, Gorst was quick to take the necessary political action. At the Abdin Palace, he and the Khedive agreed that same day to appoint Mohammed Said as the new Premier, a man known to be sympathetic to moderate nationalists; partly as a balancing act, Saba Pasha, a Christian, was brought into the government as Finance Minister. Gorst at once saw and talked with the new Premier, and telegraphed Grey to ensure the British government accepted the new appointments.

The next Tuesday, Gorst attended Boutros's funeral, which lasted for four hours from 10.30 a.m. He had a late lunch with Milner, who happened to be in Cairo, and noted in his diary:

> This sad occurrence has upset me very much. I feel that Boutros was a victim to his loyalty to British policy.

To Cromer he wrote:

> Boutros's assassination was a terrible business, and, so far as I am concerned, an irreparable loss, for he was about the only Egyptian left in whom one could have entire confidence, and who was able to understand how public affairs have to be managed ... As regards the four reasons the murderer gave for his act, he ought to have shot you for the first two and me for the second two. However, we must all go on with our work, and not allow the acts of a few criminals to interfere with what we consider to be for the good of this country.

He also in this letter took Cromer to task for not understanding his point of view about his hesitancy over the possibility of forcing ministers to override, if necessary, the General Assembly on the Suez Canal business.[20] Cromer had obviously take a bullish line, one which Gorst did not agree with, at the time at least; he was always ready to defend stoutly the line he had taken with his former chief.

These were difficult days for Gorst. Even if he was under stress he did not show it for he imposed a rigorous control on himself to mask his real feelings in order to give a calm face to the world. He did, however, concede some private thoughts to his diary:

> I am struggling along with my Report in the midst of all the confusion and worry caused by all these changes. Prince Hussein has resigned the Presidency of the Legislative Council and I have wasted time in trying uselessly to get him to reconsider his decision.[21]

The Report to which he referred was his Annual Report to Grey on the state of Egypt and the Sudan, normally written in the February and March period; it was always published in London as a command paper for public consumption. To complete its 80 deep and densely typed pages he would have needed to burn the midnight oil. Of course, he relied on department heads and Wingate too for separate contributions but it was essentially, together with its commentary and conclusions, his own report.

To add to his troubles, Doll was being difficult, though we do not know whether this was depression or something else. At least Gorst had managed earlier, with Foreign Office help, to put off a visitation by the Turkish fleet

to Egyptian waters, because he thought that this might lead to unwelcome demonstrations against the British. Towards the end of March, a visit to Cairo was paid by the former President of the USA, Theodore Roosevelt, who had been big-game hunting in East Africa. Courteously, he told Gorst what he was going to say at an address he was giving at the University. Gorst attended and described it as a 'splendid performance',[22] doubtless pleased by the critical remarks made by the speaker about the methods used by Egyptian nationalists. What, however, he had to say in London two months later was not to Gorst's liking, as we shall see.

Gorst felt it was time for him to have a break, not perhaps so surprising. So, two days after attending a memorial service for Boutros Ghali, he left Cairo on Easter Sunday, 3 April, to go ibex shooting for four days with Prince Kamel al Din, the son of Prince Hussein, in the Fayoum oasis area. He would miss the reconvening of the General Assembly on 4 April to consider his Suez Canal scheme, but perhaps this was a deliberate ploy, resigned as he now was to the outcome of its meeting.

Amid intense public interest, the Assembly met that April Monday – the day incidentally that Gorst shot an ibex with 39-inch horns – to consider the report of its committee. Rejection of the convention had been recommended on the following grounds: the scheme should not have been submitted until approved by the Company's shareholders; the Assembly had no power to modify the scheme; the scheme would entail a loss to Egypt of £130,000,000 (we do not know how this sum was computed); the government's fears about new discoveries were ill-founded; the Company might offer better terms in the future; there was no urgent financial necessity for renewing the concession in return for a cash payment and there was no provision for firm control of the Company.[23] Curiously perhaps, there was no reference to the postponement for 40 years of Egypt's right to regain sovereignty over the land occupied by the canal and its works. The Premier, Mohammed Said, and the Minister of Justice, Saad Zaghlul, opened the proceedings. The former told his audience that the government would not go ahead with the scheme without the Assembly's approval; this condition had been incorporated as Article XI of the draft convention and thereby left the Council of Ministers and Gorst with little room for manoeuvre. Saad Zaghlul, in a long and powerful speech in favour of the scheme, refuted one by one the committee's arguments for rejecting the scheme. Sirry Pasha, Minister of Public Works, also spoke and indicated the benefits accruing from the scheme in regard to helping finance irrigation projects. Then it was the turn of the well-organised opponents of the scheme including the fervent Abaza to have their say.

The next day, the meeting became a stormy one during which 50 members rose in their seats and, to wild applause from the public gallery, declared they would reject the scheme. The defiant Zaghlul again tried to argue for the scheme; however, he was constantly interrupted by unruly members of the Assembly and was forced to give up speaking. Further debate was not apparently possible. In the ensuing vote, only ministers and one Copt member, Senaika Bey, were in favour of the draft convention. The rest voted for its summary rejection. Outside the building in which the meeting had been held, a crowd of demonstrating students and many others cheered the results of the meeting with cries of hostility against British rule.[24]

Writing in 1933, Arnold Wilson concluded the General Assembly was right to reject the draft convention even if its members' intention was to condemn any scheme put up by their government. But at the same time he regretted, echoing the view put forward in 1930 by Abbas Hilmi, then the ex-Khedive, 'that no counter proposition was put forward'.

Believing that he had been let down, Gorst wrote in his diary on 9 April:

> Talked with Harvey. Felt much depressed at general situation and at failure of our efforts to encourage Egyptians to take part in their affairs. The Ministers show great weakness and their only idea is to take the line of least resistance.

The irony of the situation was that some Egyptians *had* been taking part in the affairs of their country but not at all in the way Gorst wanted. It was presumably to try and pep up ministers that he gave Mohammed Said a 'lecture' the next day, though we do not know what he said. Continuing in despondent mood, Gorst wrote to Grey on 10 April revealing a somewhat closed mind to the views of the Egyptians:

> The rejection of our proposals by the General Assembly was a foregone conclusion but I did not anticipate such an open and indecent refusal even to discuss the question ... the real hostility to the project is due to the fact that it was negotiated and prepared by the English advisers ... It would be impossible to adduce a clearer proof of the present incapacity of the Egyptians for any sort of autonomy, and of the futility of expecting from them reasonable discussion or argument on important matters of public interest. I do not see that we could well have avoided trying the experiment

> of allowing these people to have rather more say in the conduct of their affairs, but I am gradually coming to the conclusion that it has been a failure ... The points which come out most clearly from the present proceedings are (1) that both the Legislative Council and the General Assembly are entirely dominated by the Anglophobe national press, and (2) the present native Ministers, and indeed any others that we could possibly appoint, are quite incapable of standing up against hostile criticism in the press ... The only remedy that I can see is that we, the English, should come out more into the open ... as you will see, Egypt is not a bed of roses at the present time.[25]

And so Gorst was convinced, by the assassination of Boutros Ghali and the failure of his canal scheme, that the Liberal experiment was over, as was his concept and practice of pulling strings in the background. A new course would have to be plotted. Unfortunately, before he could fully work out what this should be a severe illness intervened, as we shall see. He did indeed realise the tactical error he had made by submitting his scheme to the General Assembly but by then it was too late. He himself wrote in his autobiographical notes with his usual honesty nine or so months after the events described:

> No doubt I committed some blunders in my management of what was a very difficult (perhaps impossible) business, and perhaps the decision to submit the scheme to the General Assembly was one of the chief mistakes, but it is easy to be wise after the event.[26]

Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid, the Egyptian historian, has accused Gorst of a lack of sensitivity about public opinion in Egypt,[27] citing as examples his reviving the press law, the choice of Boutros Ghali as Premier and the Suez Canal scheme. Yet, as ruler of Egypt, Gorst was forced to make difficult decisions about governing the country – and was always ready to do so. With al-Sayyid's first two examples, Gorst seemed to have weighed the consequences carefully enough before proceeding, but he undoubtedly misjudged the effect of his pet Suez Canal project on the Egyptians in the circumstances obtaining at the time.

The trial of Wardani, Boutros Ghali's self-confessed assassin, began on 21 April before an ordinary criminal court with a panel of judges including two Egyptians two months after the victim's death. There had been unfavourable comment in Britain about slowness in bringing the prisoner

to trial but Gorst rejected this as unfair criticism. The Procureur-Général's preliminary inquiry was conduced, in his view, with praiseworthy despatch in spite of so many witnesses, 110 all told, having to be examined in case Wardani had had accomplices. Ultimately, no one else was indicted for the murder for lack of evidence. Nevertheless, the police investigation revealed a widespread conspiracy behind the crime, and the existence of a secret terrorist society, the Tadama society, which advocated the use of violent tactics to achieve nationalist goals, and to which Wardani belonged. One leading member was Dr Shafik Mansur, a lawyer, who was sentenced to death and executed 14 years later for his part in the assassination of Sir Lee Stack, the then Sirdar and Governor-General of the Sudan. Wardani's trial had hardly begun when it was adjourned for a short time at the request of the defence (counsel was paid for by the Nationalist Party) to obtain special medical evidence as to the cause of death. On being resumed, the proceedings lasted until 13 May when the accused was found guilty of murder and sentenced to death. It was thought that he might be reprieved, but his appeal was rejected on 1 June and he was executed by hanging on 28 June.[28] Gorst had shown himself to be tough-minded over the course of the trial, and strongly believed a conviction was necessary in the interests in maintaining law and order.

Ever since Boutros's murder there had been, as might have been expected, great agitation among the Coptic community, which felt highly vulnerable, particularly so as no outstanding leader among them had come forward to replace Boutros. Gorst was thus concerned about the eruption of communal violence and he noted in a letter to Hardinge how the Copts were getting up a 'foolish and violent agitation', though he stated emphatically that there were no indications of fanaticism on the part of the Muslim community. Here he was no doubt playing down how students at schools were chalking up on blackboards 'Long live the murderer'.[29] The subject of Copt/Muslim relations was one which exercised Gorst and we return to it in the next chapter.

At about this time, the Council of Ministers decided off its own bat – that is without reference to Gorst – to suppress an obscure Arab newspaper which had written an offensive piece about the late Premier. Normally Gorst would have warned the Foreign Office when such a measure was contemplated but this was not always possible in the prevailing circumstances. At least Gorst was pleased ministers had done the right thing.[30]

A letter written by the Syrian journalist Faris Nimr, who, as we have earlier recorded, interviewed Gorst in happier times, to Harry Boyle in

Berlin affords a good example of how some people felt at the time. Boyle's correspondent said that Egypt had 'been drifting headlong' after the Premier's assassination; that the 'animosity against the English is so strong and so widely spread now that no English Inspector would dare to move in broad daylight without escort, where he would never have minded three years ago to travel at midnight alone, loaded with gold'; that nationalists had 'increased a thousand times in number in the last two months'; and that Wardani was now the 'greatest hero'. Some of this was alarmist or exaggerated, or so Gorst thought – he told Grey that 'panic-mongers' were very active and that rumours of intended massacres continued to circulate, but that his information tended to show there was nothing in it. Nevertheless, he noted, on account of the prevailing feeling of uncertainty which was detrimental to commercial interests, the call by the British Chamber of Commerce in Egypt for steps to be taken to put an end to agitation so to restore the necessary tranquillity.[31]

Importantly, Gorst kept a cool head. The Foreign Office offered to increase the military garrison by sending two infantry battalions from Malta. After consulting General Maxwell and Ronald Graham, the Adviser at the Ministry of the Interior, Gorst refused the offer. Present troop levels were adequate, he told Grey, and reinforcements would only serve to increase local fears. Gorst seemed to be right, and both the trial of Wardani and his execution passed off without serious incident. He had, however, been considering deporting Sheikh Shawish, the former firebrand editor of *al-Liwa* and a man deeply involved in fomenting agitation. The Foreign Office, consulted as it needed to be, was in the end not keen on taking immediate action.[32] While Gorst had that spring resisted responding to calls from the press for in his view over-severe security action, there were certain measures that were required. For instance, there were those needed to counter insubordination at schools and colleges (once fire hoses had had to be turned on students); new penal measures in the field of criminal conspiracy were needed to help deal with secret societies; and legislation had to be introduced to strengthen the judicial process over press offences in terms of defining more precisely the responsibility of those involved in publication.

In the light of events, Grey had been pondering the whole question of 'whither Egypt'. As for British attempts to develop the government of Egypt by means of Egyptians, he wrote to Gorst stating he took 'entire responsibility' for recent steps in that direction, adding interestingly that the original policy was Cromer's. He also made it clear that he believed the Egyptians had taken advantage of those efforts by agitating against the

occupation rather than furthering good government, and that it had to be emphasised in parliament that the British would not allow themselves to be turned out of Egypt.[33]

Hardinge at the Foreign Office contributed to the triangular discussion by agreeing with Gorst that a new British attitude was now needed in Egypt, a view he, Hardinge, had apparently held for some time but on which he had always had to give way because the government was in favour of self-government for all communities. Hardinge gave Gorst a pat on the back, telling him that he had made 'a very good attempt to show what Egypt was capable of doing'. The policy which Gorst had been carrying out on behalf of the British government was a good one, in Hardinge's view, but it had been pushed too fast. In saying this, Hardinge was echoing the views being expressed at the time by Cromer, who had been consulted by the Foreign Office and who was critical of Gorst's recent handling of affairs. Hardinge went on:

> I have urged Sir Edward [Grey] two or three times during the last 18 months to pull up a bit as I saw the Egyptians were getting out of hand. He, however, thought otherwise, as you gave no indication that your opinion in any way coincided with mine. In this he was, in his own way, supporting you and, as he was directly responsible I had nothing more to say.[34]

In some way Gorst must have hinted to the PUS that he thought Grey was not standing up for him but Hardinge in his letter, as one mandarin to another, took pains to disabuse Gorst of any such idea.

These various exchanges over a period of about a month plainly indicated that Gorst was carrying out the government's considered policy in Egypt and not acting independently. The outcome of all this was that Grey asked Gorst for a memorandum giving his views on the whole position in Egypt so as to help the Foreign Secretary make up his mind what course of action the government should pursue.[35] Gorst at once applied himself to this task. He sent off a discursive paper dated 22 May, which Grey copied to the Prime Minister and, confidentially, to Cromer, whose was still present in the background, ready to pronounce on Egyptian matters. The salient points made by Gorst in his paper, in which he did not pull his punches, may be summarised as follows:

> The results of changes introduced to the functions of the Legislative Council and General Assembly had been extremely disappointing.

These bodies were showing a steadily increasing tendency to becoming instruments of Nationalist Party agitation;

the main aim of the Nationalist Party was to bring the British occupation to an end by making the task of government by the British impossible. The methods being used were to: undermine the influence of Anglo-Egyptian Officials, insult the Egyptians cooperating with the British and incite disorder whenever the opportunity occurred;

the Khedive's assistance in countering the work of Nationalist Party agitators and the press had proved of little value because his political influence had come to an end when it was no longer directed against the occupation;

continued agitation for a Constitution which implied a disappearance of British control exercised a prejudicial effect on commercial and financial interests;

the effect of encouraging ministers to show initiative and independence was to make the task of Advisers more arduous than before. Because ministers were subject to violent attacks in the Legislative Council and in the press and deference to British views was considered an offence, relations between ministers and officials were damaged. This meant the government machine no longer worked properly;

the conclusion was that the current policy of ruling the country in cooperation with ministers was not compatible with the development of representative institutions;

there was little chance that perseverance with the experiment recently tried would produce better results in the immediate future;

with the possible exception of the Khedive and his ministers, the various European communities and the Egyptians themselves all believed the policy being followed was a concession to clamour, and represented a diminution of British authority;

the time had come 'to cry a halt and that to confer any real power on

> the Legislative Council so long as that body continued to maintain its present hostile attitude would be a suicidal policy' destroying the system of Advisers and ministers working together, which was still the soundest way of governing the country;
>
> a public statement of British government policy that the Egyptians were far from the stage when they could govern themselves without foreign assistance, that the occupation must continue and that further concessions on autonomy could not be expected, was needed.[36]

In his resumé, Gorst had been totally realistic about how he saw the situation. Certainly, the Liberal experiment had not been a success. But was this Gorst's fault? And had he been given an impossible task by the Liberal government? These are questions we examine further in our last chapter.

Gorst's advice was essentially taken, when Grey made a long speech about Egypt in the House of Commons on 13 June. The Foreign Secretary, moreover, defended Gorst from attacks made on him concerning his policy and handling of it in Egypt in some sections of the press. No one, Grey told the House, had carried out the British government's policy in Egypt 'with more knowledge, more ability, more skill' than Gorst, a statement producing cheers. Turning to the present, Grey said the actual state of affairs in Egypt had been painted in too dark colours, and he refuted absolutely an allegation made by one member that the British had failed completely in governing Egypt. He then gave the assurances wanted by Gorst that the occupation would continue and that there could be no more development towards self-government so long as agitation continued. Gorst felt that Grey had 'spoken up nobly'[37] and, to his evident relief, Balfour, the shadow Foreign Secretary, took a reasonable line in the debate, and Egypt did not become a party issue.

There was one other nasty knock Gorst received in April which we have not yet mentioned. This was a malicious attack on him in the 16 April issue of the *Saturday Review* published in London. Gorst read the article concerned on Sunday 24 April after he had been to church and then gone riding with Doll. Ronald Storrs, who had brought in the offending piece for his chief to see, described how Gorst turned 'pale with chagrin' as he read it. This was not surprising considering its contents.

The article, a highly scurrilous one, was directed against both the policy Gorst was carrying out as well as his own personal behaviour. Britain's honour

and reputation, its author asserted, were being seriously compromised by the Consul-General, who was not upholding the prestige of his race, and so must be removed. On the policy and work side, Gorst was, for instance, castigated for his 'wholesale deportation of natives hostile to the Khedive and Pasha class'; he was described as now being completely 'in the hands of the Khedive', about whom very disparaging remarks were made; and, the article alleged, the police, even when willing, were not encouraged to do their duty, and were doing nothing to bring Boutros Ghali's assassin to justice. There was much else besides. On the personal side, Gorst was accused of going to meet the Duke of Connaught, the King's brother, at the railway station dressed 'in a travelling cap and rough motoring dress' and riding to this meeting on a 'motor bicycle'. Moreover, he 'consistently refrained from attending religious worship and openly professed atheism'; he attended race meetings dressed in 'puttees' and cap; he claimed to have 'anti-militarist sentiments'; and, at a banquet in Cairo before various notables, he remarked to the guest of honour, the German Consul, in a loud voice so all could hear, that Britain was not a fighting nation and must soon lose command of the seas and all her colonies.[38]

Angrily, and the very same day as he read this wild and damaging effusion, Gorst wired the Foreign Office seeking permission to bring an action against the journal for what he described as an 'infamous libel'. He was quite sure of the author and noted the next day in his diary:

> There is no doubt the libellous article was written by Lady Sykes and founded on exaggerations and good stories emanating from Mark's fertile brain.[39]

The Foreign Office, perhaps not surprisingly, turned down Gorst's request. The next issue of the *Saturday Review* carried a letter from Mark Sykes who was making, in Gorst's phrase, the *amende honorable*, by replying to the previous week's article. Mark purposely avoided commenting on policy matters, but as for criticism of Gorst's personal behaviour he defended his brother-in-law stoutly, writing inter alia that the allegations about 'puttees, blasphemous conversations and absence from divine worship, they are each and everyone as complete fabrications as the motor cycle'.[40] The editor put at the foot of Mark's letter that he regretted if he had been misinformed about Gorst's dress, but added darkly that the paper had more than one source.

Assuming that Gorst was correct in believing that his once very close friend Jessica was responsible for at least part of the article, why had she

done this? We can only speculate. We can perhaps point to her addiction to alcohol and unstable behaviour as contributory factors. Then Jack and Jessica's relationship had been all those years ago not an exactly simple one, and they would sometimes be ready to injure each other. Somehow, despite their periodic meetings over the years, Jessica may have felt desperately vindictive towards her former lover, and was perhaps jealous of his achievements.[41]

Gorst seemed more able to shrug off what he believed to be 'mischievous remarks' made by Roosevelt in a well-reported speech he gave at the Guildhall, London, at the end of May. The former President told his audience that the British as rulers in Egypt had been too supine before the 'anarchy' in that country and that the 'primary duty of whoever is responsible for the government of Egypt [is] to establish order and to take whatever measures are necessary to that end'. This has sometimes been referred to as the 'govern or get out' speech.[42] This theme was supported by several British newspapers, including *The Observer*, but Gorst by no means got a universally bad press in London. The *Investors' Review* began to think Gorst was a much-maligned man and did not take Roosevelt's speech too seriously, while *The Guardian*, in defending Gorst, pointed out that he was merely trying to find a middle way between the extreme demands of the nationalists and those who wanted to treat Egypt as if it were a conquered British province.[43]

Months of unrelenting pressure of work and events in Egypt were beginning to take their toll on Gorst, although he may not have recognised, or wanted to recognise, what was happening. King Edward VII had died on 6 May, and Gorst attended three memorial services in Cairo for the late monarch (one in full uniform and others at the Coptic cathedral and Jewish synagogue). Then there was a service for King George V's accession. No doubt it was with a sigh of relief at having left Cairo behind that he and Doll established themselves on 24 May, as was the custom at this very hot time of year, at Allendale, the Consul-General's summer residence on the edge of Alexandria, near to the sea-bathing. There was, however, judging by his diary entries, only a minor let-up in the pace of life. At once he had a two-hour session at his summer palace with the Khedive, who was shortly to depart for his own holiday in Turkey. Then there were discussions with the Premier, Mohammed Said. On the social side, there were the usual visits to the races, fierce games of tennis and frequent dinner parties, though these were on a much smaller scale than in Cairo. Ever anxious for a new experience, he watched a *pelota* match, and also visited the newish private boarding school Victoria College, modelled on English public schools.

On 9 June, he went 'shark' fishing with his Greek friends and felt 'very seedy' that evening. He believed he had got sunstroke although this did not develop at once. The next few days he seemed particularly busy, with, for instance, preparing another memorandum for Grey, answering some of the accusations lately made against the British regime, writing various letters to catch the mail and engaging in a heavy round of interviews. Two of these were with his old friend Vincent Chirol of *The Times*, whom Gorst took a lot of trouble briefing so that the journalist left the Consul-General in 'a fairly sound frame of mind'. The three articles Chirol subsequently wrote on 'The Unrest in Egypt' were balanced ones and would have helped to put the problems besetting Egypt in some sort of perspective for readers.

Gorst's diary entry for 13 June ended with the following sentence, which he probably added later: 'There is no doubt that these three days of hard work on top of the sun-stroke finished me off.' The next day, as he was dressing for bathing, he suddenly fell down, his left arm and leg paralysed. He had had a stroke. When his doctor, Dr Morrison, arrived, he was better and the 'attack' seemed to have passed away, allowing him to see Harvey. But later that day he was bad again and 'his leg and arm were quite useless'. Morrison told him he had broken a small blood vessel in the brain, and prescribed perfect quiet and ice on his head. He kept his diary going with virtual one-line entries for some eight days, except that he did record that he had heard from friends who were apparently pleased with the result of the debate on Egypt in the House of Commons. But very gradually he was improving. By his birthday on 25 June – his 49th – he noted he could still only hobble about but was feeling better. The next day, he dressed for the first time and was having massage. The Premier paid him a visit the day Wardani was executed. He played poker with his staff one evening and on another his friend, Herr Hatzfeld, the German Consul, came in for bridge. He sometimes went out motoring in the afternoons. At last it was time for him to go off for his summer leave, although this may have been brought forward. On 2 July, with Doll and Ronald Storrs, he boarded the liner *Semiramus* and at 4 p.m. on a calm sea left the shores of Egypt for four months. In the evening he wrote that he felt 'very tired'.[44]

CHAPTER

# 19

# THE FINAL YEAR

In the last year of his life, Gorst was to spend only a little more than five months in Egypt; much of that time he was either not working a full day or was in constant pain. The other seven months or so he was mainly in England, recovering from his stroke or terminally ill. It is therefore difficult to gauge just how well he performed as Consul-General in the comparatively short time that he was at work in Cairo. Would he have satisfied the high standards he set himself in his prime? It was fortunate that from November 1910 to April 1911 it was at least politically quiet in Egypt except for some simmering antagonism between Muslims and Copts.

The Gorsts reached London late at night on 7 July 1910, having travelled via Brindisi and Venice. Jack was far from well, and on arrival was 'relieved to find that I had not to see either Sir E. Grey or the King tomorrow'; he did have an audience with the new King but that came many weeks later. His first call was on a Dr J. Mitchell Bruce of Harley Street, who prescribed perfect rest, mental and physical. Still feeling 'feeble and depressed', Jack went down to Castle Combe to stay with his parents. There he managed a bit of quiet fishing and reading. Things may have begun to look up when Doll and he decided to buy a 15-horsepower Silent Knight Daimler and to find a chauffeur to drive it. When they went to collect the car in London, Jack visited Grey and Hardinge at the Foreign Office, an occasion which was something of an 'ordeal' for him, though the meeting in the event

passed off well enough. But seeing Cromer proved more of a strain. His predecessor was 'rather severe on me and our proceedings in Egypt. I did not feel up to arguing the matter with him.'[1]

Nor was his report from his doctor encouraging, as he noted in his diary on 2 August:

> Heard from my doctor who considers that my attack was brought on by work and worry and he intimates that I run the risk of having another if I have to go through another period of strain or anxiety. Under these circs. I shall have to consider whether to ask the F.O. for a less strenuous post than Cairo.

The doctor may well have been right about the strain, even if not a lot was known then about strokes and their treatment. Jack, who was of course impatient about the slow nature of his recovery, found his new doctor provided him with no definite advice and therefore considered him unsatisfactory. So he gave him up and went back to Dr Addinsell, whom he had consulted about Doll.

That August, Jack's pleasures were mainly derived from motoring. He went off from Castle Combe with Doll to places like Stroud, Stonehenge and Longleat. He seemed to have been indulging his taste for ancient monuments and buildings, as well as for cathedrals. Often Eva went with them. Jack must have found her presence reassuring. He saw his solicitor in Chippenham about his will[2] and the resettlement of the Castle Combe estate, which his father was making over to him. Then he went off on a four-day trip by car, just with Doll, going to Tintern Abbey and then on to Aberystwyth, described by him as a 'very unattractive Welsh Margate'. The beautiful scenery to the north around Dolgellau and Caernarvon was more to his liking. On the way home, they lunched at Worcester and saw the cathedral.[3] Music was still important to Jack and he heard his brother Harold give a cello recital in Castle Combe church.

In September, Jack, Doll and Kitty made their annual visit to the Rudd estates in Scotland. This time there was no stalking, only at first gentle 'pottering about', trout fishing and some 'putting'. Once, in perfect weather, he went with Charles Rudd, Colonel Playfair and the ladies of the party to Gareloch in Rudd's big yacht, the *Mingay*. There was no mention of his health, and the impression is gained from his diaries that he was gaining some strength. Indeed Dr Addinsell was encouraging when Jack saw him in London at the end of September. Yet he found driving his new car 'fatiguing' so his chauffeur must have been at the wheel when he and

Doll went to stay with friends just outside Lincoln (yes, he visited the cathedral). While there he saw Marga, now 14, who lived nearby; there was no mention of Romaine. Lord Monson, Marga's step-father, told Jack that the present ambassador at Constantinople did not look like leaving his post, one that Gorst now clearly had his eye on. It must have irked him to hear from Chirol in London that Kitchener, now at a loose end after India, was interested in obtaining that particular post. At the Foreign Office he now took the bull by the horns and told Hardinge that he could not do more than another winter in Egypt, and repeated a few days later to Grey that he would like to leave Egypt on health grounds when a suitable opportunity occurred. At another meeting, he seems to have put more pressure on the Foreign Secretary when he 'ventilated the hardship of my lot'.[4] This sounds suspiciously like a touch of self-pity, something which Jack was not prone to. This uncharacteristic behaviour suggests Jack was still not himself. And the very idea of possibly leaving Egypt soon would have meant he was less likely to have been thinking about how to solve the country's political problems.

Jack kept up all his life with certain friends and, before leaving for Egypt with Doll, Kitty and Eva, he saw, for instance, Guy Oswald Smith, Garstin, Milner, and Alice Chauncey. But his interest in affairs had, if it needed to be, been revived, otherwise he would scarcely have gone while in Paris to the Chamber of Deputies to hear the Prime Minister, Aristide Briand, make a stirring speech, which apparently enraged the socialists, against the striking railway workers. On board the ship to Port Said was Mr Dudgeon, to be the head of the new Agriculture Department being set up in Cairo. He had been personally selected by Jack,[5] one of the only pieces of business we know he transacted during his four-month leave.

In Cairo, Gorst found working made him easily tired and he confided to Grey that it was 'somewhat irksome getting into the saddle again'. He was, however, only being allowed to work for half a day. It must have been a blow to him not to have his morning ride; watching his horses race was no substitute. The only relaxations his doctor permitted were croquet and motoring. Storrs said that through the winter Gorst's health grew steadily worse, yet Gorst himself makes no reference to the subject in his diary. Numbers for dinner parties at the Agency were scaled down and these occasions occurred less frequently. One visitor that winter was Kitchener, who, having heard Gorst had been ill, was no doubt casting his eye over the scene to gauge what his chances might be of becoming Consul-General. At Christmas, 31 sat down to dinner; afterwards, Gorst was ready to join in charades, seemingly a good sign, and Hylda typically enough acted a

topical skit.[6]

What was really important for Gorst was that political tempers had cooled since the Premier's assassination. In fact, in Gorst's opinion in the new year the situation was 'much healthier than at any time during the last few troublous years and a satisfactory change is observable in the attitude of the moderate section of the population towards our policy and administration'.[7] Ministers were apparently working well together while the press had been, at least partially, muzzled by the law. But there was still a need to be alert in case there was a serious revival of press agitation. As Gorst told Arthur Nicolson, the new PUS at the Foreign Office, perhaps a trifle extravagantly:

> Unless we maintain the hold we have now obtained over the native press it is not fair to hold me responsible for the condition of public security in this country. If we allow the Arabic newspapers to stir up all the violent passions of the mob we shall be heading straight for disaster and bloodshed.[8]

If, he went on, it was the Capitulations which were standing in the way of effective action being taken then these should be swept away. He was actually gunning for one particular paper, the French-language *Dépêche Egyptienne*, the publication of which he wished to see stopped. There was certainly now some evidence, fleeting as it was, of his old energy returning. This is illustrated by the steps he took, successfully and with some official help from the French, to prevent the paper reappearing.[9] Further, early in the new year he began to do some preliminary work concerning the abolition of the Capitulations and got so far as to outline to Nicolson his plans for this.[10] Unhappily, he was unable to make any progress due to the onset of his final illness.

It had always been Gorst's practice to tour the provinces in the winter months. Taking Eva with him, he made a rather unsuccessful three-day visit in November to the delta using a Public Works department steamer and the railway. Unhappily, the steamer ran into the bank and lost its rudder at the bottom of the canal, which took all day to find. In January, more successfully, he, Doll, Kitty, Eva, together with Vansittart of the Agency, set off up the Nile ultimately going as far as Aswan. As mentioned in Chapter 16, on this trip Gorst visited the penal settlement at Kharga Oasis, a journey taking eight hours by desert railway. On a tender note, there is a diary reference to how Gorst took a short walk at Luxor with five-and-a-half-year-old Kitty while the others went to the west bank, presumably to

see the tombs in the Valley of the Kings. Vansittart states in his memoirs that Gorst was in 'continual pain' during this visit to upper Egypt.[11]

Already, Gorst was working on his Annual Report to the Foreign Secretary, the last one he was to write. How did he see the situation in Egypt in 1911? On the financial side, he was able to report, after a good cotton crop, more favourable prospects than there had been for some years. The government was now living again within its income, still able to provide a substantial amount of capital for expenditure on expensive projects such as the ongoing heightening of the Aswan dam, still only half completed. Gorst and Harvey had in other words re-established the finances of the country on a sound footing after the setbacks suffered some four years before.[12]

On the political side, and this was, in parallel with the state of the economy, the most important part of his work as he saw it, Gorst considered there had been no substantial changes since he had written his special report on the position in Egypt for Grey the previous May (see Chapter 18). For emphasis and the benefit of the public, he restated that British policy was to train Egyptians to gradually take an increasing share in their own government. Nevertheless, he still adhered to the view – one accepted by the home government – that ruling Egypt in cooperation with its ministers was now incompatible with encouraging further development of representative institutions. He was scathing about the members of the Legislative Council, stating that they, 'in reality, represent nothing but the class of wealthy Beys and Pashas and are, moreover, unable to resist any spurious agitation which may be manufactured by a few interested parties'. Institutions really representative of the people, he went on, witheringly but not wholly inaccurately, were obviously impossible in a country in which, out of population of over 11,000,000, only 600,000 could read and write.[13]

But why, he asked, had the recent experiment with the Legislative Council and General Assembly failed? Undoubtedly, he averred, answering his own question, it was because British policy from first to last had been, by both Egyptians and the European colonies, mistakenly attributed to weakness. It was not, he wrote, his 'purpose here to dwell upon the manifest absurdity of this legend', but to emphasise that the general acceptance of this idea had been fatal to the success of the experiment. Two different points of view, he considered, contributed to this general delusion. First, the Nationalist Party made out that every British concession was due to its pressure; second, a section of the local European press proclaimed that every step taken by the British was a mark of weakness aimed at pacifying

the extreme partisans for Egyptian autonomy. The remedy, as previously stated, was to make Egyptians understand that the British were not to be 'hustled into going farther or faster in the direction of self government' than was considered to be in the interest of the people. Nor would the British respond to agitation or violence. As for the Legislative Council, no extension to their powers was contemplated.

As if in some way showing he had recovered some of his optimism, Gorst indicated that he saw the failure of the policy he had been pursuing for some three years as far as the Council and Assembly were concerned as being only temporary. In due course, he wrote, progress would 'inevitably' be resumed. There were already, he noted, one or two encouraging signs. For example, in the recent session of the Council a more reasonable spirit had begun to prevail, and draft laws submitted to it had been discussed in a business-like way. In another but similar sort of sphere, Provincial Councils, still in their infancy, had got off to a promising start.[14] What he did not touch on, perhaps understandably, was the question of whether his reforms to the Egyptian system of government had gone too fast, as some of his critics – Hardinge and Cromer numbered among them – maintained had happened. Nor did he mention his policy, unpopular with many of his expatriate subordinates, of putting suitably qualified Egyptians into positions previously occupied by Europeans.

This history has concentrated on the major political and administrative problems with which Gorst was so closely involved. There are though many other areas of government, often routine and mundane, to which Gorst made a significant contribution when Consul-General and to which he alluded in his Report: the setting up of the Department of Agriculture; the continuing development of the great irrigation projects; the establishment of the new Egyptian University in Cairo; law reforms regarding the Mixed Tribunals and Muslim courts dealing with family matters; and endorsing schemes for improving the water supply to and drainage of Cairo.

He also dealt, and at some length, in his Report with the problem of strained relations between the Copt and Muslim communities, which had arisen in the immediate aftermath of Boutros Ghali's murder, the discord between them manifesting itself essentially through acrimonious press campaigns. The 700,000 Copts, who had lived as a Christian minority in Egypt for centuries, were good businessmen, often quite wealthy and were strongly represented in the civil service.

Some of them, discontented with their status and having no outstanding leader like Boutros Ghali to guide them, had now decided to call a congress in early March and there discuss their grievances, already well

known to the public through the Egyptian press. The injustices about which they complained, had never, Gorst noted, been officially brought to his attention with the exception of their complaint about religious instruction in schools, to which the government had already responded. Regarding their demand for equality of treatment in the public service, Gorst carefully showed in his Report how well represented they already were: in the Ministry of the Interior, for instance, the Copts actually outnumbered Muslims. In the higher posts, Gorst did not think it wise, for instance, to put in a Copt as a mudir over a largely Muslim population. To request Sunday as a day of rest, in addition to the Muslim Friday, Gorst ruled as being impractical. The holding of the congress, Gorst thought, was unwise as the Muslims would, and did, counter this by holding their own congress. In prevailing circumstances, religious differences between the two communities, he feared, would be exacerbated.[15] In the event, the Muslims held their congress towards the end of April, by which time Gorst had left Egypt for good. Accounts slightly differ among the authorities as to the outcome of the Muslim Congress, but serious difficulties between the communities seem to have been avoided.[16]

For the average reader, the Consul-General's Annual Report might prove to be rather heavy-going. But the text, even if lucidly written and in an easy style, was perhaps made more palatable when items of a lighter nature were introduced here and there. Thus Gorst mentioned that in the Zoological Gardens, a place he so often visited during his years in Egypt, the 'menagerie' now contained 1,464 animals representing 391 species, and that kudu, waterbuck, zebra and leopards had all bred that year.[17] The Gorsts as a family were fond of animals, and for some years Hylda kept a pet cheetah in Cairo. She also had a penchant for snakes.

To the student of Gorst's Annual Reports, one thing is noticeable in this report. His conclusion on his Egyptian section ran, and in a year of major happenings, to only 33 lines (seven lines for the Sudan section at the very end of the report).[18] In his previous reports, the figures had been 67, 85 and 83 lines. It was as if he was running out of steam in mid March. He was. He had completed a noteworthy report while for the past weeks fighting acute and increasingly intolerable pain, which the doctors seemed unable to relieve. It was in the circumstances an extraordinary feat to have delivered on time this full survey on the 'Finances, Administration and Condition of Egypt and the Sudan' to the Foreign Secretary.

Ominously, as it turned out, Gorst noted in his diary on 19 February, 'felt seedy all day' and, four days later, 'still bad with neuralgia'; for the first time that year he was using that word to describe the pain from which he

was suffering. Evidently he had no idea or suspicion of what the matter might be. Nor had the doctors in Cairo. After consulting a Dr Tribe, he decided as a result to go to Helwan, a town just south of Cairo. There a local doctor diagnosed his 'neuralgia' as arising from faulty digestion and advised electric treatment, which Gorst began at once. The slight improvement experienced did not last. Gorst might have thought at this stage of Cromer and his digestive problems, from which he had made a good recovery.

In March, the neuralgia was getting steadily worse. He then thought he would try the desert air to rid himself of the pain, and set up a 'camp' on the old Suez road outside Cairo. All this time he was working on his Annual Report. Doll came to his camp, once with Kitty, as did Eva and Gwen, and once George Hunter came. A great dust storm forced Gorst back to Cairo and, on 19 March, he dictated the final introduction and conclusion of his report. He then saw Dr Morrison, before motoring back out to his camp. That night he was unhappily worse than usual. Once again unsure of whether he was better in the city or the desert he returned to Cairo and had an injection of an arsenic compound which momentarily helped him. For three days running his diary entries just read 'no better'. Ronald Storrs was to describe how Gorst

> held to his work as he had held to a losing set of tennis, fighting inch by inch his last deadly single against pain. Still he wrote his dispatches and his Annual Report, the sweat of agony pouring down his face.[19]

Indeed as late as 25 March he was calmly asking Grey for comments on his Annual Report, anxious apparently not to embarrass the home government by anything he had said. In another letter to Grey dated the same day, after describing Cairo as 'probably the most arduous and certainly the most ungrateful place in the British Empire', he asked to be transferred to an 'easier billet' before he 'broke down'. He wanted somewhere with useful work to be done and suggested because of his experience Paris or Constantinople.[20] Again, the tone and language he was using is somewhat out of character, for which the pain must surely have been responsible.

Towards the end of the month, restlessly, he travelled with Eva to Alexandria for the sea air, and saw a celebrated Austrian physician, Professor von Noorden, who confirmed the earlier diagnosis and changed his prescription. He was advised to stay in Egypt until the end of April. Doll hurried down to relieve Eva who was needed in England to look

after her mother, but Gorst was no better. In Cairo, Dr Tribe now advised him to leave Egypt as soon as possible. So a telegram was despatched to the Foreign Office, stating he was getting steadily worse and his pain was incapacitating him for work. He asked to go on leave at once for treatment. On 2 April, Grey gave him the necessary permission and told him he would be 'transferred to a good post after next winter'. He wound up his affairs, took leave of the Khedive, the Premier and Prince Hussein, among others, and on 8 April he and Doll were seen off by a large crowd at Cairo railway station.

A German ship took them to Genoa, with stops at Syracuse and Bizerta, probably irritating to the Gorsts as their journey could have seemed unnecessarily slow. Here he was met by the kind and attentive Dr Addinsell with the idea of taking him for treatment to the nearby mud baths at Acqui. However, the Italian doctor there advised that the inflammation of the stomach made it 'very dangerous' to take mud baths. Instead it was decided they should all at once return to London so that Gorst's digestive trouble could be properly cared for in a nursing home. On the journey, he had two further 'attacks' of neuralgia, one on the train and the other in his Paris hotel. But on 18 April he was installed in a nursing home in Knaresborough Place off the Cromwell Road and in the charge of a 'nurse Edith'. The same day he was visited by his father.[21]

There is little left to tell about the course of Jack's illness. For almost a month there were no diary entries at all except those each Friday showing a steady reduction in his weight. On 20 May, he motored with Doll down to Hindhead where they lunched with Dr Addinsell and his wife before Jack was installed at a nursing home nearby. On 2 June, with his handwriting showing marked signs of deterioration, he was visited by Victor Horsley, the neurosurgeon, who considered his 'neuritis etc' was all due to gastric trouble near the duodenum, and advised an operation, to which Jack at once agreed. Four days later, he motored to London and went back to the Knaresborough Place nursing home, where X-rays were taken, and a 'consultation of leading medics' decided on an exploratory operation. This operation was conducted on 9 June by Mr William Lane, one of London's leading surgeons, with Dr Addinsell in attendance. Jack noted afterwards:

> result is cancer of the pancreas and liver. I have about 2 months left to live.

Then on 10 June he made his last entry in his diary:

> decided to go down to C.C. to die as soon as I have sufficiently recovered from operation. Resigned my place.[22]

After the operation Jack was said to have borne the despairing truth with perfect calmness.

Lying in the Manor House at Castle Combe and surrounded by his devoted family, Jack began to sink more quickly than expected. Doll was quite overwhelmed by her husband's condition. Eva was stronger. Cromer, asked by Jack to come and see him, said in a letter written later to Lord Edward Cecil that Jack showed 'wonderful courage', but he was sorry that the doctors had not been merciful when he nearly collapsed during the operation under the chloroform.[23] Garstin, another visitor, was so moved by his visit to Jack's bedside that he found himself tongue-tied. But he then wrote a deeply touching letter to Jack:

> It was such a shock to me to see you lying there and to know that we should not meet again. I never realised it before. You and I have been friends for more than 24 years and good friends always. I always felt I could count upon your friendship to help and you have shown it to me in many ways in the past. Now I feel as if something had been torn out of my life. May I tell you what good it did me to see you so calm and brave – meeting the end in the way that man should do ... I just want you to know that I shall never forget you and that I shall miss you always ...
>
> Good-bye my very very dear friend,
>
> W. Garstin[24]

It is possible that Jack never knew what Garstin had written because of his heavily sedated condition.

That year, George V's Coronation took place on 22 June. In Castle Combe, Jack's father had arranged for a children's party to be held in the Manor House park. Jack asked to be moved to the library on the ground floor so he could see the children enjoying themselves at their party. In the Coronation Honours list that June, his name was included; he had been awarded the GCMG. At least he knew of his award, for Grey had written to him about it just after his operation, and had at the same time expressed 'grief at the bad news' of his illness. A fortnight later in the House of Commons, Grey, apparently barely able to conceal his emotion,

announced Jack's resignation, and at the same time paid tribute to him.[25]

One day early in July, a servant at the Manor came and told Eva that there was a gentleman waiting in a cab at the back door (the front door and drive being barred for privacy). She hurried down and there found Khedive Abbas Hilmi, who had made a special journey from Paris – incognito – and driven in a fly 23 miles from Swindon to say goodbye to his friend. Eva told her brother about his visitor who could just understand her words, and she brought the Khedive to Jack's bedside. According to family legend, the two men greeted each other in Arabic. Abbas Hilmi took Jack's hand and said, 'God has not of late been very good to you; but I think He is going to be very good to you now.' The dying man raised himself, touched his forehead and fell back. In a letter written some days later, Eva told Abbas Hilmi that Jack never spoke again; he fell into a coma when the Khedive left the room.[26] The Khedive's visit was a noble one, a memorable token of true friendship.

Jack Gorst died in the early hours of Wednesday 12 July. He was just 50. As an epitaph to him, we may quote from the lines of the poem *Invictus* written by William Henley:

> In the fell clutch of circumstance
> I have not winced nor cried aloud.
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody, but unbowed.

CHAPTER

# 20

# REFLECTIONS

After the short Gorstian era, Egypt still had a long way to go before she gained her independence from Britain. In brief, Gorst was succeeded by the autocratic Kitchener, who clashed with the Khedive and wished to see him deposed, while paying lip service to the more liberal kind of regime Gorst had tried to work for. In 1914, after Turkey had entered the First World War on the side of Germany, the British government declared Egypt a Protectorate. In 1919, while Wingate was High Commissioner, there were serious riots, and Zaghlul was deported to Malta. Subsequently, Milner and his mission visited Egypt to report on the way ahead and then, in 1923, a grant of semi-independence was made under a new constitution with Zaghlul as Prime Minister. An Anglo-Egyptian treaty was signed 13 years later, giving Britain a right of reoccupation in the event of war, a right invoked at the start of the Second World War. The 1952 revolution led to the overthrow of the monarchy and the assumption of power by Colonel Gamal Abdul Nasser. But it was not until after the Suez Canal crisis and the abortive invasion by Anglo-French and Israeli forces in 1956 that British troops finally left Egyptian soil after 74 years.

And what happened to the principal players in Gorst's story after his death? Jack's father, John, died from influenza aged nearly 81 in 1916, having survived his wife Mary by two years. Doll had been quite overwhelmed by Jack's death, developing a dread of cancer. She eventually

remarried but had no more children and lived into old age. Shortly before he died, Jack had made Eva a joint guardian with Doll of Kitty. It fell to Eva, who remained a spinster living her life in Castle Combe, to bring up Kitty. Both Jack's daughters, Marga and Kitty, married and had children, and his grandson, Paul, farms at Castle Combe today. Hylda was another sister who as a widow in due course settled in Castle Combe. Garstin served on the Council of the Red Cross in the First World War and died loaded with honours in 1925. Grey remained Foreign Secretary until 1916 and after the First World War was ambassador in Washington. As for Cromer, he undertook a range of public duties in retirement and was made chairman of the Dardanelles Commission, dying in harness aged 76.

And the Khedive? The day after he had seen Jack on his deathbed, he wrote to Jack's father to say he would try

> to retain the friendship of yourself and family by always showing to your daughters [Hylda and Gwen] whose husbands are established in Egypt that in me they have a friend who will endeavour to replace their brother.[1]

In a warm and moving letter to Eva written immediately after Jack's death, Abbas Hilmi referred to Jack as 'my best friend'.[2]

Abbas Hilmi was true to his word but then, in July 1914, while taking his summer holiday in Turkey as was his wont, a serious attempt was made on his life in Constantinople by a young man who shot him in the face. There was evidence that the firebrand journalist, Sheikh Shawish, was part of a conspiracy behind the attack. Abbas Hilmi made a good recovery but never returned to Egypt. In his memoirs, he wrote that 'the English forbade me to return to Egypt, accusing me of having gone over to the enemy. This accusation, which had no basis in logic, was quite simply monstrous.'[3] On the day a Protectorate was proclaimed, Abbas Hilmi's elderly uncle, Prince Hussein, replaced him on the throne and was given the title of Sultan of Egypt. A rich man, the ex-Khedive lived the rest of his life as an exile, spending much of his time on the French Riviera, in Switzerland and on his 1,400-ton diesel-engine yacht, the *Nimet-Allah*. In 1936, ever mindful of his pledge to Jack Gorst's father, Abbas Hilmi employed Hylda Hunter's elder son, Archie, as his Private Secretary until the Second World War intervened. If Abbas Hilmi, who died in 1944, ever harboured any resentment towards Britain it never affected his friendship for the Gorst family. And whenever he was in England he visited Jack Gorst's grave in Castle Combe to lay a wreath.

The verdict of history has not on the whole been kind to Jack Gorst as far as his tenure as Consul-General in Egypt goes. His death attracted full and worthy obituaries in the newspapers of the day, mostly sympathetic, regretting how he had been cut off in his prime, how Britain could not afford the loss of so talented a public servant and Egypt of so true a friend. Tributes too were paid in the House of Commons. But he had his critics and subsequent historians like Magnus, Tignor, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid and Mansfield tended to label him a failure. But from the story we have told is this label, or something like it, justified or fair? This is a matter beset with problems: by what yardstick is failure, or indeed success, to be judged, and is it by today's or yesterday's standards? A complication here is that Gorst's instructions from the home government seem, as far as we can tell, to have been woolly. Another is that Gorst was perceived by nationalists not to have offered enough by way of constitutional advance, while by many of the British community he was perceived as giving away too much. In trying to assess Gorst's career, we must first consider Gorst the man, before turning to the major issues he faced and how he dealt with them.

Gorst had – there are no doubts here – the intellectual capacity for a top job in the public service, for he was equipped with a sharp probing mind, an unusual facility for handling detail, much industriousness and an ability to find solutions to complex problems. He also wrote very well. Unlike his father, with whom he shared a family penchant for the unconventional, he was able to discipline himself into becoming a reliable team player in his chosen profession.

In character, Gorst was outgoing, sensitive, warm-hearted and with a steely resolve and depth of courage. But he was also self-centred, impatient of fools, could appear to lack charm and be abrupt in speech. Above all, his was a truly passionate nature, a trait that may not, however, always have been recognisable. It was, all in all, a strange mixture. When we talk of his passion, we mean his total commitment to what was engaging his attention, be it his work or a relationship in which he was becoming involved. This passion too played a prominent part in his motivation and strong will to succeed in his career. On a more altruistic note, he came to believe that he had within him the power to bring changes to the government of Egypt which would benefit the people of the country as a whole.

His unusual persona attracted friends and admirers besides enemies, and could inspire affection among his staff. A characteristic that is clearly evident throughout his story is his intense loyalty to his family. He himself had said that he would not be happy unless he succeeded in satisfying the romantic side of his nature. Whether, after his various uninhibited amours

and his great love affair with Romaine, his marriage to Doll did fully satisfy his emotional needs we shall never know, though there is in this author's mind some doubt as to whether he had found in her the ideal helpmate in the arduous career he was pursuing. Doll was loving and loyal, but her unstable temperament may have been a burden to her husband.

Being seconded to the Egyptian Civil Service was an astute move, for which Gorst owed thanks to Cromer, whose protégé he became. In Egypt, Gorst found he was able to use his initiative and brains to full advantage. He was a success in all the posts he occupied in the Ministries of Finance and the Interior. Particularly as Financial Adviser he seems not to have put a foot wrong – the obituarist in *The Times* called him 'almost a genius for finance'.[4] But his rapid rise up the ladder of promotion and his pushy behaviour did not endear him to all his colleagues. Yet his success continued with the leading role he played in negotiating the Anglo-French Entente in 1904 and then as a senior official in the Foreign Office.

So far then, Gorst had risen to each of the challenges he had been set. And, importantly, he had shown himself to be cool under pressure. But of course his career has essentially to be judged by the fist he made of being Consul-General, for in this demanding role he was de facto ruler of Egypt. This top post gave the incumbent a position of almost unrivalled power in Egypt, and this was something Gorst well understood. He would accept the heavy responsibilities that came with the post, was never afraid of making decisions and enjoyed the exercise of power. But he was by no means power-hungry. For all his pushiness, he preferred, rightly or wrongly, to pull the strings from behind the scenes. Nor did he like the trappings of power, his style of governing meeting on occasions with disapprobation from both Egyptians and Europeans; about his only expression of splendour would be the size and magnificence of the parties he gave at the Agency.

Cromer's legacy to Gorst was crucial. It seemed that he had handed over a prosperous and well-ordered country. Nevertheless, there were signs detected by the newcomer of some fraying at the edges of the administration probably due to Cromer being too long in his post. For instance, several ministries were not functioning smoothly and there had been some economic prodigality. Gorst's arrival also coincided with a severe financial crisis arising out of speculative activity. But, and this is a big but, there had been under Cromer virtually no progress made in preparing Egyptians for self-government, an original aim at the time of the Dufferin Report; almost the reverse, for in the early 1900s too many British were coming into the country to run the civil service at the expense of Egyptians. At the same time a rising tide of nationalism, of which as we have seen Cromer tended

to be dismissive, was making itself felt and an end to the Occupation was being demanded. While Gorst and his new Financial Adviser were able in time to deal satisfactorily with Egypt's finances, the major question of how to cope with nationalism was not one to which Gorst could find a real answer during his tenure. Gorst had the question of the nationalists much in mind when drawing up the unexceptional 'lines of policy', which were to guide his action, and in planning the changes he was to make. While he was envisaging a fairly cautious programme, there was nevertheless a somewhat Byzantine aspect in his method insofar as he was letting it be quietly known that he was continuing with Cromer's policies, yet in practice he would be following a rather different path to his predecessor. Gorst did not in principle believe that Egypt was ready for self-government, but he thought there were acceptable ways of encouraging leading Egyptians to take more interest in and responsibility for the government of their country. At the same time, he believed he could take steps to reduce the hold on the levers of power maintained by British officials. In putting his ideas into practice, he seemed to accept there would be some loss of efficiency in the functioning of the government machine, a risk he was prepared to take. The precise political-cum-administrative changes he was venturing to make can be considered under four distinct heads. These relate as a whole to the task he had been set by the Liberal government at home.

First, in his wish to see ministers more independently minded and not acting as the Consul-General's 'dummies', he had to wait, thus demonstrating patience, a full 18 months for the appropriate moment before Boutros Ghali and his new team of ministers made their appearance. Some modest success attended this move at least until the Premier's assassination. The historian John Marlowe considered that as a result of the move ministers under the Occupation never again returned to their former subservient state. Elgood put it another way when, in commenting on Kitchener's decision against reversing his predecessor's policies, he wrote: 'Gorst had ploughed too deeply for that.'[5] But the biographer of Gorst, Peter Mellini, wrote that Gorst made a major mistake, in appointing Boutros Ghali as Premier, because he was hated by the Egyptians and was a Christian.[6] Against this we would point out that Boutros was not the first Christian to hold the post of Premier, and that the local press in November 1908 had commented favourably on the composition of the new Council of Ministers.

Second, his efforts to increase the powers and responsibilities of the three representative institutions in Egypt met with mixed results. On his own admission, the experiment with the Legislative Council was a failure. Both the Council and General Assembly, Gorst considered, had allowed themselves

to become the instruments of the Nationalist Party and its press in agitating against the government. The Egyptians themselves saw matters in a different light. However, in radically expanding the powers of the Provincial Councils, Gorst brought about a promising and imaginative development in local government, for which most historians give him credit.

Third, in trying to put more Egyptians into top posts in the civil service and at the same time reduce the service's dependence on British officials, Gorst's aim at least from today's perspective was sensible. Yet at the time this move met with a poor response from his own people. Many saw their careers at risk and resented what Gorst was trying to do. They took a back seat, as instructed to, but perhaps too quickly, so as to let Egyptians make the running. Somehow his policy miscarried and his subordinates failed to give him the required support. Gorst was only aiming to do in a small way what British governments and their imperial and colonial administrations had to do in the twentieth century when British officials were replaced by Asian or African officials as territories were prepared for self-government. Gorst though was years in advance of his time.

Fourth, in his desire to improve relations with the Khedive, we can safely say Gorst was successful. In a short space of time, Gorst obtained the Khedive's trust and also his friendship, perhaps no mean feat in the circumstances of the day. One effect of this was to distance the Khedive from the Nationalist Party; the latter in any case wanted to see a constitutional regime in place and this would have been at the expense of the Khedive's power. Yet Gorst eventually concluded that because the Khedive's political influence had come to an end when not directed against the British occupation there was little value to be obtained from the Khedive's help in countering nationalists. Another effect was to preclude Gorst from cultivating for political purposes, had he wished to do so, the moderate *Ummah* party. Overall we must ask – was Gorst wise as the de facto ruler of Egypt to get so close to the Khedive? Cromer thought that, while the attempt to ensure there were cordial relations between the Consul-General and the Khedive, whom he had always regarded as a master intriguer, was sound in principle, the price paid for the cooperation was excessive.[7] Certainly, Gorst may have, in conducting business, compromised his options by his close friendship with Abbas Hilmi.

Gorst seemed for the first two and a half years or so of his tenure to be holding his own despite the opposition from various quarters to his policies. In coming badly unstuck in promoting his doom-laden scheme for extending the concession of the Suez Canal Company, his judgement – usually sound in this sort of field – deserted him. With his experience,

he should have spotted that the General Assembly was not going to do his bidding, even if he had dragooned the Council of Ministers to fall into line. Too late he realised his mistake. The combination of this crisis and then of Boutros Ghali's death – Gorst felt keenly that the Premier had lost his life because of his support for British policy – led a depressed and then later an ailing Gorst to the realistic conclusion that his experiment in giving Egyptians more participation in governing their country was over for the moment. In his last year as Consul-General, bedevilled as he was by illness and while the political crisis had mainly passed, he achieved little.

One serious criticism of Gorst's policy has come from some historians. Was the original plan of supporting the authority of the Khedive and the building-up of the position of the Council of Ministers and of Egyptian officials really compatible with the development at the same time of representative institutions? The two concepts, it was claimed, were mutually exclusive.[8] One or other could be attempted, but not both. Gorst, the pragmatist, might have answered this criticism by stating his idea was that Egypt would learn about the democratic process through the Provincial Councils and their newly acquired powers. Increasing the powers of the Legislative Council might come later, he would have argued, but not before the Provincial Councils' performance had been evaluated. As for the Khedive, Gorst never got as far as visualising any changes in his role under the Organic Law of 1883.

We must understand that Gorst was, to his credit, an innovator in matters of political reform, and was ready to accept the risks that might therein be involved. His critics and enemies have often considered that the concessions he made to the Egyptians had come about because of the pressure exerted on him by the nationalists, and by his consequent pandering to them. The label of his being a 'weak' man has as a result been attached to him by some. But his so-called concessions were part of a carefully thought-out plan, and he was not weak; nothing could have been further from the truth. On the contrary, he showed strength and courage throughout his time as Consul-General in promoting and doing his best to carry though policies which turned out to be unpopular with certain sections of the community. Ronald Storrs said Gorst was 'as strong a man I have ever met or served'. Arthur Weigall, historian and formerly Inspector-General of Antiquities in Egypt, specifically commented on his being called a weak man: 'Nobody who came into direct contact with him laboured for long under that delusion.' Cromer, writing in 1915, credited Gorst with 'great moral courage',[9] hardly a description of a weak man. We can point as well to various instances during his last few years which belied

this unhappy label: to mention a few at random – his firmness in resorting to unpopular measures to curb for instance the excesses of the press and to deal with serious crime, his refusal to make a loan of £2 million from government funds to the mortgage banks, his determination to impose his will on Wingate and his officials over the sentences meted out in the Kamil affair, his strong stance over Wardani's trial and his refusal twice to accept when offered reinforcements of British troops.

As Gorst embarked on his programme of political reforms, it would have been better, we argue, for him to have received proper public backing for what he was doing from the Foreign Office, even if this might have cut across his surely mistaken desire for self-effacement. This could have been effected by an appropriate statement in the House of Commons by the Foreign Secretary. Such a statement was not made until 13 June 1910, when Grey, certainly supportive of Gorst, explained what the Consul-General had been trying to do in Cairo. What a difference it might have made if this statement had come earlier. Hardinge of the Foreign Office was one of several people who thought Gorst was going too *fast* in Egypt – an allegation which does not stand up to real examination except as regarding Gorst's requirement that British officials should take more of a back seat. What we suggest is that the support of the Foreign Office was too *slow* in coming.

The question of why Gorst could not carry his officials with him over his administrative reforms is something of a puzzle. He should perhaps have taken more account of their worries about their careers. But the explanation, if indeed there is one, is probably found deep in Gorst's psyche. In his relations with people, he was often too like his father and could alienate them by his cleverness or his manner. His story has contained a number of examples of this. Some commentators are maybe near the mark in suggesting he did not have real authority. If so, was this because of his small stature or rather insignificant appearance? It is true that his self-assertive behaviour dating from early days may have been an attempt to make up for his want of inches. Lord Lloyd, who knew Egypt well in the 1920s when he was High Commissioner but did not know Gorst, wrote that, as effectively head of a great Oriental administration, Gorst lacked 'the quality of leadership in its highest form'.[10] Cromer had it, as did Kitchener. Despite the abundance of talents Gorst was endowed with by his fairy godmother, perhaps the gift of real leadership was not one of them.

What then is the final balance sheet? In May 1911, *The Spectator* commented shrewdly on Gorst's last Annual Report:

> Speaking generally, or, rather politically, the Report is a confession of failure: failure, however, not as regards the prosperity of Egypt or the welfare of her people, nor, again, personal failure on the part of Sir Eldon Gorst, but failure as regards the attempt by the present government to carry out so-called Liberal principles in the administration of Egypt.[11]

Again, the historian Newman wrote in 1928 giving another view of Gorst's contribution as follows:

> By many Gorst was regarded as a failure, but in reality he succeeded. He took over control of affairs in Egypt at a time when he could expect little praise. His task was devoid of all glamour, and most of his work was not ostentatious. But it was none the less valuable and contributed its full share to the regeneration of Egypt. When he arrived in the country in 1907, his path was beset with pitfalls of every conceivable description ... ... Four years later, the prospects in Egypt were more hopeful than they had been for many years.[12]

Some years after Gorst's death, Cromer was generous in his praise of a man for whom he had 'the highest regard and esteem', and believed Gorst had made a thoroughly honest and very courageous attempt to carry out his reform programme. But the task which he had been set to accomplish, Cromer ventured, 'was impossible of achievement'. Had Gorst lived, Cromer felt he would have instituted considerable changes in his policy.[13] With Gorst's agile mind and fecund intelligence, this was likely. But, struck down in his prime, Gorst was not given the chance by fate to recover lost ground. The experiment given to Gorst in providing the Egyptians with more responsibility in governing themselves than they had had in the previous 24 years was one breaking difficult new ground. It is to Gorst's credit that in carrying out this experiment he in effect gave ministers greater independence, improved the prospects of Egyptian civil servants, made significant advances in local government and contributed to new constitutional arrangements in the Sudan. In addition, he left Egypt prosperous economically with its finances soundly based and in a reasonably stable state politically.

This is a pretty good record. Jack Gorst, we consider, has been too harshly judged by his critics. A solitary figure in the history of the Occupation, as he has been called,[14] he genuinely wanted to share the government of Egypt with Egyptians. His was an honourable attempt at achieving this goal.

# NOTES

## CHAPTER 1

1. Sir John Gorst, *New Zealand Revisited* (Pitman, 1908), 194–5. Other material on New Zealand in this chapter comes from the same book. Also see Archie Hunter, *A Life of Sir John Eldon Gorst* (Frank Cass, 2001), chapters 3–5, *passim*.
2. Hunter, 14.
3. Autobiographical Notes (A.N.), v.1, 3–4. These Autobiographical Notes are in two volumes. The first covers the period from Gorst's birth until the end of 1895 and was probably written from about 1893. The second volume runs from 1896 to 1909, and each year was usually written in the year following the events described.

## CHAPTER 2

1. Tim Card, *Eton Renewal* (John Murray, 1994), 11.
2. A.N. v.1, 6.
3. Lord Vansittart, *The Mist Procession* (Hutchinson, 1958), 85.
4. A.N. v.1, 9.
5. Card, 9.
6. Ibid. 225.
7. A.N. v.1, 11–12.
8. In the University Register, Gorst is recorded as being 21st Wrangler; but in A.N. v.1, 17, he claims to have been 20th Wrangler. A Wrangler was a person placed in the first class in the mathematical tripos. Names of examinees appeared in order of merit; Jack Meadows, *The Victorian Scientist* (British Library, 2004), 9.

9. Records of Trinity College, Cambridge.

## CHAPTER 3

1. Hunter, 151–4.
2. A.N. v.1, 24.
3. Zara Steiner, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1898–1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1969), 16. The Diplomatic Service and the Foreign Office did not amalgamate until 1919.
4. A.N. v.1, 27.
5. *The Globe*, 12 July 1911.
6. Ibid. 33–4.
7. J. Tilley and S. Gaselee, *The Foreign Office* (Putnam, 1933), 272.

## CHAPTER 4

1. Janet Abu Lughod, *Cairo* (Princeton University Press, 1971), 103, 115.
2. J.C. McCoan, *Egypt As It Is* (Cassell, Petter & Galpin, Preface, 1877), 50.
3. McCoan, 58; James Aldridge, *Cairo* (Macmillan, 1969), 195–7; Abu Lughod, 113.
4. Lord Edward Cecil, *The Leisure of an Egyptian Official* (Century, 1921), 141–2.
5. P.J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt* (Weidenfeld Paperbacks, 1991), 57, 60.
6. Peter Mansfield, *The British in Egypt* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), 7; McCoan, 236, 258.
7. Mansfield, 7; Vatikiotis, 82.
8. Earl of Cromer, *Modern Egypt* (Macmillan, 1908), v.1, 11; see also Vatikiotis, 154. The figures given on the Egyptian debt by different authorities vary according to calculations used.
9. McCoan, 402.
10. Vatikiotis, 132.
11. Ibid. 136.
12. Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid, *Egypt and Cromer* (John Murray, 1968), 75.
13. Cromer, v.1, 173–4.
14. Vatikiotis, 151.
15. Mansfield, 39; Cromer, v.1, 287.
16. Al-Sayyid, 23–4; Mansfield, 40.
17. Cromer, v.1, 340–1.
18. Al-Sayyid, 28.
19. Alfred Milner, *England in Egypt* (Edward Arnold, 1892), 227–30.
20. Al-Sayyid, 58; Mansfield, 12; Cromer, v.2, 335.

## CHAPTER 5

1. A.N. v.1, 6 (JG's pagination can be misleading).
2. Ibid. 5.

3. Ibid. 3–4.
4. Roger Owen, *Lord Cromer* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 222–3.
5. Unsigned but by J. Gorst, 'The English in Egypt', *Edinburgh Review* 1890, v.171, 267–306.
6. A.N. v.1, 17–18.
7. JG d, 29 November 1890, 6 and 15 August 1891.
8. A.N. v.1, 9.
9. Gorst's diaries, JG d, run from 1890 to 1911, with just two years, 1892 and 1896, missing for an unknown reason.
10. A.N. v.1, 23.
11. Moberly Bell Letters (MBL), Baring-Bell, 11 May 1890.
12. In *The Times*, 19 August 1890.
13. Ibid. 29 October 1890; JG d, 1, 2 & 3 October 1890. Kassala was occupied by the Italians in 1894 and handed over to Egypt in 1897.
14. In *The Times*, 14 November 1890.
15. Ibid. 18 November 1890; JG d, 28 August 1890.
16. JG d, 19 November 1890.
17. MBL, Baring-Bell, 25 December 1890; Strickland-Constable Papers (S-CP) Gorst-Sykes, 24 December 1890.
18. Milner, 38.
19. Lord Lloyd, *Egypt since Cromer* (Macmillan, 1933), 37.
20. Cromer, v.2, 282.
21. A.N. v.1, 26.
22. Strickland-Constable Papers (S-CP), Gorst-Sykes, 15 August 1891.
23. Milner Letters, dep 27, F 27, Gorst-Milner, 1 May 1891.
24. A.N. v.1, 31.
25. Mansfield, 150.
26. Ibid. 151.
27. A.N. v.1, 32.
28. Milner Letters, dep 27, F 235, Gorst-Milner, 3 February 1893.
29. There are various accounts of the crisis: see, for example, al-Sayyid, 107–10; Owen, 265–7; Mansfield, 154–6.
30. Milner Letters, dep 28, F 99–104, Gorst-Milner, 23 November 1893.
31. Ibid.
32. JG d, 9 and 27 January 1894; A.N. v.1, 37; Milner Letters, dep 28, F 206–9, Gorst-Milner, 14 April 1894.
33. A.N. v.1, 38.
34. Ibid. 36.

## CHAPTER 6

1. A.N. v.1, 33.
2. Peter Mellini, *Sir Eldon Gorst: The Overshadowed Proconsul* (Hoover Institution Press, 1977), 23–4.
3. Ronald Storrs, *Orientations* (Nicholson & Watson, 1945), 87–8.

4. Al-Sayyid, 95.
5. Amira Sonbol (ed.), *The Last Khedive of Egypt: Memoirs of Abbas Hilmi II* (Ithaca Press, 1998), 257.
6. A.N. v.1, 14.
7. Mary Repington, *Thanks for the Memory* (Constable, 1938), 61.
8. Ibid. 55–6.
9. Ibid. 56–7.
10. Strickland-Constable Papers (S-CP), Gorst-Sykes, 14 August 1889.
11. Ibid. Gorst-Sykes, 17 August 1889.
12. Ibid. Gorst-Sykes, 26 October 1889.
13. Ibid. Gorst-Sykes, 31 October 1889.
14. Christopher Sykes, *The Big House* (HarperCollins, 2004), 144–5.
15. Ibid. 140–1.
16. Ibid. 155.
17. Ibid. 219.
18. Ibid. 206.
19. S-CP, Gorst-Sykes, 12 November 1889.
20. Repington, 106–7; see also JG d, entries 9 January–12 April 1890 for information on how Jack Gorst and Jessica Sykes spent time together.
21. A.N. v.1, 18–19.
22. S-CP, Gorst-Sykes, 2 June 1890.
23. JG d, 8 August 1890.
24. Ibid. 21 September 1890.
25. S-CP, Gorst-Sykes, 8 October 1890.
26. Ibid. Gorst-Sykes, 7 April 1891.
27. Ibid. Gorst-Sykes, 3 July 1891.
28. Ibid.
29. Ibid. Gorst-Sykes, 24 July 1891.
30. Ibid. Gorst-Sykes, 28 August 1891.
31. JG d, 27 September 1891.
32. A.N. v.1, 29–30.
33. S-CP, Gorst-Sykes, 19 March 1892.
34. Ibid. Gorst-Sykes, 25 March 1892.
35. Sykes, 210.

## CHAPTER 7

1. JG d, 21 February 1893; 9 March 1893.
2. Ibid. 23–27 April 1893.
3. Ibid. 26 July 1893.
4. Ibid. 23 September 1893.
5. A.N. v.1, 37.
6. Ibid. 38–9.
7. Cromer, v.2, 481.
8. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882–1914*

(Princeton University Press, 1966), 70; Mansfield, 123.
9. Milner, 337–8.
10. A.N. v.1, 39–40.
11. JG d, 14 April 1894.
12. Strickland-Constable Papers, Gorst-Sykes, 25 January 1892.
13. JG d, 28, 29 August and 1 September 1894; al-Sayyid, 120–1; Owen, 275–6.
14. JG d, 9 October 1894.
15. Egypt No. 1 (1895), C 7644, 11–12.
16. A.N. v.1, 41.
17. Owen, 274.
18. Mellini, 48.
19. JG d, 14–19 February 1895.
20. Egypt No. 1 (1895), 12; Tignor, 207.
21. JG d, 7, 8, 9 February 1895.
22. A.N. v.2, 46.
23. Clara Boyle, *Boyle of Cairo* (Titus Wilson, 1965), 155.
24. Al-Sayyid, 82 (quoting Milner Papers).
25. A.N. v.2, 52–3.
26. Al-Sayyid, 84.
27. A.N. v.2, 48–50.
28. Philip Magnus, *Kitchener: Portrait of an Imperialist* (John Murray, 1958), 149.
29. Egypt No. 1 (1896), C 7978, 15–18; Egypt No. 2 (1897), C 8332, 16–17; Egypt No. 3 (1899), C 9231, 27–8; Milner (second ed. 1902), 388–90.
30. A.N. v.2, 53.

## CHAPTER 8

1. JG d, 19, 20 January 1894. Much of the material in this chapter comes from Gorst's diaries.
2. Information from papers held by the de Lotbinière family.
3. Ibid. 19, 22–30 March 1894.
4. Ibid. 4 May 1894.
5. Ibid. 21 May 1894.
6. Ibid. 28 May 1894.
7. Ibid. 25 February and 14 March 1895.
8. Ibid. 29 March 1895.
9. Repington, 107–8.
10. A.N. v.1, 21.
11. Al-Sayyid, 143.
12. JG d, 4 September 1895.
13. Ibid. 26 September 1895.
14. Ibid. 4 November 1895.
15. Ibid. 4 February 1897.

16. Gorst's biographer, Professor Peter Mellini, considers at page 58 of his work that Mattie Bird was probably identical with 'M.R.'. We do not, however, have enough information to make this identification – see above 66.
17. The information about Jack Gorst's holiday in the USA is taken entirely from his diary entries of 7 August to 29 September 1897.
18. A.N. v.2, 51.
19. T.S. Harrison, *The Homely Diary of a Diplomat in Egypt 1897–1899* (H. Mifflin, 1917), 142.
20. JG d, 22 March 1898.
21. Ibid. 22 July 1898.
22. Ibid. 19 August 1898.
23. A.N. v.2, 63–4.
24. JG d, 14 April 1899.
25. Ibid. 9 July 1899.
26. A.N. v.2, 70–1.
27. JG d, 28, 29 July 1899.

## CHAPTER 9

1. Al-Sayyid, 125.
2. P.G. Elgood, *The Transit of Egypt* (Arnold, 1928), 183.
3. A.E.P. Brome Weigall, *Egypt from 1798 to 1914* (Blackwood, 1915), 234.
4. Clara Boyle, 156.
5. Hugh and Mirabel Cecil, *Imperial Marriage* (John Murray, 2002), 221.
6. Owen, 24.
7. A.N. v.2, 62–3.
8. J. Gorst, 'The Oriental Character', *Anglo-Saxon Review,* 1899, v.2, 124–38.
9. Cromer, v.2, 286–7; Milner, 105–6.
10. A.N. v.2, 60–1.
11. Owen, 308.
12. Al-Sayyid, 138.
13. Mansfield, 162.
14. Tignor, 382.
15. Ibid. 226.
16. Al-Sayyid, 78.
17. A.N. v.2, 61.
18. Egypt No. 3 (1899), C 9231, 14; Egypt No. 1 (1902), C 1012, 37–38; Tignor, 364; Owen, 311–12.
19. Egypt No. 3 (1899), C 9231, 16; Tignor, 222; Owen, 305.
20. Owen, 306–7, 309; Tignor 243.
21. Owen, 298–9.
22. Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria R.I.* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 575.
23. Boyle, 109.
24. Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 79.
25. J.S.R. Duncan, *The Sudan* (Blackwood, 1952), 81.

26. Egypt No. 1 (1900), C 95, 44; Owen, 301.
27. A.N. v.2, 65.
28. Ibid. 67.
29. Egypt No. 3 (1899), C 9231, 9–10.
30. Ibid. Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 2.
31. Egypt No. 3 (1899), C 9231, 8–9; A.N. v.2, 62, 69–70, 78; and JG d, 4 November 1898.
32. Egypt No. 1 (1900), C 95, 11–12.
33. A.N. v.2, 69–70.
34. Milner Letters, dep 28, F99–104, Gorst-Milner, 23 November 1893. Rogers was Director-General of the Sanitary Department.
35. A.N. v.2, 76.
36. Ibid. 71–2.

## CHAPTER 10

1. Egypt No. 1 (1900), C 95, 3.
2. Egypt No. 1 (1902), C 1012, 4.
3. Egypt No. 3 (1898), C 9231, 8; Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 1.
4. Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 26.
5. Egypt No. 1 (1902), C 1012, 5; Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 12; A.N. v.2, 83–4.
6. Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 8–9; A.N. v.2, 88.
7. A.N. v.2, 82.
8. Ibid. 83.
9. Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 13–14.
10. A.N. v.2, 82; Egypt No. 1 (1903), C 1529, 28–9.
11. JG d, 15, 20, 21 November 1902; Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 42–3.
12. Tignor, 180–1; Cromer, v.2, 289; on the other hand, John Marlowe in *Cromer in Egypt* gives at page 154 a figure of 366 'English' employed in the 'civil administration' in 1890.
13. Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 37.
14. Ibid. 37–8; Tignor, 187–8.
15. JG d, 14–23 December 1900.
16. Boyle, 111–12.
17. JG d, 18–27 April 1899; André von Dumreicher, *Trackers and Smugglers in the Deserts of Egypt* (Methuen, 1931), 52.
18. JG d, 24 March 1902 and subsequent entries.
19. Dumreicher, 150–2.
20. Exodus, chapter 17, v 1–7.
21. JG d, 2 April 1902.
22. A.N. v.2, 84.
23. Ibid. 85.

## CHAPTER 11

1. A.N. v.2, 77 and 87.
2. JG d, 31 July 1900.
3. Ibid. 7 October 1900.
4. A.N. v.2, 77.
5. JG d, 11, 18 July 1901.
6. Ibid. 27 August 1901.
7. Ibid. 29 August 1901. Almost certainly, Lady Beatrix would not have been travelling by herself; her lady's maid probably went ahead to the station with the luggage.
8. Ibid. 30 August 1901.
9. A.N. v.2, 80–1.
10. JG d, 10 April 1902.
11. Ibid. 11 June 1902.
12. Ibid. 25 June, 22 July 1902.
13. Philip Magnus, *King Edward The Seventh* (John Murray, 1964), 216.
14. A.N. v.2, 85.
15. JG d, 28 and 29 January and 16 February 1903.
16. C.E. Coles, *Recollections and Reflections* (St Catherine's Press, 1918), 55.
17. JG d, 7 March 1903.
18. Ibid. 15 March 1903.
19. Boyle, 157.
20. In *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004 ed., v. 48, 75–8.
21. JG d, 29 May 1903.
22. Ibid. 25 June 1903.
23. Ibid. 12 August and 5 September 1903.
24. Ibid. 6 August 1903.

## CHAPTER 12

1. Philip Magnus, *King Edward The Seventh* (John Murray, 1964), 312–13.
2. A.N. v.2, 89–90.
3. Marquess of Zetland, *Lord Cromer* (Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 271.
4. Steiner, 46–8.
5. G.P. Gooch and H. Temperley, *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898–1914*, v.II (HMSO, 1927), 298–300; Christopher Andrew, *Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale* (Macmillan, 1968), 206.
6. Gooch and Temperley, 308–10.
7. Ibid. 311.
8. Ibid. 313; A.W. Ward and G.P. Gooch (eds.), *The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy,* v.III, 1866–1919 (Cambridge University Press, 1923), 312–13.
9. JG d, 28 and 29 November 1903; National Archives Kew (N.A.), F.O. 633/6, No. 11, Lansdowne-Cromer, 7 December 1903.
10. N.A., F.O. 633/6, Gorst-Cromer, 11 December 1903; Cromer-Lansdowne,

12 December 1903.
11. *Cambridge History*, op. cit., 312.
12. N.A., F.O. 633/6, Gorst-Cromer, 8 January 1904.
13. Ibid. Lansdowne-Cromer, 5 January 1904.
14. JG d, 4 January 1904.
15. F.O. 633/6, Gorst-Cromer, 1, 6 and 8 January 1904.
16. Gooch and Temperley, 337, 338.
17. Ibid. 337, 339.
18. Ibid. 339.
19. Ibid. 352–5.
20. Zetland, 281.
21. JG d, 24, 25 and 28, March 1904.
22. N.A., F.O. 633/6, Gorst-Cromer , 31 March 1904.
23. John Marlowe, *Cromer in Egypt* (Elek Books, 1970), 250; Gooch and Temperley, 355.
24. N.A., F.O. 633/6, Gorst-Cromer, 1 April 1904.
25. Zetland, 282.
26. *Cambridge History*, 311.
27. Marlowe, 252; Owen, 324.
28. A.N. v.2, 94; Gorst gave this view 20 months after the Entente was signed.
29. Owen, 324.

## CHAPTER 13

1. JG d, 21 April 1904.
2. Ibid. 20 and 22 April 1904.
3. The information about the domestic life the Gorsts led comes mainly from JG d, 1904–7.
4. A.N. v.2, 95.
5. Steiner, 41, 43.
6. N.A., F.O. 633/6, Gorst-Cromer, 17 December 1903.
7. A.N. v.2, 95.
8. JG d, 15 November 1904.
9. A.N. v.2, 97.
10. Ibid. 99; JG d, 22 July 1905.
11. JG d, 10–12 May 1905.
12. *Cambridge History*, op. cit, 318; A.N. v.2, 102.
13. R. Ensor, *England 1870–1914* (Clarendon Press, 1987), 369–70.
14. JG d, 14 July 1905.
15. A.N. v.2, 98.
16. Steiner, 74.
17. JG d, 1 November 1904.
18. A.N. v.2, 101.
19. Steiner, 95, 107; *The Times* obituary of Gorst, 13 July 1911.
20. *Cambridge History*, 317–18; JG d, various entries in February 1906.

21. A.N. v.2, 102; JG d, 1 May 1906; see also Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (Abacus, 1992), 450, 525, 526.
22. Vatikiotis, 222–3.
23. There are many accounts of the Dinshawai incident. See especially the official versions: Egypt No. 3 and No. 4 of 1906, C 3086 and C 3091 respectively. See also Owen, 336; Tignor, 280; al-Sayyid, 171.
24. Egypt No. 3 (1906), C 3086 at p20–5; Owen, 337.
25. A.N. v.2, 115.
26. Steiner, 21.
27. Commercial No. 8 (1907), C 3610.
28. A.N. v.2, 103–4.
29. J.E. Gorst, 'Egypt: The Old Problem and the New', *Edinburgh Review* (1907), v.205, 48–77.

## CHAPTER 14

1. N.A., F.O. 633/13, Cromer-Grey, 28 March 1907.
2. Owen, 345–6.
3. N.A., F.O. 633/13, Cromer-Grey, 28 March 1907.
4. N.A., F.O. 633/13, Grey-Cromer, 7 April 1907.
5. JG d, 4 April 1907.
6. Hugh and Mirabel Cecil, *Imperial Marriage* (John Murray, 2002), 221.
7. Hunter, 196, 281.
8. A.N. v.2, 109–10. The post of Agent and Consul-General, while certainly made prestigious by Cromer, did not equate to that of Ambassador (see Marlowe, 275).
9. JG d, 22 April 1907.
10. NA, F.O. 800/46, Gorst-Grey, 28 April 1907; JG d, 24 April 1907; Storrs Papers, Box II Folder 1, Storrs to his father, 11 April 1907.
11. JG d, 27 April 1907.
12. A.N. v.2, 115.
13. N.A., F.O. 800/46, Gorst-Grey, 11 May 1907.
14. Ibid. Owen, 350; al-Sayyid, 182; Boyle, 153.
15. N.A., F.O. 800/46, Gorst-Grey, 1 May 1907 and Gorst-Grey, 11 May 1907.
16. Wilfred Blunt, *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888–1914* (Knopp, 1921), 6.
17. Al-Sayyid, 95–6; Tignor, 262.
18. Al-Sayyid, 185–6.
19. Sonbol, 104–5, 126.
20. Al-Sayyid, 129, 137; Sonbol, 104–5.
21. Egypt No. 1 (1904), C 1951, 31–3.
22. Egypt No. 1 (1907), C 3394; Tignor, 271, 274.
23. E.W.P. Newman, *Great Britain in Egypt* (Cassell, 1928), 162–3; Sonbol, 14–15; Vatikiotis, 228.
24. Al-Sayyid, 168, 183, 189–90; Marlowe, 258–61; Tignor, 286; Vatikiotis,

228.
25. A.N. v.2, 111.
26. Ibid. 113–14.
27. Milner Letters, dep 218, F 456–7, Gorst-Milner, 11 May 1907.
28. N.A., F.O. 371/247, Gorst-Grey, 18 May 1907.
29. N.A., F.O. 800/46, Gorst-Grey, 10 June 1907; Sonbol, 259.
30. Cromer, *Abbas II* (Macmillan, 1915), xi; Owen, 186.
31. Vansittart, 86; Marlowe, 273; Lloyd, v.1., 66–7.
32. JG d, 26 May 1907.

## CHAPTER 15

1. JG d, 30 September 1907; Gorst's activities in the summer of 1907 are all taken from his diary entries in July to September that year.
2. Sonbol, 143.
3. Storrs, 66.
4. A.N. v.2, 119–21.
5. Gorst Papers at St Anthony's College (Oxford, Middle East Centre, NRA 20811).
6. JG d, 2 November 1907.
7. Elgood, 185; Storrs, 67.
8. Boyle, 157.
9. N.A., F.O. 633/14, Gorst-Cromer, 16 November 1907.
10. Mellini, 161.
11. N.A., F.O. 800/46, 439, Grey-Cromer, 14 September 1907.
12. JG d, 30 September and 23 October 1907.
13. N.A., F.O. 800/46, 468–473, Gorst-Grey, 3 November 1907; Grey-Gorst, 6 November 1907; and Gorst-Grey, 8 November 1907.
14. Sonbol, 260.
15. A.N. v.2, 122–3.
16. Egypt No. 1 (1908), C 3966, 6; Tignor, 370–3.
17. JG d, November–December 1907; Storrs, 71.
18. Boyle, 158.
19. In *The Onlooker*, 28 December 1907.
20. Boyle, 154.
21. Henry Keown–Boyd, *The Lion and the Sphinx*, (Memoir Club, 2002), 68.
22. Storrs, 71.
23. JG d, 15 and 24 May 1908; A.E.P. Brome Weigall, 210; *The Planet*, 25 July 1908.

## CHAPTER 16

1. N.A., F.O. 633/14, Gorst-Cromer, 1 March 1908; Egypt No. 1 (1908) C 3966, 42.
2. Erik Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (I.B.Tauris, 1993), 94, 97.
3. A.N. v.2, 124.

4. Ibid. 125.
5. Ibid.
6. In *The Times*, 23 June 1910.
7. Egypt No. 1 (1908), C 3966, 2–3.
8. Ibid.
9. Egypt No. 1 (1910), C 5121, 4.
10. Ibid. 27–9.
11. Egypt No. 1 (1911), C 5633, 36–7.
12. In *The Egyptian Gazette*, 23 October 1908.
13. A.N. v.2, 128; Lloyd, 73.
14. Tignor, 298.
15. N.A., F.O. 371/452, Gorst-Grey, 13 November 1908; Egypt No. 1 (1909), C 4580, 2–3.
16. N.A., F.O. 371/452, Gorst-Grey, 13 November 1908.
17. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 20 May 1909.
18. A.N. v.2, 131; Egypt No. 1 (1909), C 4580, 3.
19. Egypt No. 1 (1908), C 3966, 22–3.
20. Elgood, *The Transit of Egypt* (1928), 188; Lloyd, 81–2.
21. Elgood, *Egypt and the Army* (Oxford University Press, 1924), 28; Coles, 169.
22. Egypt No. 1 (1910), C 5121, 27.
23. Ibid. 53.
24. Egypt No. 1 (1908), C 3966, 23.
25. Egypt No. 1 (1910), C 5121, 24–5, 59–63; this Law No. 15 of 1909, was also known as the Relegation Law or Criminal Deportation Law. It was officially entitled: *Loi soumettant certains individus à la surveillance de la Police*.
26. A.N. v.2, 134; JG d, 17 August 1909; N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 30 October 1909; see also Mellini, 186.
27. Egypt No. 1 (1911), C 5633, 34.
28. Egypt No. 1 (1910), C 5121, 27; Egypt No. 1 (1911), C 5633, 35; family information; and see also Mansfield, 186.
29. Egypt No. 1 (1909), C 4580, 3–5.
30. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Grey-Gorst, 25 November 1908; F.O. 371/660, Gorst-Grey, 11 February 1909.
31. Egypt No. 1 (1910), C 5121, 2.
32. Tignor, 299; Mansfield, 185–6.
33. A.N. v. 2, 130.
34. JG d. Various diary entries in September and October 1909, and entry on 14 March 1910.
35. JG d, 28 March 1909.
36. In *The Egyptian Gazette*, 15 April 1909; JG d, 29 March to 6 April 1909.
37. Mellini, 176–7.
38. Boyle, 159.

39. Ibid. 155, 157.
40. C. Boyle, *Servant of the Empire* (Methuen, 1938), 167 (note that Boyle wrote two books about her husband).

## CHAPTER 17

1. Egypt No. 1 (1911) C 5633, 16 and 81.
2. A.N. v.2, 122.
3. Sudan Archive, University of Durham Library (S.A.D.), Wingate Papers, 281/5/33, Wingate-Gorst, 7 November 1907 and 281/5/110, Maxwell-Wingate, 30 November 1907.
4. JG d, 1 January 1908.
5. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 12 January 1908.
6. Ibid.
7. S.A.D., Wingate Papers, 284/5/71, Gorst-Wingate, 22 December 1908.
8. Ibid. 234/7/8, Gorst-Wingate, 31 January 1909; M.W. Daly, *The Sirdar* (American Philosophical Society, 1997), 172.
9. N.A., F.O. 371/451, Gorst-Grey, 1 May 1908; Egypt No. 1 (1909), C 4580, 55–6.
10. Egypt No. 1 (1909), C 4580, 56–7.
11. S.A.D., Wingate Papers, 282/5/60, Gorst-Wingate, 15 May 1908.
12. Daly, 173.
13. N.A., F.O., 633/14, Gorst-Cromer, 6 June 1908.
14. A.N. v.2, 127.
15. Egypt No. 1 (1909), C 4580, 57.
16. Egypt No. 1 (1911), C 5633, 61 and 75.
17. N.A., F.O. 371/452, Gorst-Grey, 18 August 1908; see also Tignor, 218–19.
18. Egypt No. 1 (1908), C 3966, 54.
19. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Grey-Gorst, 25 November 1908.
20. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 20 May 1909.
21. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 30 October 1909; Egypt No. 1 (1910), C 5121, 65; P.M. Holt, *A Modern History of the Sudan* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1961), 116; Daly, 175.
22. Slatin's book is *Fire and Sword in the Soudan*, 1896.
23. The information on Gorst's tour comes from entries in his diary, November to December 1909.
24. Hardinge Papers, NRA 3853, v.21, Hardinge-Gorst, 7 January 1910.

## CHAPTER 18

1. A.N. v.2, 132.
2. Ibid. 132–3.
3. Lt-Col. Sir Arnold Wilson, *The Suez Canal* (Oxford University Press, 1933), 94.
4. JG d, 4 and 6 October 1908; see also Mellini, 194–5.
5. JG d, 2 January and 5 February 1909; the text of the draft convention as

submitted to the General Assembly is given in Sonbol, 266–9.
6. Wilson, 95.
7. Ibid.
8. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 20 May 1909; JG d, 8 April 1909.
9. Mellini, 196.
10. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 30 October 1909.
11. Egypt No. 1 (1910), C 5121, 3.
12. A.N. v.2, 133.
13. JG d, 4 and 8 November 1909.
14. Hardinge Papers, NRA 3853, v.17., Hardinge-Gorst, 12 November 1909.
15. Wilson, 97.
16. In a domino dance, each dancer wore a cloak and a mask to conceal his or her identity.
17. N.A., F.O. 633/14, Gorst-Cromer, 5 February 1910; JG d, 11 February 1910.
18. Storrs, 72.
19. Ibid. 73.
20. N.A., F.O. 633/14, Gorst-Cromer, 26 February 1910.
21. JG d, 23 February 1910.
22. Ibid. 23 March 1910.
23. Wilson, 98.
24. Ibid. 100–1.
25. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 10 April 1910.
26. A.N. v.2, 133.
27. Al-Sayyid, 199.
28. Egypt No. 1 (1911), C 5633, 5; Lloyd, 100; Keown-Boyd, 113–14.
29. N.A., F.O. 371/895, Gorst-Hardinge, 5 March 1910; Storrs, 73.
30. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 30 April 1910.
31. N.A., F.O. 633/14, Nimr-Boyle, 8 May 1910; Egypt No. 1 (1911) C 5633, 4–5.
32. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Grey-Gorst, 24 April 1910; F.O. 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 29 April 1910; F.O. 800/47 Gorst-Grey, 30 April 1910.
33. Ibid. Grey-Gorst, 3 May 1910.
34. Hardinge Papers, NRA 3853, v.21, Hardinge-Gorst, 22 April 1910 and 13 May 1910.
35. N.A., F.O. 800/47, Grey-Gorst, 3 May 1910.
36. N.A. CAB 37/102, No. 19, 1910, memorandum by Eldon Gorst, 22 May 1910.
37. Hansards Parliamentary Debates (P.D.), 17, 13 June 1910, 1146–56; JG d, 14 June 1910.
38. In *Egyptian Daily Post*, 26 April 1910, reproducing the article from *The Saturday Review* of 16 April 1910.
39. JG d, 24 and 25 April 1910.
40. In *The Saturday Review*, 23 April 1910.

41. Sykes, 210, 285, 290.
42. Elgood, *The Transit of Egypt*, 198; Mansfield, 188.
43. In *The Investors' Review*, 4 June 1910; *The Guardian*, 6 June 1910.
44. The information on Gorst's illness comes exclusively from entries in his diary with effect from 13 June to 2 July 1910.

## CHAPTER 19

1. JG d, 7–9, 27, 28 and 30 July 1910.
2. Ibid. 12 and 29 August 1910.
3. Ibid. 17–22 August 1910.
4. Ibid. 7, 27, 29 September and 1, 3, 6, 10 and 13 October 1910.
5. Ibid. 25 and 28 October 1910.
6. Mellini, 232; Storrs, 76; JG d, 4 November and 25 December 1910.
7. Egypt No. 1 (1911), C 5633, 4.
8. N.A., F.O. 371/895, Gorst-Nicholson, 24 December 1910.
9. Ibid.; JG d, 23 December 1910 and 1 January 1911.
10. Lloyd, 105–6; Mellini, 228–9.
11. JG d, 21 November 1910, 15 and 23 January 1911; Vansittart, 94.
12. Egypt No. 1 (1911), C 5633, 10–11.
13. Ibid. 1–3.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid. 5–10.
16. Elgood (Transit), 196; Vatikiotis, 209; and Mellini, 226–8.
17. Egypt No. 1 (1911), C 5633, 32.
18. Ibid. 62 and 42.
19. Storrs, 76; see also JG d, entries from 19 February 1911 onwards.
20. N.A., F.O. 800/46 and 800/47, Gorst-Grey, 25 March 1911.
21. JG d, various entries in April and May 1911.
22. Ibid., in May and June 1911.
23. Violet Milner Papers, 67 C 724/1–2, Cromer-Cecil, 18 September 1911; Gorst Family Papers.
24. Gorst Family Papers.
25. Ibid. P.D. 28, 6 July 1911, 1308.
26. Gorst family information; Storrs, 76–7; Sonbol, 263.

## CHAPTER 20

1. Gorst Family Papers.
2. Ibid. See also Abbas Hilmi Papers, File 18, Eva Gorst-Abbas Hilmi, 18 July 1911, and Sir John Gorst-Abbas Hilmi, 19 July 1911.
3. Sonbol, 307 and 367.
4. In *The Times*, 13 July 1911.
5. Marlowe, 275; Elgood (Transit), 200.
6. Mellini, 238.
7. Cromer, *Abbas II*, xii.

8. See for example Lloyd, 107.
9. Storrs, 67; Weigall, 221; Cromer, op. cit., xiv.
10. Lloyd, 113.
11. In *The Spectator*, 13 May 1911.
12. Newman, 170–1.
13. Cromer, op. cit., xiv.
14. Marlowe, 32.

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*The Saturday Review*
*The Spectator*
*The Times*

# INDEX

*Note: In subheadings Gorst's name is abbreviated to JG. When the names of his relatives appear their relationship to him is put in parentheses*