URABI AHMAD, BLUNT WILFRID SCAWEN

SECRET HISTORY OF THE ENGLISH OCCUPATION OF EGYPT

Wilfrid Blunt

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Blunt W.

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Содержание

Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt Being a Personal Narrative of Events

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

When I first arranged with Mr. Blunt to publish *The Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt*, I suggested that he write for the American Edition a brief foreword bringing the book into even closer relation to the Anglo-Egyptian situation as it stands today. He thought this idea a good one, and agreed to write such a note. But Mr. Blunt was born in 1840, and has for a number of years been in failing health. In June he wrote me that he was so ill as to be quite unable to finish the foreword, which he had actually commenced to write. He felt furthermore that any advantage the edition would gain by having a new preface by him would be more than counterbalanced by any delay in the appearance of the book "at the present extremely critical moment."

He remarked further: "What could I have said more appropriate today as a new preface than the few words which already stand as the short preface I set to the first edition of my *Secret History* (published in London and which you reprint in this new edition). This and my poem *The Wind and the Whirlwind* (which you also give as an Appendix). Both are absolutely true of the present shameful position of England in Egypt and the calamity so closely threatening her Eastern Empire. What could I say more exactly suited? This is the punishment we are reaping today for our sin of that sad morning on the Nile which saw the first English gun open its thunder of aggression just forty years ago at Alexandria in the name of England's honour. What could I add to my words of grief and shame then uttered and repeated here? Let these stand for my new preface. My day is done. Alas! that I should have lived to see those words come true of England's punishment, more than true."

A. A. K.

PREFACE OF 1895

I desire to place on record in a succinct and tangible form the events which have come within my knowledge relating to the origin of the English occupation of Egypt – not necessarily for publication now, but as an available document for the history of our times. At one moment I played in these events a somewhat prominent part, and for nearly twenty years I have been a close and interested spectator of the drama which was being acted at Cairo.

It may well be, also, that the Egyptian question, though now quiescent, will reassert itself unexpectedly in some urgent form hereafter, requiring of Englishmen a new examination of their position there, political and moral; and I wish to have at hand and ready for their enlightenment the whole of the materials I possess. I will give these as clearly as I can, with such documents in the shape of letters and journals as I can bring together in corroboration of my evidence, disguising nothing and telling the whole truth as I know it. It is not always in official documents that the truest facts of history are to be read, and certainly in the case of Egypt, where intrigue of all kinds has been so rife, the sincere student needs help to understand the published parliamentary papers.

Lastly, for the Egyptians, if ever they succeed in re-establishing themselves as an autonomous nation, it will be of value that they should have recorded the evidence of one whom they know to be their sincere friend in regard to matters of diplomatic obscurity which to this day they fail to realize. My relations with Downing Street in 1882 need to be related in detail if Egyptians are ever to appreciate the exact causes which led to the bombardment of Alexandria and the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, while justice to the patriot leader of their "rebellion" requires that I should give a no less detailed account of Arabi's trial, which still presents itself to some Egyptian as to all French minds, in the light of a pre-arranged comedy devised to screen a traitor. It does not do to leave truth to its own power of prevailing over lies, and history is full of calumnies which have remained unrefuted, and of ingratitudes which nations have persisted in towards their worthiest sons.

Sheykh Obeyd, Egypt.

1895

PREFACE ON PUBLICATION

Since the first brief preface to my manuscript was written twelve years ago, events have happened which seem to indicate that the moment foreseen in it has at last arrived when to the public advantage and without risk of serious indiscretion as far as individuals are concerned, the whole truth may be given to the world.

Already in 1904 the original manuscript had been thoroughly revised, and in its purely Egyptian part remodelled under circumstances which add greatly to its historic value. My old Egyptian friend, Sheykh Mohammed Abdu, of whom so much mention is made in it, had taken up his country residence at my doors at Sheykh Obeyd, and I found myself in almost daily intercourse with him, a most precious accident of which I did not fail to take full advantage. That great philosopher and patriot – now, alas, lost to us, for he died at Alexandria, 11th July, 1905, the day being the twenty-third anniversary of the bombardment of that city – after many vicissitudes of evil and good fortune had attained in the year 1899 to the supreme position in Egypt of Grand Mufti, and having thus acquired a wider sphere than ever of influence with his fellow countrymen, had it at heart to bequeath to them a true account of the events of his time, events which had become strangely misunderstood by them, and clothed with legends altogether fantastic and unreal.

On this subject he often spoke to me, regretting his lack of leisure to complete the historic work, and when I told him of my own memoir, he urged me very strongly to publish it, if not in English at least with his help in Arabic, and he undertook to go through it with me and see that all that part of it which related to matters within his knowledge was accurately and fully told. We had been personal friends and political allies almost from the date of my first visit to Egypt, and with his garden adjoining mine it was an easy matter for us to work together and compare our recollections of the men and things we had known. It was in this way that my history of an epoch so memorable to us both took final shape, and I was able (how fortunately!) to complete it and obtain from him his approval and *imprimatur* before his unlooked-for death closed forever the chief source of knowledge which he undoubtedly was of the political movement which led up to the revolution of 1881, and of the intrigues which marred it in the following year.

The Mufti's death, a severe blow to me as well as to Egypt, postponed indefinitely our plan of publishing in Arabic, nor till the present year has the time seemed politically ripe for the production of my work in English. The events, however, of 1906, and now Lord Cromer's retirement from the Egyptian scene, have so wholly changed the situation that I feel I ought no longer to delay, at least as far as my duty to my own countrymen is concerned. We English are confronted to-day in our dealings with Egypt with very much the same problem we misunderstood and blundered about so disastrously a generation ago, and if those of us who are responsible for public decisions are, in the words of my first preface, to "re-examine their position there, political and moral," honestly or to any profit, it is necessary they should first have set before them the past as it really was and not as it has been presented to them so long by the fallacious documents of their official Blue Books. I should probably not be wrong in asserting that neither Lord Cromer at Cairo nor Sir Edward Grey at home, nor yet Lord Cromer's successor Sir Eldon Gorst, have any accurate knowledge of what occurred in Egypt twenty-five years ago – this notwithstanding Lord Cromer's tardy recognition of the reform movement of 1881 and his eulogium of Sheykh Mohammed Abdu repeated so recently as in his last annual Report. Lord Cromer, it must be remembered, was not at Cairo during any part of the revolutionary period here described, and, until quite recently, has always assumed the "official truth" regarding it to be the only truth.

For this reason I have decided now finally on publication, giving the text of my Memoir as it was completed in January, 1905, the identical text of which my friend signified his approval suppressing only certain brief passages which seem to me still too personal in regard to individuals living, and

which could be excised without injury to the volume's complete historic value. I can sincerely say that in all I have written my one great aim has been to disclose the *vérité vraie* as it is known to me for misguided History's sake.

If there is at all a second reason with me, it must be looked for in a promise publicly made as long ago as in the September number of the "Nineteenth Century Review" of 1882 that I would complete some day my personal *Apologia* in regard to events then contemporary. At that time and out of consideration for Mr. Gladstone, and for the hope I had that he would yet repair the wrong he had done to liberty in Egypt, I forbore, in the face of much obloquy, to exculpate myself by a full revelation of the hidden circumstances which were my justification. I could not clear myself entirely without telling facts technically confidential, and I decided to be silent.

There is, however, a limit to the duty of reticence owed to public men in public affairs, and I am confident that my abstention of a quarter of a century will excuse me with fair judging minds if I now at last make my conduct quite clear in the only way possible to me, namely, by a complete exposure in detail of the whole drama of financial intrigue and political weakness as it was at the time revealed to me, substantiating it by the contemporary documents still in my possession. If the susceptibilities of some persons in high places are touched by a too candid recital, I can but reply that the necessity of speech has been put on me by their own long lack of candour and generosity. During all these years not one of those who knew the truth has said a confessing word on my behalf. It will be enough if I repeat with Raleigh:

Go, Soul, the Body's guest,
Upon a thankless errand.
Fear not to touch the best,
The truth shall be thy warrant.
Then go, for thou must die,
And give the world the lie.

Wilfrid Scawen Blunt.

Newbuildings Place, Sussex.
April, 1907.

CHAPTER I
EGYPT UNDER ISMAÏL

My first visit to Egypt was in the winter of 1875-6, when I spent some pleasant months as a tourist on the lower Nile. Before, however, describing my impressions of this my earliest acquaintance made with the Egyptian people, it may be as well, that, for their benefit and the benefit of foreign readers generally, I should say a few words in explanation of what my previous life had been as far as it had had any relation to public affairs. It will show them my exact position in my own country, and help them to understand how it came about that, beginning as a mere onlooker at what was passing in their country, I gradually became interested in it politically and ended by taking an active part in the revolution which six years later developed itself among them. I was already thirty-five years of age at the date of this first visit, and had seen much of men and things.

I began life rather early. Belonging to a family of the landed gentry of the south of England with strong Conservative traditions and connected with some of the then leaders of the Tory party, I was placed at the age of eighteen in the Diplomatic Service, in the first instance as attaché to the British Legation at Athens where King Otho was still on the throne of Greece, and afterwards, during a space of twelve years, as member of other legations and embassies to the various Courts of Europe, in all of which I learned a little of my profession, amused myself, and made friends. I was thus, between 1859 and 1869, for some weeks at Constantinople in the reign of Sultan Abd-el-Mejid; for a couple of years in the Germany of the Germanic Confederation; for a year in Spain under Queen Isabella; and for another year in Paris at the climax of the Emperor's prestige under Napoleon III; and I was also for a short time in the Republic of Switzerland, in South America, and in Portugal. Everywhere my diplomatic recollections are agreeable ones, but they are without special political interest or importance of any official kind.

Our English diplomacy in those days, the years following the Crimean War, which had disgusted Englishmen with foreign adventures, was very different from what it has since become. It was essentially pacific, unaggressive, and devoid of those subtleties which have since earned it a reputation of astuteness at the cost of its honesty. Official zeal was at a discount in the public service, and nothing was more certain to bring a young diplomatist into discredit at the Foreign Office than an attempt, however laudable, to raise any new question in a form demanding a public answer. We attachés and junior secretaries were very clearly given to understand this, and that it was not our business to meddle with the politics of the Courts to which we were accredited, only to make ourselves agreeable socially, and amuse ourselves, decorously if possible, but at any rate in the reverse of any serious sense. It is no exaggeration when I affirm it that in the whole twelve years of my diplomatic life I was asked to discharge no duty of the smallest professional importance. This discouraging *régime* gave me, while I was in the service, a thorough distaste for politics, nor was it till long after, and under very different conditions and under circumstances wholly accidental, that I at last turned my attention seriously to them. My pursuits as an attaché were those of pleasure, social intercourse, and literature. I wrote poems, not despatches, and though I assisted diplomatically at some of the serious dramas of the day in Europe, it was in the spirit of a spectator rather than of an actor, and of one hardly admitted at all behind the scenes. On my marriage in 1869, which was soon followed by the death of my elder brother which left me heir to the family estates in Sussex, I retired without regret from the public service to attend to matters of private concern which had always interested me more.

Nevertheless my early connection with the Foreign Office, though it was never to be officially renewed, was maintained on a friendly footing as of one honourably retired from the service, and this and my experience of Courts and capitals abroad, proved later of no little value to me when I once more found myself thrown by accident into the stream of international affairs. It gave me the

advantage of a professional knowledge of the machinery of foreign politics and, what was still more important, a personal acquaintance with many of those who were working that machinery. Not a few of these had been my intimate friends. Thus at the very outset of my life I had found myself in official fellowship with Lord Currie, who for so many years directed the permanent policy of the Foreign Office, with Sir Henry Drummond Wolff, Sir Frank Lascelles, Sir Edward Malet, Lord Dufferin, Lord Vivian, and Sir Rivers Wilson, all closely connected afterwards with the making of Egyptian history, with Lord Lytton who was to be Viceroy of India in the years immediately preceding the crisis of 1881, and amongst foreign diplomatists with M. de Nélidoff, Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, Baron Haymerly, who died Prime Minister of the Austrian Empire, and M. de Staal, for twenty years Russian Ambassador in London. With all these I was on terms of personal intimacy long before I paid my first visit to Egypt, and it is with a full knowledge of their individual characters that I am able to speak of them and judge them. Having been myself, as it were, of the priesthood, I could not well be deceived by the common insincerities which are the stock in trade of diplomacy, or mistake for public policy action which was often only personal. It is far too readily believed by those who are without individual experience of diplomacy that the great events of the world's history are the result of elaborate political design and not as they are really in most instances, dependent upon unforeseen accidents and the personal strength or weakness, sometimes the personal whim, of the agents employed.

For the first few years of my retirement from the service I occupied myself entirely with my domestic affairs, and, as I have said, it was only by accident that my mind was gradually turned to politics. In 1873, finding myself in indifferent health, and to escape a late spring in England, I made with my wife our first common journey in Eastern lands. We went by Belgrade and the Danube to Constantinople, where we found Sir Henry Elliott at the Embassy and renewed acquaintance with other friends connected with it, among them with Dr. Dickson, of whom I shall have afterwards to speak in connection with the tragical death of Sultan Abd-el-Aziz, and who attended me with great kindness during a sharp attack of pneumonia I had there and for whom I contracted a sincere regard. The Ottoman Empire was then enjoying a period of comparative tranquillity before the storm of war which was so soon to burst over it, and I troubled myself little with its internal broils, but my sympathies, such as they were at that time, were, in common with those of most Englishmen of the day, with the Turks rather than the Christians of the Empire. On my recovery from my illness, I bought half a dozen pack horses at the At-maidan, the horse market at Stamboul, and with them we crossed over to Scutari and spent six pleasant summer weeks wandering in the hills and through the poppy fields of Asia Minor, away from beaten tracks and seeing as much of the Turkish peasant life as our entire ignorance of their language allowed. We were impressed, as all travellers have been, with the honest goodness of these people and the badness of their Government. We judged of the latter by what we saw of the ways of the Zaptiehs, our semi-military escort, whose manner with them was that of soldiers in an invaded country. Yet it was clear that with much fiscal oppression a large personal liberty existed in rural Turkey for the poor, such as contrasted not unfavourably with our own police and magistrate-ridden England. The truth is that everywhere in the East the administrative net is one of wide meshes, with rents innumerable through which all but the largest fish have good chance of escaping. In ordinary times there is no persecution of the quite indigent. I remember telling some peasants, who had complained to me through my Armenian dragoman of hardship in their lives at Government hands, that there were countries in still worse plight than their own, where if a poor man so much as lay down by the roadside at night and got together a few sticks to cook a meal he ran the risk of being brought next day before the Cadi and cast into prison; and I remember that my listeners refused to believe my tale or that such great tyranny existed anywhere in the world. My deduction from this incident is the earliest political reflection I can remember making in regard to Eastern things.

The following winter – that is to say, the early months of 1874 – we spent in Algeria. Here we assisted at another spectacle which gave food for reflection: that of an Eastern people in violent subjection to a Western. The war in which France had just been engaged with Germany had been followed in Algeria by an Arab rising, which had spread to the very outskirts of Algiers, and the Mohammedan natives were now experiencing the extreme rigours of Christian repression. This was worst in the settled districts, the colony proper, where the civil administration was taking advantage of the rebellion to confiscate native property and in every way to favour the European colonists at the native expense. With all my love for the French (and I had been at Paris during the war, and had been enthusiastic for its defence at the time of the siege) I found my sympathies in Algeria going out wholly to the Arabs. In the Sahara, beyond the Atlas, where military rule prevailed, things were somewhat better, for the French officers for the most part appreciated the nobler qualities of the Arabs and despised the mixed rascaldom of Europe – Spanish, Italian, and Maltese as well as their own countrymen – which made up the "Colonie." The great tribes of the Sahara were still at that time materially well off, and retained not a little of their ancient pride of independence which the military commandants could not but respect. We caught glimpses of these nomads in the Jebel Amour and of their vigorous way of life, and what we saw delighted us. We listened to their chauntings in praise of their lost hero Abd-el-Kader, and though we misunderstood them on many points owing to our ignorance of their language, we admired and pitied them. The contrast between their noble pastoral life on the one hand, with their camel herds and horses, a life of high tradition filled with the memory of heroic deeds, and on the other hand the ignoble squalor of the Frank settlers, with their wineshops and their swine, was one which could not escape us, or fail to rouse in us an angry sense of the incongruity which has made of these last the lords of the land and of those their servants. It was a new political lesson which I took to heart, though still regarding it as in no sense my personal affair.

Such had been the preliminary training of my life, and such its main circumstances when, as I have said, in the winter of 1875-6 I first visited Egypt. The only other matter which, perhaps, deserves here a word of explanation to non-English readers, and it is one that in Europe will receive its full appreciation, is the fact that my wife, Lady Anne Blunt, who accompanied me on all these travels, was the grandaughter of our great national poet, Lord Byron, and so was the inheritor, in some sort, of sympathies in the cause of freedom in the East, which were not without their effect upon our subsequent action. It seemed to us, in presence of the events of 1881-2, that to champion the cause of Arabian liberty would be as worthy an endeavour as had been that for which Byron had died in 1827. As yet, however, in 1875, neither of us had any thought in visiting Egypt more serious than that of another pleasant travelling adventure in Eastern lands. We had on leaving England the plan of entering Egypt from the south, by way of Suakim, Kassala, and the Blue Nile, and so of working our way northwards to Cairo in the spring, but this, owing to the issue, just then so unfortunate to Egypt, of the Abyssinian campaign, was never realized, and the only part of our program which we carried out was that instead of landing at Alexandria, as was then the universal custom, we went on by the Canal to Suez and there first set foot upon Egyptian soil.

My first impression of all of Egypt is of our passage on the last day of the year 1875 through Lake Menzaleh, at that time the unpersecuted home of innumerable birds – a truly wonderful spectacle of prodigal natural life – to a point on the Canal north of Ismaïlia. What a sight it was! Lake Menzaleh was still an almost virgin region, and the flocks of flamingos, ducks, pelicans, and ibises which covered it, passed all belief in their prodigious magnitude. The waters, too, of the lakes and of the Canal itself were alive with fish so large and in such great quantities that not a few were run down by our ship's bows in passing, while everywhere they were being preyed on by fish hawks and cormorants, which sat watching on the posts and buoys. I imagine that the letting in of the sea for the first time on land never before covered with water provided the fish with feeding ground of exceptional richness, an advantage which has since been lost. But certain it is that both fish and birds

have dwindled sadly since, and it seems unlikely that the splendid spectacle we saw that winter will be again enjoyed there by any traveller's eyes.

We landed at Suez in the first days of the year 1876, and the news of the great disaster which had overtaken the Egyptian army in Abyssinia was the first that greeted us. The details of it were not generally known, but it appeared that seven ortas, or divisions, of the Khedivial troops had perished, while a tale was in circulation of the Khedive's son, Prince Hassan, having been captured and mutilated by the enemy, an exaggeration which was afterwards disproved, for the prince, a mere boy at the time, had been carried away from the battlefield of Kora early in the day, at the very beginning of the rout, as had Ratib Pasha himself, the Egyptian general in command, who was in charge of him. Loringe Pasha, however, the American, had really lost his life with many thousands of the rank and file, and the misfortune put a final limit to the Khedive Ismaïl's ambition of universal empire on the Nile. In our small way it affected us, as making our thought of a journey to Kassala impossible, and deciding us on a less adventurous one immediately in Lower Egypt.

We were anxious, nevertheless, to see Egypt in a less conventional way than that of ordinary tourists, and, having our camping equipment with us for the longer journey, we hired camels at Suez and went by the old caravan route to Cairo. It is not necessary that I should say much of our journey across the desert. The four days spent in it alone with our Bedouin camel-men gave us our first practical lessons in Arabic – in Algeria we had been dependent wholly on a dragoman – and they laid the basis, too, of those relations with the desert tribes of Arabia which were afterwards to become so pleasant to us and so intimate. On the fifth morning we entered Cairo, greeted on our arrival at Abbassiyeh by the whistling of bullets fired by the Khedivial troops at practice, for we had unwittingly encamped overnight just behind their targets and the aim of the recruits was very uncertain, but no harm was suffered. We little thought at the time that we should ever be interested in the doings of these soldiers as a fighting army, and still less that our sympathies would one day be with them in a war against our own countrymen. I was as yet, though not perhaps even then enthusiastically so, a believer in the common English creed that England had a providential mission in the East, and that our wars were only waged there for honest and beneficent reasons. Nothing was further from my mind than that we English ever could be guilty, as a nation, of a great betrayal of justice in arms for our mere selfish interests.

Neither need I say anything in detail about Cairo, through which we passed that day without stopping longer than to ask for our letters at the Consulate. Our object was to see the country districts and not to waste time on a city already in part European, and we thought to find camping ground immediately beyond the Nile. So we rode on. We did not understand the entreaties of our camel-men that we should alight and let them and their camels go back, or realize that we were doing them an injustice by forcing them to break the tribal rule which forbade them as Bedouins of the eastern desert to cross over to the west. In spite of their expostulations we held on our way by the Kasr-el-Nil bridge and the road to Ghizeh. We had caught sight of the Pyramids and pushed on eagerly in their direction, and were only stopped by the failing light which overtook us at sunset close to the little fellah village of Tolbiya, the last but one before the Pyramids are reached. It was there that we made our halt and alighted for the first time on the black soil of the Nile, as yet hardly dry from the autumn inundation.

The good people of Tolbiya, in their hearty fellah fashion, received us with all possible hospitality. Though living on the tourist road to the Pyramids and accustomed to treat Frank travellers in some sort as their prey, the fact of our alighting at their village for a night's lodging gave us a character of guests they at once recognized. Of all the Europeans who for many years had passed their way, not one had made a pause at their doors. Thus our relations with them were from the outset friendly, and the accident served us as an introduction in the sequel to other villagers when, after a few days spent among these, we went once more on our way. We had no choice at the time but to stay where we were, for in the morning our Bedouins refused to go a mile farther with us, and, having received their hire, departed with their camels. Other camels then had to be found. So it happened

that my first week in Egypt was occupied in going a round of the neighbouring village markets in search of the needed beasts, and making purchases of pack saddles and water, skins and all kinds of travelling gear for our further journey.

The fellahin at that time were in terrible straits of poverty. It was the first of the three last terrible years of the Khedive Ismaïl's reign; Ismaïl Sadyk, the notorious Mufettish, was in power; the European bondholders were clamouring for their "coupons," and famine was at the doors of the fellahin. It was rare in those days to see a man in the fields with a turban on his head, or with more than a shirt to his back. Even in the neighbourhood of Cairo, and still more in the Fayûm to which we took our way as soon as the camels were procured, I can testify that this was the case. The country Sheykhs themselves had few of them a cloak to wear. Wherever we went it was the same. The provincial towns on market days were full of women selling their clothes and their silver ornaments to the Greek usurers, because the tax collectors were in their villages whip in hand. We bought their poor trinkets and listened to their stories, and joined them in their maledictions on a government which was laying them bare. We did not as yet understand, any more than did the peasants themselves, the financial pressure from Europe which was the true cause of these extreme exactions; and we laid the blame, as they did, on Ismaïl Pasha and the Mufettish, Ismaïl Sadyk, little suspecting our English share of the blame.

The villagers were outspoken enough. Englishmen in those days were popular everywhere in Mohammedan lands, being looked upon as free from the political designs of the other Frank nations, and individually as honester than these in their commercial dealings. In Egypt especially they stood in amiable contrast with the needy adventures from the Mediterranean sea-board – the Italian, Greek, and Maltese money-lenders – who were sucking the life blood of the Moslem peasantry. Already there were rumours in the air which had reached the village of a possible European intervention, and the idea of it, if it was to be English, was not unpopular. The truth is that the existing state of things was wholly unendurable, and any change was looked to with joy by the starving people as a possible relief. England to the fellahin in their actual condition of beggary, robbed and beaten and perishing of hunger, appeared in the light of a bountiful and friendly providence very rich and quite disinterested, a redresser of wrongs and friend of the oppressed, just such, in fact, as individual English tourists then often were, who went about with open hands and expressions of sympathy. They did not suspect the immense commercial selfishness which had led us, collectively as a nation, to so many aggressions on the weak races of the world.

In the year 1876 I too, as I have said, was a believer in England, and I shared the common idea of the beneficence of her rule in the East, and I had no other thought for the Egyptians than that they should share with India, which I had not yet seen, the privilege of our protection. "The Egyptians," I wrote in my journal of the time, "are a good, honest people as any in the world – all, that is, who do not sit in the high places. Of these I know nothing. But the peasants, the fellahin, have every virtue which should make a happy, well-to-do-society. They are cheerful, industrious, obedient to law, and pre-eminently sober, not only in the matter of drink, but of the other indulgences to which human nature is prone. They are neither gamblers nor brawlers, nor licentious livers; they love their homes, their wives, their children. They are good sons and fathers, kind to dumb animals, old men, beggars, and idiots. They are absolutely without prejudice of race, and perhaps even of religion. Their chief fault is a love of money, but that is one political economists will readily pardon… It would be difficult to find anywhere a population better fitted to attain the economical end of the greatest happiness for the greatest number. In politics they have no aspirations except to live and let live, to be allowed to work and keep the produce of their labour, to buy and sell without interference and to escape taxation. They have been ill-treated for ages without losing thereby their goodness of heart; they have few of the picturesque virtues; they are neither patriotic nor fanatical nor romantically generous. But they are free from the picturesque vices. Each man works for himself – at most for his family. The idea of self-sacrifice for the public good they do not understand, but they are innocent of plots to enslave

their fellows… In spite of the monstrous oppression of which they are the victims, we have heard no word of revolt, this not from any superstitious regard for their rulers, for they are without political prejudice, but because revolt is no more in their nature than it is in a flock of sheep. They would hail the Queen of England, or the Pope, or the King of Ashantee with equal eagerness if these came with the gift for them of a penny less taxation in the pound."

Such were my first thoughts about Egypt in the early days of 1876, not altogether inaccurate ones, though I was far from suspecting the growth already beginning of political ideas in the towns. Neither did I understand the full influence of European finance in the hardships from which the peasantry were suffering. Nevertheless, on our return to Cairo in March I saw something of the reverse of the medal. Mr. Cave's financial mission had arrived during our tour, and was established in one of the palaces on the Shubra Road, and from its members – one of whom was an old acquaintance, Victor Buckley of the Foreign Office, and from Colonel Staunton, our Consul-General – I learned something of the condition of financial affairs; while a little later Sir Rivers Wilson, also my friend, who was to play later so prominent a part in Egyptian affairs, appeared at Cairo and joined the other members of the financial inquiry. What their report was of the condition of affairs I need not here relate in detail, but it will help to an understanding of the matter if I give a very short account of it and how their mission came to be appointed, the first of its kind in Egypt.[1]

The Khedive Ismaïl's reign had begun in the full tide of a period for Egypt of high material prosperity. His predecessor, Saïd, a man of fairly enlightened views, had had the good sense to give all possible encouragement to the fellahin in agricultural matters. He had abandoned the claim of the Viceroy to be sole landlord on the Nile, had recognized proprietary rights in the existing occupiers of land, and had fixed the land tax at the low figure of forty piastres to the feddan. This had resulted in a general enrichment of the population, and the fellahin, emancipated from their old condition of serfdom to the Circassian Pashas, were everywhere accumulating wealth. Egypt at the close of Saïd's reign had become not only the most prosperous province of the Ottoman Empire, but one of the most progressive agriculturally of the Eastern world. The revenue, though small in comparison to what it is now, probably not more than four millions sterling, was easily collected, and the expenses of administration were insignificant, while the public debt amounted to only three millions. It is true that in his later years Saïd had granted a number of concessions to European adventurers on terms which were becoming a heavy burden on the state, but the general wealth of the country was so large that this was not more than its light taxation could bear, and the Viceroy had at his disposal, when all yearly claims had been discharged, probably not less than a couple of millions for his free expenditure. Certainly there never had been an age in Egypt when the mass of the native inhabitants had been so materially prosperous; and to the fellahin especially it had come to be spoken of as, for them, the "age of gold." Ismaïl, when in 1860 he succeeded to the Viceroyalty, was without question the richest of Mohammedan princes and master of the most prosperous of Mohammedan states.

Ismaïl's character, before he became Viceroy, had been that of a wealthy landed proprietor managing his large estates in Upper Egypt according to the most enlightened modern methods. He was praised by nearly all European travellers for the machinery he had introduced and the expenditure he had turned to profit, and it is certain that he possessed a more than usual share of that natural shrewdness and commercial aptitude which distinguishes the family of Mohammed Ali. His succession to the Viceroyalty had been more or less a surprise to him, for until within a few months of Saïd's death he had not been the immediate heir, and his prospects had been only those of an opulent private person. It was perhaps this unexpected stroke of fortune that from the beginning of his reign led him to extravagance. By nature a speculator and inordinately greedy of wealth, he seems to have looked upon his inheritance and the absolute power now suddenly placed in his hands, not as

[1] Note. For a fuller and better account of the finance of that time serious students of Egyptian history should consult "Egypt's Ruin" by Theodore Rothstein published by A. C. Fifield, 13. Clifford's Inn, London, in 1910 with an introduction by me.

a public trust, but as the means above all things else of aggrandizing his private fortune. At the same time he was as inordinately vain and fond of pleasure, and his head was turned by his high position and the opportunity it gave him of figuring in the world as one of its most splendid princes. He was surrounded at once by flatterers of all kinds, native and European, who promised on the one hand to make him the richest of financiers, and on the other the greatest of Oriental sovereigns. In listening to these his own cleverness and commercial skill betrayed him, and made him only their more ready dupe. Ismaïl, before his accession, had been an astute money-maker according to the ways in which money was then made in Egypt, and he had had, too, a European education of the kind Orientals acquire on the Paris boulevards, superficial as regards all serious matters, but sufficient to convince him of his capacity to deal with the rogues of the Bourse with the weapons of their own roguery. In both directions he was led astray.

His first act of self aggrandizement was simple and successful. The revenue, which rested chiefly on the land tax, was low, and he raised it by progressive enhancements from the 40 piastres where he found it, to 160, where it has ever since stood. The country under his hand was rich and at first could afford the extra burden. Men gave of their superfluity rather than of their necessity, and for some years did so without complaint. This enhancement, however, of the revenue was only part of his rapacious program. His native flatterers reminded him that in the days of his grandfather the whole land had been regarded as the Viceroy's personal property, and that, moreover, Mohammed Ali had claimed and exercised for some years a monopoly of its foreign trade. Ismaïl schemed to revive these rights in his own person, and though he did not dare, in the face of European opinion, to commit any great acts of open confiscation in regard to the land, he gained to a large extent his ends by other means, and so rapidly that in a few years he managed to get into his own hands a fifth of the whole area of the cultivable land of Egypt. His method was by various means of intimidation and administrative pressure to make the possession of such lands as he desired to acquire a burden to their owners, and to render their lives so vexatious that they should be constrained to sell at prices little more than nominal. In this way he had, as I have said, possessed himself of an enormous property in land, and he doubtless thought that this was to prove to him a correspondingly enormous source of personal income. But his very covetousness in the matter proved his ruin. It was found in practice that while under his personal management as a comparatively small owner his estates had been well worked, and had brought him wealth, his new gigantic ownership laid him open to losses in a hundred ways. In vain he laid out enormous sums on machinery. In vain he laid whole villages and districts under contribution to furnish him forced labour. In vain he started factories on his estates and employed managers from Europe at the highest salaries. He was robbed everywhere by his agents, and was unable to gather from his lands even a fraction of the revenue they had brought in taxation when not his own. This was the beginning of his financial difficulties, coinciding as it did with the sudden fall in agricultural prices, and especially of cotton, which soon after set in, and it was the beginning, too, of the ruin of the peasantry, whom, to supply his deficiency, he now loaded with irregular taxation of all kinds. Ismaïl Sadyk, the notorious Mufettish, was his chief agent in this disastrous history.

It was not long, however, before Ismaïl fell into much more dangerous hands, and embarked in much more ruinous adventures than these early ones. To say nothing of the enormous sums which he poured out like water on his own private pleasures, of his follies of palace building, his follies with European women, and his follies of royal entertainment, there were schemes of ambition vast enough to drain the purse of any treasury. It is not known precisely how many millions he expended at Constantinople in procuring himself the Khedivial title, and in getting the order of the viceregal succession altered in favour of his son. But it must have been very many, while still more went in hair-brained schemes of speculation and in liabilities contracted towards European syndicates. Lastly, there was the conquest of the Upper Nile, and the attempted conquest of the kingdom of Abyssinia. To provide for all these immense expenditures loans had to be raised, at first on a small scale with local bankers and Greeks of Alexandria, and presently in more reckless fashion on the European

Stock Exchange. Here his worst counsellor and evil genius had been Nubar Pasha, the Armenian financier, who, by a strange inversion of ideas, has come to be regarded by a certain class of Egyptian opinion ignorant of history as an "Egyptian patriot." Nubar was, however, in fact, the one man who, more than any other after Ismaïl himself, was responsible for Egypt's financial ruin.[2] Commissioned by his master to find him money at any cost to meet his extravagant wants, he raised loan after loan for him in Europe on terms which realized for him hardly more than 60 per cent. of the capital sums he inscribed himself for as debtor, while he, Nubar, pocketed as commission several millions sterling. Of the ninety-six millions nominally raised in this way, it has been calculated that only some fifty-four reached Ismaïl's hands.

At the date which I am writing of the whole of this liability had not yet been incurred, but already the interest on the foreign debt amounted to four millions yearly, and to raise sufficient revenue to meet it and to carry on the administration and pay the huge expense of the Abyssinian war, the peasantry were being fleeced, as I have described, under pressure of the whip, of their last hoarded piastres. Those who talk lightly in these days of Ismaïl as a prince rather unfortunate than guilty, and to be pitied in some sort for the betrayal of the country financially to Europe, know nothing of the truth, nor do they realize the enormity of the ruin inflicted by his selfish folly on his fellah subjects. It has been calculated that the total cost of his reign to Egypt amounted to something like 400 millions sterling, nor is this in my opinion an exaggerated estimate, for it had gathered in the whole of the peasant savings of a number of prosperous years, and nearly the whole of their agricultural stock besides the public debt, and left them, moreover, indebted privately to the amount of something like twenty millions to the Greek and other local usurers.

Such had been the causes of Egypt's misfortunes as I learned them at Cairo in the spring of 1876. With regard to the origin of our financial intervention, it was certainly at that time Ismaïl's own foolish doing, and was not, as far as I know, prompted by any direct political motives in England. He most certainly applied to the English Government for financial assistance through Colonel Staunton in the autumn of 1875, and in a way that almost necessitated the assistance having a political character. His reason for choosing England rather than France as the recipient of his confidences was that at the time England was in a far better position financially to help him. The French Government was still crippled by the expense of the war with Germany of 1870, and was really unable to assist him in any effectual way, while, as I have already said, the friendship long existing between England and Turkey, and the abstention of Englishmen so far from commercial intrigues in Egypt had probably convinced him, in company with the general opinion of the Mohammedan East, that England was a non-aggressive power as far as the Ottoman Empire was concerned. Especially in the matter of the Suez Canal the French Government had become an object of suspicion, and it was therefore natural that when Ismaïl resolved to sell his shares in the Canal, it was to England rather than to France that he made the offer of them. I remember well the impression produced in England at the time. It was by no means one of general approval, and Disraeli was much blamed for involving the Government in a transaction which had almost necessarily political consequences. What is, I think, not generally known, at any rate in Egypt, is that the agreement to purchase the Khedive's share for four millions sterling was made not by the English Government collectively, for Lord Derby was averse to it, but on the personal responsibility of the Prime Minister who, without consulting his colleagues other than Lord Derby, they being absent from London, arranged with the London house of Rothschild to advance the money. What may have been in Disraeli's mind politically about it I do not know, but I am very sure that Lord Derby, who was then at the Foreign Office, had no idea connected with it of political aggression. Lord Derby was a man whose view of foreign policy was essentially one of non-intervention, nor had Disraeli as yet succeeded in indoctrinating his party with his own imperialistic ideas. The transaction, nevertheless, was one of evil augury for Egypt, and especially by reason of

[2] Note in correction as to Nubar's wealth *see* Appendix.

the part played in it by the Rothschilds. As will be seen later, the financial connection of this too powerful Hebrew house with Egypt was the determining cause, six years later, of England's military intervention.[3]

Mr. Cave's mission, which followed immediately on the purchase of the Canal shares, was without any question Ismaïl's doing also. The object in Ismaïl's mind, as is perfectly clear, when he asked for it, was still further to work the new mine of English political assistance he had discovered, with a view to further loans. He wanted to get some public testimonial, in the shape of a published report, in favour of his continued solvency, and so to re-open to him the European stock exchanges. It was for this purpose that he applied to Colonel Staunton for an English inquiry, and to a large extent he succeeded in his plan. Mr. Cave, who was chosen by the English Government for the inquiry, was a worthy and, I believe, quite disinterested man, but one who lacked experience of the East, and so was specially easy to deceive; he lacked also the fibre necessary for dealing quite courageously with all the facts. Ismaïl, like most spendthrifts, when it came to the point of showing his accounts, had always concealed a part of them, and, with the assistance of Ismaïl Sadyk, now gave a fanciful budget of his revenue, which Cave too readily accepted. He also allowed dust to be thrown in his eyes to some extent as to the misery of the fellahin. It was the Khedive's plan to surround distinguished financial visitors whom he desired to captivate with the show of great wealth. The mission was splendidly entertained and taken about everywhere by the Khedive's officers, who arranged things beforehand, and prevented as far as possible the nakedness of the land from being seen. Thus Cave's report, when it was published, gave only a partial truth. I think too that Cave might have insisted, if he had been of a stronger character, on the fact which lay at the bottom of all Egypt's financial difficulty, namely, that in justice, and indeed it might have been maintained in law, Ismaïl's debts were personal not public ones, and should have been so treated. Cave's weakness on this point was the beginning of the political intervention in favour of the bondholders, and his report led by a necessary logic to the recognition of Ismaïl's debt as a public obligation. Sir Rivers Wilson, who immediately followed him, though a far abler man, was equally inexperienced, and was at that time chosen, I believe, principally for his knowledge of the French language. I knew him intimately, and I knew also, but in a less degree, Cave; and I continued in correspondence with Wilson for some years and am well acquainted with all his Egyptian doings.

My last recollection that winter at Cairo is of a barbaric banquet offered by the Khedive to Mr. Cave and the members of his commission, to which I was by accident invited. It was given in the Viceregal Kiosque at the Pyramids, and was one of those extravagant entertainments Ismaïl was accustomed to dazzle European eyes with, nor was there anything wanting to point the contrast between the wealth of the entertainer and the poverty of those at whose expense it was really given. The table was spread for us literally under the eyes of a starving multitude of peasants, the very peasants Mr. Cave was there to save from ruin. Yet none of us seemed to feel the incongruity of it all. We feasted elaborately, and drank champagne of the best, and went our way, and it is only now that, with a better knowledge of the whole circumstances, I recall the real character of the scene and recognize it for what it in all verity was with its waste and surrounding misery, a true presentment of the twin causes of the coming revolution.

[3] Since this was written much new information with regard to the purchase of the Canal shares has been made public, modifying in some degree the account here given; the main facts however regarding the Rothschilds' connection with it and Disraeli's remain untouched.

CHAPTER II
SIR RIVERS WILSON'S MISSION

On leaving Cairo that spring of 1876 we paid our first visit to the confines of Arabia. It was then more the custom with European tourists than it is now to go on from Egypt into Syria by way of the desert, and we took once more to our camels and our tent life, and with the same Bedouins who had escorted us from Suez, crossed the Suez Canal and made a long tour through the Sinai peninsula and on by Akabah to Jerusalem. As we were strange to the country we passed through, and were still very ignorant of Arabic and had with us no dragoman, we got into some rather perilous adventures which are now amusing to recollect, though at the time they were disagreeable enough. It is perhaps worth recording as a curious accident of travel that as we were passing along the shore of the Gulf of Akabah, which is fringed in places with coral reefs, we had stopped to examine these and to admire the wonderful colours, purple, gold, and vermilion, of the innumerable little fishes which live in them. I was standing thus at the sea's edge, my gun, which I always then carried, in my hand, when I saw a great commotion in the water near me and suddenly, before I was well aware of the cause, a large shark, one of a shoal, leaving the rest came straight to where I stood and was already within a few yards of me before I understood what manner of fish it was or that I was the object of its attack. I had barely time to raise my gun when it turned, as these fishes do, on its side and rose half out of the water to take hold of me, and it was so near me when I fired that my charge of small shot killed it without the need of a second barrel, so that we were able, with the help of a lasso, to bring it high and dry on shore. It was a very large one, nearly ten feet long, and I do not doubt that if I had been a little more careless than I was I might have been carried from the rock into the sea by it. The incident brought home to me the danger which was once so common in Egypt for the fellahin from crocodiles in the Upper Nile, and I have been cautious in the matter of sea bathing ever since.

We fell into trouble, too, with certain Arabs on our way, through our ignorance of the rules and customs of the desert. When camped outside Akabah, we received a visit from Abunjad the well-known Sheykh of the Alawin, a branch of the Howeytat tribe, who had the customary right of escorting travellers to Petra, and whom we managed to offend, with the result that we ended by starting without escort or guides, our only native companions being two Arab boys who had followed us from Mount Sinai, and knew nothing of the northern country. With these we ventured north for Palestine, and presently ran short of water. The wells, when we by fortune found them, proved to be almost dry, and it was only after great hardships under a burning sun that we at last reached an Arab encampment. Things had become so bad for us one night that we had resolved that if at noon on the following day we should have still failed to find water we must abandon our baggage and push on on our best camels for our bare lives to the settled country. An hour, however, before the time agreed on, the happy sound of an ass braying told us that a camp must be near, and presently we spied an Arab child perched on a mound, and from him, under some compulsion of fear, got knowledge of their watering place. It was a beautiful pool of rain water in the hollow of a rock, and here we lay long and quenched our thirst and filled our goat skins. By good fortune it was, the men of the place, Azazimeh Arabs, were away or I doubt if we should have been allowed to take so liberal a share of this "Bounty of God," for they were in possession of the place and had sown a little barley field, as Bedouins often do on the Syrian frontier for the chance of rain, and this was all their drinking store till their corn should be ripe. Nor were they otherwise than justly angry on their return, and we had to watch all night for fear of an attack. It was not till morning that they came with shouts and menaces, but we had already loaded our camels, and being well armed held on our way. Knowing the ways of Bedouins better now, I feel sure that we need not thus have quarrelled with them, and that with a little explanation and payment for our disturbance of their rights they would have received us well.

But as it was, we were within a hair's breadth of a serious misadventure, and deserve to be thankful that the following day we at last reached the grass lands between Hebron and Gaza. Here the more settled Arabs gave us a good reception, and having made friends with them the memory of our past danger was soon forgotten. This ended our travels for that year, and from Jerusalem we returned in the early summer by the ordinary sea route to England.

The winter of 1877-8 saw us again in the East, this time with a larger program of adventure. We visited Aleppo, and passed down the Euphrates to Bagdad, and on our return journey made acquaintance with the great Bedouin tribes of Mesopotamia and the Syrian Desert south of Palmyra. We began now to know something of the language, and to understand the customs of the Arabs, and made no more mistakes of the kind I have just described. For this we were largely indebted to the wise counsels of the then English Consul at Aleppo, Mr. Skene, who had had a large experience of Bedouins and their ways, and who taught us to approach them on their nobler side, and putting aside all fear to trust them as friends, appealing to their law of hospitality. The history of this most interesting and successful journey has been very fully written by my wife in her "Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates," in reality a joint work, in which my first political views in regard to Arabian liberty may be traced by those who care to seek them. My sympathy with the Arabs as against the Turks, with whom they were at chronic war, was the result of no pre-conceived idea, and still less of any political plan, but was caused by what I saw, the extreme misgovernment of the settled districts by the Ottoman officials, and the happiness of the still independent tribes. It was a time of much local disorganization. The Russo-Turkish war was in its last desperate throes at Kars and Plevna, and though our good wishes were all with the Moslem armies as against the invading Muscovites, the sight of the miserable Syrian and Mesopotamian villagers being driven in chains as recruits to the sea coast moved us to anger against the imperial government, an anger which the hatred everywhere manifested by the Arabs against the Turks daily intensified. It was impossible in those days of far worse rule than now for any one with the instinct of liberty to do otherwise than resent the Ottoman misgovernment of its Arabic-speaking provinces. It was a government of force and fraud, corrupt and corrupting to the last degree, where every evil engine was employed to enslave and degrade the people, where the Moslems were worse treated than the Christians, and where all alike were pillaged by the Pashas. The Turk in his own home in Asia Minor has a number of honest and manly virtues, but as a master in a subject land he is too often a rapacious tyrant. Every vilayet had been bought with money at Constantinople, and the purchasing Valy was making what fortune he could during his term of office out of those he was given to administer. The land of Bagdad, under Ottoman rule, we had seen turned into a wilderness, Damascus into a decaying city. Everywhere land was falling out of cultivation, and the Government, like a moral plague, was infecting the inhabitants with its own corruption. Can it be wondered at if, in view of these doings, we thought and spoke strongly, and, though our Government at the time was in open alliance with the Porte, our sympathies were with any scheme which might make the Arabian provinces independent of the Empire?

On my return to England I find a record that on the 14th of May, 1878, I was taken by my cousin, Philip Currie (now Lord Currie), who was then his private secretary and one of the highest officials at the Foreign Office, to see Lord Salisbury. Lord Salisbury had just accepted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and, though I knew nothing of it, must have been at the point of signing the famous secret treaty with the Sultan known as the Cyprus Convention, and our journey in Arabian lands had excited his interest to learn from me something about them. In answer to his questions I told him all my thoughts very frankly, and I remember especially suggesting to him the possible independence some day of Syria, and that it might join hands with Egypt against the common misgovernment of their Turkish rulers. To this, however, he by no means responded, saying that there could be no political connection between the two provinces of the Ottoman Empire, and that the case of each stood on a separate basis. He was more influenced by me, however, when I spoke unfavourably of the then much talked of Euphrates Valley Railway scheme, under English guarantee, in which I saw

a new danger to Arabian liberty, and I have reason to know that my arguments weighed with him to the extent that he shortly after refused all Foreign Office support to the enterprise, which has remained to this day abandoned. My conversation on this occasion left me with a high opinion of Lord Salisbury's intelligence on Eastern matters, and, though his view of them has never been mine, I have always preserved a strong feeling of his personal integrity, while it began a connection between us never intimate, but always friendly on his part. To the last he allowed me to write to him on these subjects, and though seldom agreeing he invariably responded to my occasional letters with more than the usual official courtesy.

Any hopes, however, that I may have had of persuading Lord Salisbury to my views about the Arabs were speedily dispelled by his attitude that summer at Berlin, when his policy was publicly proclaimed of guaranteeing to the Sultan the whole of his Asiatic dominions. The inner history of the Congress of Berlin as it affected Egypt is so curious, and at the same time so important, that it is necessary I should tell it here as I learned it soon after the events had happened.

It will be remembered that the terrible winter of 1877-8 witnessed the final scenes of the war between Russia and Turkey, and that the spring of the new year found the Czar's army at the gates of Constantinople. The same period had been one of extreme misery in Egypt. The Cave mission, whose arrival I had seen at Cairo, had been followed by other financial missions of less integrity, which had resulted in what was known as the Goschen-Joubert arrangement of the Khedive Ismaïl's debts, a truly leonine settlement, according to which the enormous yearly charge of nearly seven millions sterling had been saddled on the Egyptian revenue, an amount which could only be wrung out of the ruined fellahin by forcing them, under the whip, to mortgage their lands to the Greek usurers who attended the tax-gatherers everywhere on their rounds through the villages. The last two Niles had been very bad ones, and there had been famine in the land from the sea to Assouan. Many thousands of the villagers – men, women, and children – had died that winter of sheer hunger. There had been nothing like it since the beginning of the century. Under these circumstances it was clear that either the Khedive must go bankrupt or a reduction be made on the interest of his debts, the Goschen-Joubert arrangement being abandoned. The former course would have been the more equitable and by far the better one for the country, but in the foreign bondholders' interests this was put aside, and a final attempt was made by these, this time successfully, to secure the diplomatic intervention of the great Powers for yet another settlement between Ismaïl and his creditors. The moment was a favourable one as far as England was concerned, for it coincided with the resolve of the English Government, under Disraeli's guidance, to play a forward political game, and take the leading part in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire. Lord Derby, who so far had gone unwillingly with his chief in his new policy of imperial adventure, now would go no further with him and left the Foreign Office, and, as we have seen, was replaced by Lord Salisbury. It was the signal of a general diplomatic advance, not unaccompanied with menace. The British fleet was brought through the Dardanelles into the Sea of Marmora, the Russian army was overawed and prevented from entering Stamboul, and under pressure of the English demonstration a treaty of peace was hurriedly drawn up between the Czar and the Sultan, the treaty of San Stefano. On the side of Egypt, at the same time, an official Commission of Inquiry was appointed, which, though nominally international, was intended at the Foreign Office to be mainly an English one, my friend Sir Rivers Wilson being chosen as English commissioner. His appointment was, I believe, almost the first Lord Salisbury signed on taking the command in Downing Street.

It will also be remembered that two months later a secret convention was negotiated at Constantinople by our then Ambassador, Sir Henry Layard, a man of great ability and knowledge of the East, who had acquired the personal confidence of the still youthful Sultan, Abdul Hamid, in accordance with which the island of Cyprus was leased to England and a guarantee given to the Sultan of the integrity of all his Asiatic provinces in lieu of promises of reform to be enforced by the presence in Asia Minor of certain ambulant English consuls, military men, who were to give advice

and report grievances. The idea of the Cyprus Convention, certainly in the minds of Disraeli and Salisbury who signed it and of Layard its true author, was to establish informally but none the less effectually an English protectorate over Asiatic Turkey. The acquisition of Cyprus was in their view to be the smallest part of the bargain. The island was really of very little value to England as a *place d'armes*, and its selection for that purpose was due less to its fitness for the purpose than to a fantastic whim of Disraeli's, backed up by the roseate report of its potential wealth sent in by one of our consuls who had an interest in the island. Disraeli many years before, as a quite young man, had in his novel "Tancred" advanced half jestingly the idea of a great Asiatic empire under an English monarchy, and Cyprus was to be specially included in it as recalling the historic fact that our English king, Richard Cœur de Lion, had once been also its sovereign. The whole thing was a piece of romantic fooling, but Disraeli loved to turn his political jests into realities and to persuade his English followers, whom as a Jew he despised, in all seriousness to the ways of his own folly. The really important object aimed at by Layard in the Convention – and it was certainly his rather than Salisbury's, who was new to office and whose experience the year before at Constantinople had made him anything but a Turcophile – was to acquire the strategic control of Asia Minor, which it was thought might be effected through the ambulant consular posts it created. These were to supervise the civil administration in the provinces, and see that the peasantry were not too much robbed by those who farmed the taxes, and that the recruiting grounds of the Ottoman army were not depopulated by mismanagement. Thus the advance of Russia to the Mediterranean might, it was thought, be checked in Asia as their advance in Europe had been checked at San Stefano.

Looking back at the position now, with our knowledge of subsequent events, and especially of the Sultan Abdul Hamid's character, it seems strange both that the Sultan should have signed such a Convention which, if it had been carried out, would have put Asiatic Turkey as much into English military hands as Egypt is to-day, or that our Foreign Office should have believed in its success, and the epithet applied to it at the time by Gladstone, who denounced it as an "insane Convention," seems more than justified. It must, however, be remembered that as regards Abdul Hamid he had really no choice, with the Russian army still at his doors, but to accept the English alliance even if it should mean tutelage, and also that up to that point England had always proved a reliable and disinterested friend. Layard, on the other hand, was conscious of his personal ascendency at the palace, and he knew how great the prestige was in the Asiatic provinces of the English name. An English Consul in those days held a position of absolute authority with Valys and every class of Ottoman officials, and he may well have thought that this could be indefinitely extended. The honour of England was so great in all Turkish eyes, and her policy towards the Moslem Empire had been so sympathetic that no suspicion existed anywhere of her having selfish plans. Layard, too, was himself a believer in the Turks, and he may have had dreams of playing the part at Constantinople of *Maire du Palais*, which Lord Cromer has shown us an example of since at Cairo. Now, it is only astonishing that such English dreams should ever have been indulged in, or that by Moslems England's disinterestedness should ever have been trusted.

Lastly, it will be remembered that a month after the secret signature of the Cyprus Convention, the great European Congress of 1878 met at Berlin. It had been called together principally at Disraeli's instance, and was to be the most important meeting of the Powers since the Congress of Paris. Like the earlier Congress its special object was to determine the fate of European Turkey and of the Christian subjects of the Sultan, and on England's part to revise the treaty of San Stefano. On its success in this direction Disraeli had staked his whole reputation as a statesman. England had intervened, according to his showing, on the highest motives of policy as Turkey's best and most disinterested friend, and it was on her approval as such by the other great Powers that depended his political position at home no less than abroad. So vital, indeed, to Disraeli did success at the Congress appear, that he went himself to it as chief plenipotentiary, taking Lord Salisbury, who was still new to diplomacy, with him as a second ambassador, while Russia was represented by Prince Gortschakoff, France by M.

Waddington, and Italy by Count Corti, Prince Bismarck presiding as host over the whole august assemblage. I may add that Currie accompanied Lord Salisbury as *précis* writer on the occasion, and Lord Rowton, Disraeli.

The general proceedings of the Congress are of course well known, and I need not here describe them, but what has never been published is the following all important incident, of which, as already said, I learned the particulars some little time after it occurred. The Congress assembled on the 13th of June, and as the matters to be discussed were of the highest moment, and there was not a little suspicion of each other among the plenipotentiaries in regard to a possible partition of Turkey, it was proposed at the outset that a preliminary declaration should be made by each Ambassador affirming that his Government came to the Congress unfettered by any secret engagement as to the questions in dispute. This declaration Disraeli and Salisbury, who seem to have been taken by surprise, and were unprepared to make a clean breast of their secret doings with the Sultan, had not the presence of mind to refuse, and no less than the others formally agreed and gave their word to – it must be remembered that both were new to diplomacy. It may therefore be imagined how high a surprise it was, and scandal at Berlin when a few weeks later, 9th July, the text of the hidden Cyprus Convention was published in London by one of the evening papers. One Marvin, an Oriental traveller and linguist, but who had no official position at the Foreign Office, had been imprudently employed as translator and copyist of the Turkish text by Currie, and had sold his information for a round sum to the "Globe." The publication came as a thunderclap on our Embassy at Berlin, and though the authenticity of the text was promptly denied in London, the truth at Berlin could not long be concealed. Our two plenipotentiaries found themselves confronted with the unexplainable fact that they had perpetrated a gross breach of faith on their European colleagues, and stood convicted of nothing less than a direct and recorded lie. The discovery threatened to break up the Congress altogether. Prince Gortschakoff declared himself outraged, and he was joined in his anger on the part of France by M. Waddington. Both gave warning that they would withdraw at once from the sittings, and M. Waddington went so far as to pack up his trunks to leave Berlin. The situation was an ugly one, and was only saved by the cynical good offices of Bismarck, on whom Disraeli, as a fellow cynic and a man of bold ideas, had made a sympathetic impression. The German Chancellor, as "honest broker," brought about the following compromise, with which M. Waddington declared himself satisfied. It was agreed between the French and English plenipotentiaries:

1. That as a compensation to France for England's acquisition of Cyprus, France should be allowed on the first convenient opportunity, and without opposition from England, to occupy Tunis.

2. That in the financial arrangements being made in Egypt, France should march *pari passu* with England; and,

3. That England should recognize in a special manner the old French claim of protecting the Latin Christians in Syria.

It was in consideration of Disraeli's surrender on these three points that Waddington consented to remain at Berlin and join the other ambassadors in arranging the Balkan settlement, which eventually was come to more or less on the lines of the English proposals. The price thus paid to France by Disraeli of a province belonging to his ally the Sultan, it is curious to reflect, enabled that statesman to return a little later to London and claim a public triumph, with the famous boast in his mouth that he had brought back "peace with honour." A curious history truly, and deserving to be specially noted as marking the point of departure for England of a new policy of spoliation and treacherous dealing in the Levant foreign to her traditional ways. To the Cyprus intrigue are directly or indirectly referable half the crimes against Oriental and North African liberty our generation has witnessed. It suggested the immediate handing over of Bosnia to Austria. It helped to frustrate a sound settlement in Macedonia. It put Tunis under the heel of France, and commenced the great partition of Africa among the European Powers, with the innumerable woes it has inflicted on its native inhabitants, from Bizerta to Lake Chad, and from Somaliland to the Congo. Above all it

destroyed at a critical moment all England's influence for good in the Ottoman Empire. It embittered Moslem hearts against her in 1881 and 1882, and, as I will show, was a powerful factor in the more violent events of those troubled years in Egypt. Also it most certainly defeated its own end in Asiatic Turkey if England's co-operation in reform was really contemplated. The doings at the Congress opened the Sultan's eyes to the danger there might be in any English co-operation, and also beyond question hardened his heart to a policy contrary to English advice, and in which he has been only too successful, that of suppressing all liberty and self-government among his own Turkish subjects. To it the Liberal party at Constantinople owes more than to anything else its ruthless persecution, and it is even not too much to say that whatever woes have been inflicted on the Armenians have been caused by the false hopes raised at Berlin of their emancipation by England's moral help, a help her own immorality has made her powerless to give. The immediate effect in Egypt of the compromise come to with M. Waddington was the despatch of a telegram from Berlin to Wilson at Alexandria ordering him, much to his chagrin and surprise, to see that in all the financial appointments made in connection with his official inquiry, France should receive an absolutely equal share. It was, indeed, though unknown to Wilson at the time, the determining cause, a year later, of the Anglo-French condominium.[4]

Public affairs were in this position when in the autumn of that same year, 1878, I found myself once more upon my road eastwards. My journey of the winter before to Bagdad, and especially the success I had had in a matter much more interesting to me than any politics, the purchase and bringing safely home of the Arab mares which were to form the nucleus of my now well-known stud at Crabbet, had roused considerable interest and curiosity in England, and I had spent the summer preparing my wife's journal for publication, and it was now in the Press. We were not content, however, with this, and had made up our minds to a new expedition still more adventurous than any we had yet attempted, and were on our way back to Damascus, from which starting point we designed to penetrate into central Arabia and visit Nejd, the original home and birthplace of the Arabian horse. Our sea-voyage from Marseilles would touch at Alexandria, and it so happened that I found on board the Messageries steamer at Marseilles my friend Sir Rivers Wilson who had just been appointed Finance Minister in Egypt, and in his company we made the voyage. During the six days' passage I had ample opportunity to learn from him all that had happened during the past two years at Cairo, and the tale he told me of the condition of the country was a very terrible one. I remember well his account of that most dramatic of the many crimes of the Khedive Ismaïl, his murder of the Mufettish Ismaïl Sadyk, an act of treachery which more than any other alienated from the Khedive the allegiance, I will not say of his Egyptian subjects at large, for that he had already lost, but even of that group of slaves and servants by which he was surrounded.

Ismaïl Sadyk was an Algerian by birth but had come at an early age to Egypt, and had by his abilities risen in the viceregal service, his first connection with the Court having been, I believe, under Abbas I as a superintendent of his stud. Under Saïd and Ismaïl he had served in various official capacities and had made himself, as we have seen, Ismaïl's *âme damnée* in the work of extracting their last piastres from the fellahin. With all his cruelties to them – and he had shown inexhaustible ingenuity in devising means for their spoliation – he had maintained a certain honourable repute at

[4] I have given the story of the arrangement made with Waddington as I heard it first from Lord Lytton at Simla in May, 1879. The details were contained in a letter, which he showed me, written to him from Berlin, while the Congress was still sitting, by a former diplomatic colleague and have since been confirmed to me from more than one quarter, though with variations. In regard to the main feature of the agreement, the arrangement about Tunis, I had it very plainly stated to me in the autumn of 1884 by Count Corti who had been Italian Ambassador at the Congress. According to his account, the shock of the revelation to Disraeli had been so great, that he took to his bed, and for four days did not appear at the sittings, leaving Lord Salisbury to explain matters as he best could. He said there had been no open rupture with Waddington, the case having been submitted by Waddington to his fellow ambassadors, who agreed that it was one that could not publicly be disputed, "Il faut la guerre ou se taire." The agreement was a verbal one between Waddington and Salisbury, but was recorded in a dispatch subsequently written by the French Ambassador in London, in which he reminded the latter of the conversation held in Berlin, and so secured its acknowledgment in writing.See Appendix V. as to the Berlin Congress.

Cairo as an Arab gifted with the traditional virtue of generosity and a large liberality in spending the wealth he had acquired, and so as an old man was not unpopular. For the last few years of his life he had been Finance Minister, and to Ismaïl had always proved himself a devoted and faithful servant. Ismaïl had nevertheless betrayed him a few months before the time I am writing of basely to his death, and under circumstances so revolting that the Egyptian world, used as it was to crime in high places, had been shocked and confounded. The Khedive's motive had been the wholly base and selfish one of screening himself by casting upon his too faithful Minister the blame of certain frauds he had himself committed, and he had insured his silence by having the old man murdered almost in his own presence.

The details given me by Wilson were as follows: Ismaïl had been in the habit, in his dealings with the various European commissioners whom he had from time to time invited to inquire into his financial affairs, of concealing as far as was possible from them the extreme truth of his senseless extravagances, and with his Minister Ismaïl Sadyk's help had once more now, as on previous occasions, presented to the new official commission a false statement of his debts. The pressure, however, on him was severe, as the commission had received a hint, if I remember rightly, from Riaz Pasha, that they were being befooled on this point, and he, fearing that the whole truth would come out, and when the matter should be fully gone into by the commission his Minister might tell the facts, determined to be beforehand with him and make of him his scapegoat and victim. He took the execution of the deed into his own hands. It was his custom with his Minister, with whom he was on the closest possible terms of personal friendship, to call sometimes for the old man in the afternoon at the Finance Office and take him for a drive with him to Shubra or to one or another of his palaces; and so on this occasion he did, and, suspecting nothing, the Minister mounted with him and they drove together to the Jesireh Palace and there got down and entered. No sooner, however, were they inside than Ismaïl on some pretext left him alone in one of the saloons and immediately sent to him his two younger sons Husseyn and Hassan and his aide-de-camp, Mustafa Bey Fehmy, when the princes struck and insulted the unarmed Minister and hustled him on board one of the viceregal steamers which was lying with steam up beside the quay, and there, though not without a vigorous resistance, the old man was despatched. According to Wilson, the actual doer of the deed was Mustafa Bey, acting under the Khedive's order, and he added that the truth had been disclosed through the young aide-de-camp falling ill of fever soon after and telling it in his delirium. I have reason, however, to believe that as far as Mustafa's personal act went this was a mistake, though the rest of the facts have been fully confirmed to me, and that the Mufettish was handed over by Mustafa to Ishak Bey, in whose charge he perished, though whether at once or a little later is uncertain. Some say that Ismaïl Sadyk was thrown as many another had been thrown, with a stone tied to his feet into the Nile, others that he was conveyed alive as far as to between Waddy Halfa and Dongola and there strangled. All that is quite beyond dispute is that once on board the steamer he was never seen again alive, and that the steamer having gone up the river, it was some weeks later officially announced that the Mufettish was away in Upper Egypt for a change of air and ultimately that he had there taken to drink and died. It is also certain that Mustafa, a mild young man and unused to scenes of violence, and being himself, as the Mufettish was, of Algerine extraction, was so horrified at the *rôle* he had been ordered to play in it that he had a long and dangerous illness. It was this experience that a year later caused him to take the part he did against his master Ismaïl and ultimately to join Arabi in the earlier phases of the revolution of 1881-2. He is the same Mustafa Fehmy who has for so many years filled the office of Prime Minister in Egypt.

Of all these things we talked as we sat day after day on the deck of the Messageries steamer, and, especially, of course, of Wilson's own important mission as Ismaïl Sadyk's successor. Wilson's hopes at that time were high regarding his own administrative success, and he showed a keen appreciation of the responsibility of the charge he had undertaken of restoring Egypt to prosperity and rescuing the fellahin from their financial bondage, but he was also fully aware of the difficulties which lay

before him. The Khedive's character he had learned to understand, and he was prepared to find in him an astute and unscrupulous opponent. But he counted on his own *bonhomie*, tact, and knowledge of the world to be able to live on friendly terms with him, and to avoid what personal risks he might run. He relied too on his French education, for he had lived much at Paris, to preserve intact the dual character of the Anglo-French Ministry, of which he formed a part, and above all he relied on Nubar. In Nubar he reposed unlimited confidence, believing him to be a heaven-born Eastern statesman, and one devoted to English interests. He had, moreover, behind him, as he thought, the full support of the London Foreign Office, and what was perhaps even a stronger stay in Europe, the interest and power of the house of Rothschild. On this last he knew he could rely, for he had just persuaded them on his passage through Paris to advance that fatal loan of nine millions on the Khedivial Domains which was to bind them to the cause of European intervention whenever necessary on the part of the bondholders. To myself, who knew Wilson well, though I sympathized to the full with his humanitarian hopes and personal aspirations, there seemed to be certain elements of doubt in his position which did not augur altogether well for his success.

We parted at Alexandria in good hope that all would go well with him in a mission so much one of despair to a ruined state, but with misgivings. The difficulties before him we both guessed would be immense, and in spite of his excellent qualities of heart and head and his great *savoir vivre*, I had my fears for him. The event more than justified my forebodings, and in a shorter time than either of us could have thought possible.

Sir Rivers Wilson's brief career as Finance Minister in Egypt failed through many causes. It was of ill omen, I think, at the very outset that it should have commenced with a new and heavy loan, the proceeds of which it is difficult to find were put to any serious purpose. Errors of administration, too, there certainly were which inflicted great injustice on the people, and which, as will be seen later, prepared the way for a general discontent. It is not, however, necessary for me to go into these, for they are matters of notoriety to be found in the Blue Books. Wilson's excuse for them must be found in the fact that in all matters of internal policy he trusted absolutely for guidance to Nubar, and that he greatly overrated Nubar's power to deal with them. If Wilson had been more of a statesman and less of a financier he would not have blundered as he did into political difficulties which, with a little more experience of the arts of government, might have been easily avoided. Nubar was a weak reed on which to lean. As a Christian and an alien it was not difficult for one so astute as Ismaïl to rouse Mohammedan opinion against him, and when, thinking only of restoring the financial equilibrium, Wilson began a series of crude retrenchments among the native officials, a discontented class was at once brought into existence which gave the Khedive his opportunity of diverting the popular ill-will from himself to his Christian Ministers. What made it the more easy for him was that in these retrenchments no European salaries were cut down. The agreement with France had made it imperative that each Englishman employed in Egypt should be duplicated with a Frenchman, and Wilson did not dare touch one of them. Wilson, as holding the purse strings, had to bear the odium of all this.

Nor did he, in spite of his good intentions, succeed in relieving the peasantry in any way of their burdens. It was an essential part of his program that the Khedive should remain solvent, and that meant that the interest on the enormous debt should be punctually paid. The nine millions advanced by the Rothschilds went mostly in paying the more urgently immediate calls, and not a tax was reduced or a demand remitted. On the contrary, the *régime* of the whip went on, even more mercilessly than before, in the villages, and an additional terror was introduced into the agricultural situation by the institution, at great expense and most futilely carried out, of a new revenue survey, under English direction, which was interpreted as the prelude of a still enhanced land-tax. Lastly, the project, lightly suggested by Wilson, of rescinding the Moukabalah arrangement, which would have meant confiscation by the Government of landed property representing something like fifteen millions, disturbed every landowner's mind, and led to the belief that even worse things might be expected of the English

Minister than any they had suffered from his predecessors. It seems to me astonishing now with my better knowledge of Egypt that any one so intelligent and well meaning as Wilson undoubtedly was should have fallen into such errors, and I half suspect that some of them were suggested to him for his discomfiture by the Khedive himself. The climax of the Wilson-Nubar political unwisdom was reached when, without any arrears of pay being given them, the native army, including 2,500 officers, began to be disbanded. This put the alien Ministry finally into the Khedive's hands, and it was a chance Ismaïl did not throw away.

The history of the *émeute* of February, 1879, which overthrew the Nubar-Wilson Ministry, needs to be recounted here as it really happened, for the truth about it will not be found in any published history. The Khedive was, as we have seen, anxious to divert the popular hatred with which he was regarded in Egypt from himself to his new Ministers, and he was also most desirous of ridding himself of their tutelage. By an Act called the Rescript of 1878 he had abdicated his personal control of the revenue and the administration into their hands, and used as he was for eighteen years to absolute power in Egypt it irked him already to have lost it. He had only signed the Rescript as an alternative to bankruptcy, and this being averted he did not intend to stand by the letter of his bond. Being also an astute judge of character, he had seen at once the weakness of the Ministry, how Wilson and his French colleague, de Blignières, depended, in their foreign ignorance of Egyptian things, altogether on Nubar for their knowledge how to act, and also how helpless Nubar himself was as a Christian to rule a Mohammedan country.

Nubar was known to the Mohammedan official class as an Armenian adventurer, who had enriched himself as agent of the loan-mongers of Europe at the public expense, and to the fellahin as the author of the International Tribunals, an institution extolled by foreigners, but to them especially odious as having laid them more than any other agency had done in bondage to the Greek usurers. As these Courts were then administered in Egypt, a fellah who had once put his signature to any paper for money borrowed could be sued before foreign judges according to a foreign procedure and in a foreign language, without the smallest chance, if he was a poor man, of defending himself, or of showing, as was often the case, that the figures had been altered or the whole paper a forgery, and he might be deprived of his land and of all he possessed before he well knew what the claim made on him rightly was. Nubar was known especially for this, and was without following of any native kind or supported by any opinion but that of the foreign commercial class of Alexandria. It was therefore through Nubar that Ismaïl saw the new *régime* could be most easily attacked, and most surely reduced to impotence. All that was needed to overthrow it was a public native demonstration against the unpopular Christian, and this the discontent of the 2,500 officers cashiered and cheated of pay and pension made it a very easy matter to arrange.

Ismaïl's chief agents in getting up the *émeute* of February were Shahin Pasha, one of his own Court servants, and Shahin's brother-in-law, Latif Effendi Selim, who, as Director of the Military College, held a position specially advantageous for the purpose. By these a demonstration of the students of the college was arranged, which at the hour named marched through the streets of Cairo announcing their intention of demanding the dismissal of the obnoxious Ministry, and they were joined by the crowd and especially by such of the cashiered officers as chanced to be upon their way, and it was so arranged that they should arrive at the Government offices at the hour when the Ministers were about to leave it. There they found Nubar Pasha in the act of stepping into his carriage, and they insulted and assaulted him, Nubar's moustache being pulled and his ears boxed. A general popular demonstration followed, and presently the first regiment of the Khedivial Guard under its colonel Ali Bey Fehmy, which had been held in readiness, appeared upon the scene, and a little after the Khedive himself. A few shots were then fired over the heads of the demonstrators, and the Khedive having ordered them to their homes the crowd dispersed. The program, arranged beforehand with Ali Bey, had been successfully carried out, and the Khedive was able to claim of the English and French Consuls, to whom he immediately appealed, the necessity of Nubar's dismissal,

and to persuade them that but for his powerful intervention and authority with the people worse things would have happened. Nubar therefore was advised to resign, and a Moslem official of the Khedive's choosing, Ragheb Pasha, was allowed to be named Prime Minister in his place. With Ragheb, a special adherent of his own, at the Ministry of the Interior, Ismaïl knew that Wilson and de Blignières would be powerless to administer the country, and that their fall also must speedily follow.

Nubar having been thus successfully disposed of, Wilson's tenure of office as Finance Minister became, as the Khedive had calculated, all but impossible, and his fall was hastened by extraneous circumstances. Our then Consul-General in Egypt, Vivian (afterwards Lord Vivian and Ambassador at Rome) had been estranged from Wilson by a personal quarrel which had taken place between them, and when in his political difficulties Wilson appealed to him for support, the support was grudgingly given or altogether withheld. Wilson's final discomfiture soon followed; an incident, somewhat similar to that of February, was arranged in March at Alexandria, on which occasion he and his wife were hustled and hurt by the mob, and when Wilson laid his complaint before the Foreign Office it refused him any efficient backing for redress. He was advised, as Nubar had been, to resign, and, there being no other course left him, he retired from office and returned to Europe.

I have an interesting letter from Wilson of this date. Writing on 30th April, 1879, he says: "You will I daresay have heard that I have been upset by that little scoundrel the Khedive. He didn't quite have me assassinated, as you not without reason imagined might be the case, but he had me attacked in the street and very roughly handled, and now he has had the satisfaction of getting rid of me altogether, H. M.'s Govt., with their usual loyalty to their agents, having left me to my fate. Crepy Vivian is the cause and chief abettor of this sudden overthrow of arrangements which he was instructed specially to protect. Partly from jealousy, and a good deal from want of intelligence, with the addition of a great deal of vanity, he went at once into the Khedive's camp. His Highness, whose highest art of government lies in the disunion of the people he has to deal with, might reasonably have expected to make a split between Blignières and myself, or between one or both of us and Nubar, but in his wildest dreams he never could have hoped that the English Consul-General would become his toady and instrument for the overthrow of the Ministry imposed on him by an English Government… We leave on the 6th and shall get to London about the 15th. I am glad to be out of the place now. The whole thing is going to the devil. The country is pestilential with corruption. The French and English Governments seem afraid of acting, and for the moment the Khedive rides rampant and is bleeding the country to death. The smash cannot be delayed, but in the interval it is dreadful to think of the mischief and misery that are being worked."

CHAPTER III
TRAVELS IN ARABIA AND INDIA

While these important events had been happening in Egypt I had been away, still travelling with my wife on our new adventure in Central Arabia, far removed from all knowledge of them or of the affairs of the outside world.

On our way to Damascus, where we were to begin our serious campaign, we had stopped for some days in Cyprus, being curious to look at the new English possession, just acquired at the cost of so much scandal, which we found receiving its first lessons in English administration at the hands of Sir Garnet Wolseley. The island was still in its summer heat, no rain having fallen, and seemed to us little better than a dusty wilderness. We called on Wolseley at his government house at Nicosia, and found him making the best of a rather forlorn and very isolated position. In his talk with us he put as good a face as he could on the outlook of this latest "gem of Empire," but it was clear that in his professional mind the island had no great merit, and was rather in the nature of that gross of spectacles brought home from the fair we read of in the "Vicar of Wakefield." It was difficult, indeed, to see what use it could be put to, or how it could be made to pay its cost of management. Its acquisition had already begun to bring discredit to the English name, and it was generally spoken of, we found among the Mohammedans of Syria, as a *backshish* taken by England for services rendered to the Sultan.

At Damascus we met several interesting personages, among others the old hero of the Algerian war with France, Seyyid Abd-el-Kader, and that other in some ways hero, the ex-leader of the Turkish constitutional party, Midhat Pasha. My impression of the latter, much as I was inclined to sympathize with Mohammedan reform, was not favourable. Personally he was unimpressive, of no distinguished appearance, and with a certain boastful and self-assertive manner which suggested vanity as a leading characteristic. In a long conversation I had with him on the subject of Ottoman regeneration, I found his ideas shallow and of that commonplace European kind which so often in the East do service for original thought and depth of conviction. His ideas of reform for the Empire, and of the Syrian vilayet of which he had just been appointed Valy, as he expounded them to me, were wholly material ones, the construction of railroads, canals, and tramways, all excellent things in their way, but leaving untouched the real necessities of the administration and which, as he had no funds whatever at his disposal for public works, were in his own province quite illusory. Of the larger matters of economy, justice, and protection for the poor, he did not speak, nor did he show himself in the smallest degree in sympathy with the people of the province he had come to govern. Indeed, he was imbued with more than the usual Turkish contempt for everything Arabian, which he took no pains to conceal, and his avowed methods in dealing with the Bedouins were brutal in the extreme. This naturally repelled me. Nevertheless I cannot help regretting now that I did not make some effort at the time of his misfortunes to rouse public feeling in his favour in England, when such might have perhaps saved him from the terrible punishment he suffered at the Sultan's hands. I did not, however, at that time know all the facts, and it was only in 1884 that I learned, from a source on which I could rely, the true history of Midhat's trial on the false charge of murder brought against him three years before. This is so important a matter that I make no excuse for relating it here in detail.

It may be remembered that when I was at Constantinople in 1873 I had been cared for during a serious illness by Doctor Dickson, the then physician of the British Embassy, with whom I had formed a very pleasant intimacy. This worthy old man, who had already at that time been some thirty-five years in Turkey, had become thoroughly orientalized and possessed a wider experience and more complete knowledge of all things Ottoman than perhaps any other Englishman then living. He had, moreover, a loyal sympathy with the people among whom he had so long lived, and had retained with it a very high integrity and sense of old-fashioned English honour, which made him

the most capable and reliable witness possible in regard to events which had come under his notice. His evidence, therefore, on what I am about to relate may be considered as absolutely final on the matter it touches. In 1884 I was again at Constantinople, and it was then that he gave it me; and it seemed to me so important as a corrective to history that I at once on the day I heard it wrote it down. It is textually as follows:

"Nov. 3, 1884. Doctor Dickson was sent by the English Embassy to investigate the circumstances of Abd-el-Aziz' death; and he gave us a most precise account of all he had seen at the palace that day. The party of doctors consisted of a Greek, Marco Pasha, of an old Englishman who had been Lord Byron's doctor, and several others. They found the body in the guard house and examined it carefully. The Sultan was dressed in a silk shirt, such as the *caïquejis* wear, plain without stripes, and pink silk trousers. When stripped the body was found without scratch or bruise, 'the most beautiful body in the world,' with the exception of the cuts in the two arms on the inside where the arteries are. The cut on the left arm was deep to the bone and Dr. Dickson had put his finger into the wound. That on the right was imperfect and the artery was not severed. They were manifestly the cause of death. The other doctors were satisfied with this examination and went away; but Dr. Dickson and the other English doctor insisted upon taking the evidence of the Sultan's mother, and this was her account: Abd-el-Aziz had twice since his deposition tried to destroy himself, once by trying to throw himself down a well, once into the Bosphorus, but had been prevented; and the Sultana had been warned to give him no instrument with which he could effect his purpose. When therefore he had asked her for a mirror and scissors to trim his beard she had chosen the smallest pair she possessed, and thought it impossible he should harm himself with them. She occupied the room next to his, and there were always one or two girls on watch when she was not herself with him. It happened, however, that one afternoon he had ordered the girls out and bolted the door, saying he wished to be alone; and the girls did not dare disobey. But when half an hour was passed they came and told her, and at first she was not alarmed, but bade them wait at the door and listen. Then they came back and said they heard nothing, and at the end of the hour she herself went, followed by her women, and pushed the door open. They found the Sultan leaning on his side on the sofa dead in this position.

[Here in my journal is a sketch.]

"The sofa and the curtains of the room were of velvet, red on yellow ground. And Dr. Dickson's colleague examined the place and found the left arm of the sofa saturated with blood, and a great pool of coagulated blood on the floor beneath; also on the middle of the sofa a small mark of blood corresponding with the wound on the right arm, but though he examined carefully there was not a speck elsewhere than close to the sofa, so that it was impossible there could have been any struggle or murder. As the Sultana said: 'If he was murdered the murderer must have been myself, for I was in the next room and nobody else could have come near him.' At the trial of Midhat and the rest for murder, they produced a linen, not a silk, shirt, with a cut in the side as from a sword thrust, a pair of green or yellow trousers, and a fur dressing gown, not those which were on the corpse, and chintz covers of the sofa and chintz curtains sprinkled with blood, not those of the room where the body was found. Dr. Dickson had thereupon written a protest stating what he knew, and had given it to Lord Dufferin, begging him to have it handed as evidence to the President of the Court. But Dufferin would not interfere without instructions, and while he telegraphed, or pretended to telegraph, Midhat was condemned. Marco Pasha, he says, must have been induced to give the evidence he did. The story of men having been seen climbing in and out of the window was ridiculous, as it was so high from the ground the men must have broken their legs jumping out. Dr. Dickson is a very precise old gentleman, and the sort of witness whose evidence would be accepted by any jury in the world. I therefore entirely believe his account, improbable as at first sight it seems, that a Sultan should not have been murdered and should have committed suicide. Midhat and Damad died in chains at Taif

some months ago, having been starved to death. Midhat's end was hastened by a carbuncle, but he was none the less made away with. The Sheykh el Islam has also recently died there, who gave the *fetwa* authorizing Abd-el-Aziz' deposition. This act of terror has given Abdul Hamid the absolute power he now holds."

Another person of importance to my narrative whom we met that autumn of 1878 at Damascus was Sir Edward Malet, at that time Secretary of Embassy at Constantinople, and who was making a tour of Syria partly for his amusement, partly to gather information. During my diplomatic career I had served twice under his excellent father, and had been very intimate with his family and with himself from the days when we were both attachés, and I am therefore able to speak of his character, which has been strangely misunderstood in Egypt, from intimate personal knowledge. Malet was a man of fair ordinary abilities, gifted with much industry, caution, and good sense. Having been born, so to say, in diplomacy and put into the service by his father when he was only sixteen, he had had a thoroughly professional training, and, as far as the traditions and usages of his work went, he was an entirely competent public servant. He could write a good plain despatch, and one which might be trusted to say not a word more than his instructions warranted, and would commit his Government to nothing not intended. He had the talents which are perhaps the most useful under the ordinary circumstances of the service to which he belonged, prudence, reticence and a ready self-effacement, those in fact which should distinguish a discreet family solicitor, – and the duty of a diplomatist, except in very rare cases, is in no way different from that of a solicitor. Imagination, however, Malet had none, nor initiative, nor any power of dealing on his own responsibility with occasions requiring strong action and prompt decision. He was the last man in the world to lead an intrigue or command a difficult situation. Personally he was amiable, without being attractive, and he had retained a certain boyishness of mind which in his unofficial moments was very apparent. His industry was great and his conduct irreproachable. As a quite young man this was very noticeable. He always preferred his work, however little interesting, to any form of amusement, and even when on leave would spend his spare afternoons copying despatches with us in his father's chancery rather than be at the trouble of inventing occupation for himself elsewhere. I record this because he has been credited in Egypt with an ambitious and intriguing restlessness which was the precise opposite of his very quiet character. Neither in pleasure nor in work had he the smallest spirit of adventure. Otherwise it is possible that he might have accompanied us, as I proposed to him to do, to Arabia, but he was not one to leave the beaten track, and, though I interested him as far as I could in my more romantic plan, he preferred to follow the common tourist road, and so went on after a few days to Jerusalem.

Our own journey was a very different one, and proved to be of even more interest than I had anticipated. The full detail of it has been published both in English and in French, under the title "A Pilgrimage to Nejd," and so I will deal, with it here briefly. To narrate it in a very few words: we travelled by the Haj Road as far as Mezarib and from thence to the Jebel Hauran, where one of the Druse chiefs of the Atrash family provided us with a *rafyk* or guide, and so passed down the Wady Sirhán by Kâf to Jôf where Mohammed el Aruk, son of the Sheykh of Tudmor, who was with us, had relations. Thence, after some stay with these, we crossed the Nefud, a hazardous passage of ten days through the great sand desert to Haïl and, though we had no letters or introductions of any kind, were received by the Emir Mohammed Ibn Rashid, the then sovereign of independent Nejd, with all possible honour. Our quality of English people was a sufficient passport for us in his eyes, and the fact of our visits made the previous year to so many of the Anazeh and Shammar Sheykhs, rumours of which had reached him. By this time we had learned sufficient Arabic to be able to carry on a conversation, and we found him courteous and amiable, and exceedingly interested to hear all we had to tell him about the affairs of the great world from which Nejd is so completely shut off by the surrounding deserts. On matters which at all concerned Arabia he was curious to learn our opinion, and especially as to the characters of the various Bedouin Chiefs, his enemies or rivals. European politics interested him very little, and hardly more the politics of Constantinople or Egypt, for at that

time the Sultan, though Nejd was called at Bagdad a province of the empire, was in no way recognized by the Wahhabi Princes as their sovereign, and the only relations they had had with him for a century had been those of a hostile character. The recollection of Mohammed Ali's invasion of Nejd was still a living memory, and Midhat Pasha's more recent seizure of El Hasa on the Persian Gulf and his abortive expedition to Jôf were much resented at Haïl. It stood us in good stead with Ibn Rashid that we had come to him without the intervention of any Ottoman authority.

The result of this friendly visit to the capital of independent Arabia, with the view I obtained there of the ancient system of free government existing for so many centuries in the heart of that wonderful peninsula, was to confirm me in the enthusiastic feelings of love and admiration I already entertained for the Arabian race. It was indeed with me a political "first love," a romance which more and more absorbed me, and determined me to do what I could to help them to preserve their precious gift of independence. Arabia seemed to me in the light of a sacred land, where I had found a mission in life I was bound to fulfil. Nor do I think that I exaggerated the value of the traditional virtues I saw practised there.

By nearly all Orientals the Bedouin system of government is looked upon as little else than brigandage, and on the confines of civilization it has, in fact, a tendency to degenerate into such. But in the heart of Arabia itself it is not so. In Nejd alone of all the countries of the world I have visited, either East or West, the three great blessings of which we in Europe make our boast, though we do not in truth possess them, are a living reality: "Liberty, Equality, Brotherhood," names only even in France, where they are written up on every wall, but here practically enjoyed by every free man. Here was a community living as our idealists have dreamed, without taxes, without police, without conscription, without compulsion of any kind, whose only law was public opinion, and whose only order a principle of honour. Here, too, was a people poor yet contented, and, according to their few wants, living in abundance, who to all questions I asked of them (and in how many lands had I not put the same in vain) had answered me invariably, "Thank God, we are not as the other nations are. Here we have our own government. Here we are satisfied." It was this that filled me with astonishment and pleasure, and that worked my conversion from being an idle onlooker at the misfortunes of the Eastern world into one filled with zeal for the extension of those same blessings of liberty to the other nations held in bondage. Our journey back to the civilized but less happy world of Irak and Southern Persia, which we visited in turn in the following spring, only confirmed and intensified my conviction. How wretched a contrast indeed to Nejd were the lands of the Lower Euphrates, inhabited by the same Arab race, but a race demoralized, impoverished, and brutalized by Ottoman rule! How still more wretched Persian Arabistan! I cast about in my mind for some means of restoring them to their lost dignity, their lost prosperity and self-respect, and, for a moment, I saw in England's protection, if it could be given, a possible road for them to salvation. It was with ideas of this sort taking shape and substance in my mind that, after a most difficult land journey from Bagdad to Bushire on the Persian Gulf and thence by sea to Kurrachi, I found myself at last in India, where experiences of another kind were awaiting me and a new lesson in the economy of Eastern things.

My reason for going on to India, after the severe journey we had just made, was that on our arrival at Bushire we had found letters awaiting us from Lord Lytton, who had for many years been my most intimate friend, inviting us to pay him a visit at Simla. Lytton, of whose endearing personal qualities I need here say nothing, for I have already paid that tribute to his beloved memory, had been like myself in the diplomatic service, and I had served with him at Lisbon in 1865, and we had written poetry and lived together in an intimacy which had been since continued. Now in 1879 he had been a little over two years Viceroy in India, and at the time we arrived at Simla was just bringing his first Afghan campaign to a successful conclusion, and he signed the Treaty of Gandamak in the first month of our staying with him. Lytton, who was a man of very superstitious temperament, though a rationalist in his religious beliefs, spent much of his spare time during the war, hard worker though he was, in making fire-balloons which he launched at intervals, arguing from their quick or

slow ascensions good or bad fortune to his army. Not that he allowed such results to decide his action, for he was a steady worker and sound reasoner, but it soothed his nerves, which were always highly strung, to have these little intimations of a supernatural kind in which he persuaded himself half to believe. He connected my coming to Simla with the good turn the war had taken, and looked upon me as a fortunate influence as long as I was with him. He made me the confidant of all his thoughts, and from him I learned many interesting things in the region of high politics which I need not here particularize, though some of them will be found embodied in this memoir. With my Arabian ideas, as a man of romance and a poet, he at once professed his sympathy, and gave instructions to Sir Alfred Lyall, who was then his Foreign Secretary, to talk the matter over with me and give me all possible information.

The Indian Government was at that time not at all disinclined to make a forward movement in the Persian Gulf. There had been for many years past a kind of protectorate exercised by the Indian Navy of the Arabian seaports, a protectorate which, being rigidly restricted to the prevention of piracy and quarrels between the tribes at sea without any attempt at interfering with them on shore, had been wholly beneficent, and the recent assertion of the Ottoman claim to sovereignty over them was resented at Calcutta. The Sultan Abdul Hamid too had already begun to alarm our authorities by his Pan-Islamic propaganda, which it was thought was affecting the loyalty of the Indian Mohammedans. Ideas, therefore, of Arab independence were agreeable to the official view, and Sir Alfred Lyall reported well of mine to Lytton, so well that there was a plan half agreed to between us that I should return the following winter to Nejd and should be the bearer of a complimentary message from the Viceroy to Ibn Rashid. I am glad now, with my better knowledge of the ways of the Indian Government, that this proposal led to no practical result. I see plainly that it would have placed me in a false position, and that with the best will in the world to help the Arabs and serve the cause of freedom I might have made myself unconsciously the instrument of a policy tending to their subjugation. It is one of the evils of the English Imperial system that it cannot meddle anywhere among free people, even with quite innocent intentions, without in the end doing evil. There are too many selfish interests always at work not to turn the best beginnings into ill endings.

These matters, however, were not the only ones I discussed with Lytton and his subordinates. Sir John Strachey, his finance minister, put me through a course of instruction on Indian finance and Indian economics, the methods of dealing with famines, the land revenue, the currency, the salt tax, and the other large questions then under discussion – Strachey being the chief official advocate of what was called the forward policy in public expenditure – and with the unexpected result that my faith, up to that moment strong in the honesty of the Indian Government, as the faithful guardian of native interests, was rudely shaken. The following extracts from letters written by me at the time from Simla will show how this short glimpse of India at headquarters was affecting me: "I am disappointed," I wrote, "with India, which seems just as ill-governed as the rest of Asia, only with good intentions instead of bad ones or none at all. There is just the same heavy taxation, government by foreign officials, and waste of money one sees in Turkey, only, let us hope, the officials are fools instead of knaves. The result is the same, and I don't see much difference between making the starving Hindoos pay for a cathedral at Calcutta and taxing Bulgarians for a palace on the Bosphorus. Want eats up these great Empires in their centralized governments, and the only way to make them prosper would be to split them up and let the pieces govern themselves." Also to another friend, Harry Brand, Radical Member of Parliament, now Lord Hampden, "The *natives*, as they call them, are a race of slaves, frightened, unhappy, and terribly thin. Though a good Conservative and a member of the Carlton Club I own to being shocked at the Egyptian bondage in which they are held, and my faith in British institutions and the blessings of British rule have received a severe blow. I have been studying the mysteries of Indian finance under the 'best masters,' Government secretaries, commissioners, and the rest, and have come to the conclusion that if we go on *developing* the country at the present rate the inhabitants will have, sooner or later, to resort to cannibalism, for there will be nothing but each

other left to eat. I do not clearly understand why we English take their money from these starving Hindoos to make railroads for them which they don't want, and turnpike roads and jails and lunatic asylums and memorial buildings to Sir Bartle Frere, and why we insist upon their feeding out of their wretched handfulls of rice immense armies of policemen and magistrates and engineers. They want none of these things, and they want their rice very badly, as anybody can see by looking at their ribs. As to the debt they have been saddled with, I think it would be honester to repudiate it, at least as a Debt on *India*. I never could see the moral obligation governments acknowledge of taxing people for the debts they, and not the people, have incurred. All public debts, even in a self-governing country, are more or less dishonest, but in a foreign despotism like India they are a mere swindle."

On the whole, this brief visit to India at headquarters had considerable influence with me in the shaping of my ideas on the larger questions of Imperial policy, and giving them the direction they afterwards took. I still believed, but with failing faith, in the good intentions, if no longer in the good results, of our Eastern rule, and I thought it could be improved and that the people at home would insist upon its being improved if they only knew.

One of my last recollections of my two months' stay with Lytton at Peterhoff, as the Viceregal residence was then called at Simla, was of a dinner at which I sat next to Cavagnari the evening before he set out on his fatal mission to Kabul. He was an interesting man, the grandson, so he told me, of a Venetian merchant who, when the French Republican army occupied Venice, lent a large sum of money to Bonaparte, which was never repaid. The Emperor, however, rewarded him by making his son his private secretary, who became a devoted adherent of the Imperial family. Lewis Napoleon Cavagnari, the grandson, was also a strong Bonapartist, and believed himself, on account of his name, to have before him a very high destiny. He had faith in his "star," and I can testify that in his talk to me that night – and it was long and intimate – the last thing he seemed to think of was failure or danger in his mission. Yet only a few days before he must have had an admonition in the tragic news, of which we also talked, of the Prince Imperial's death in South Africa. When we parted it was with an engagement on my part and on my wife's that we would go in the autumn to visit him at Kabul. "You must not come, however," he said, "before the autumn, because I shall not have got the Residency comfortable or fit to receive ladies." Of any more dangerous reason he gave us no kind of hint.

Another acquaintance at that time with whom a tragic history is connected was Colley, then Lytton's military secretary, who the year following was to die on Majuba Hill. Lytton had the highest possible opinion of his military talents, and between them they had in large measure directed the Afghan campaign from Simla. His fault was, I think, too great self-confidence and too much ambition. He occupied Majuba because he could not bear to let the campaign end without gaining some personal success. Melgund again, who is now Lord Minto, Pole-Carew, and Brabazon, Lytton's aides-de-camp, were all three, with Lord Ralph Kerr, among our friends of that time, and Plowden and Batten, the husbands of their two fair wives. We made the voyage back from Bombay in Melgund's company and that of Major Jack Napier, leaving India on the 12th of July in full monsoon and arriving at Suez on the 25th, and on the same day by train to Alexandria.

I think it was at Aden, as we passed it to the Red Sea, that we learned the great news of the day in Egypt, the deposition of the Khedive Ismaïl, a subject to us of great rejoicing, and no sooner had we arrived at Alexandria than I learned the full details of his share in the affair from that other intimate friend of my diplomatic days, Frank Lascelles, whom I found acting Consul-General at the British Agency. What he told me does not differ much from the account of it officially published, and I need not repeat it here. What, however, is not generally known is the part played in it by the Rothschilds, which Lascelles did not at that time know but which I heard later from Wilson. Wilson, indeed, was able to boast that through these he had had his full revenge. On his return, he told me, from Egypt, crestfallen and abandoned by his own Government, he had gone straight to the Rothschilds at Paris and had represented to them the danger their money was running from the turn affairs had taken at Cairo and Alexandria. The Khedive intended to repudiate his whole debt and to shelter himself in

doing so by proclaiming Constitutional government in Egypt. If they did not prevent this, all would be lost. He thus succeeded in alarming the Rothschilds and in getting them to use the immense political influence they possessed in favour of active intervention. At first, however, they had pulled the strings both at Downing Street and on the Quai d'Orsay in vain. The English Government was no longer in an intervening mood, trouble having broken out for them in South Africa; and at Paris, too, there was an equal unwillingness. In despair for their millions the Rothschilds then made supplication at Berlin to Bismarck, who ever since his Frankfort days had extended a certain contemptuous protection to the great Hebrew house, and not in vain. The French and English Governments were given to understand by the then all-powerful Chancellor that if they were unable to intervene effectively in Egypt in the bond-holders' interests the German Government would make their cause its own. This settled the matter, and it was agreed that, as the least violent form of intervention, the Sultan should be applied to to depose his too recalcitrant vassal. To the last moment Ismaïl refused to believe that the Porte, on which he had lavished so many millions and was still appealing cash in hand – for he had hidden treasures – would desert him. The pressure from Europe was too great. Wilson claims to have had the question of Ismaïl's successor submitted to him as between Halim, whom the Sultan much preferred, and Tewfik, and to have decided in favor of the latter as being known to him to be of weak character and so the more convenient political instrument. But be that as it may, the fatal telegram was despatched conveying to Ismaïl the news of his fall, and that his Viceregal functions had passed away from him to his son. It had been Lascelles' disagreeable duty to convey the news to the old tyrant of eighteen irresponsible and ruinous years. True to his rapacious habit, his last act had been to deplete the treasury of its current account and to gather together all the valuables he could anywhere lay hands on, and so retire to his yacht, the "Mahroussa," with a final spoil of his Egyptian subjects amounting, it is said, to three millions sterling. Nobody had cared to hinder him or inquire, or bid him stay even for an hour.

CHAPTER IV
ENGLISH POLITICS IN 1880

Cavagnari's tragical death at Kabul, which took place before the summer of 1879 was over, a disaster which involved Lytton in a new war and endless political trouble, effectually ended any projects we had made of fresh travel for that year, either in Afghanistan or Arabia. I spent, therefore, a full twelve months in England, the busiest as yet in some ways of my life. Up to that date, though I was now in my fortieth year, I had not only taken no public part in politics, but I had never so much as made a speech to an audience or written an article for a review, or a letter to a newspaper. Constitutionally shy in early life I had shrunk from publicity in any shape, and the diplomatic training I had had had only aggravated my repugnance to being *en évidence*. Diplomacy, whether it has or has not anything to hide, always affects secrecy and entertains a distrust of public speaking and an extreme jealousy of the indiscretions of the Press. Now, however, having persuaded myself that I had a mission in the Oriental world, however vague and ill defined, I began to talk and write, and even overcame my timidity to the extent of appearing once or twice upon a platform. The first occasion on which I ever thus spoke was at a meeting of the British Association at Sheffield on the 22nd of August, to which I was invited as a distinguished traveller in the company of M. Serpa Pinto, M. de Brazza, and Captain Cameron, all of African fame, and where I opposed Cameron's advocacy of a Euphrates Valley Railroad. I was able to speak on this matter with more authority than he, for, though he had gone out with much beating of drums the year before to explore the route, he had turned back from the difficult part of it – that which lay between Bagdad and Bushire – while we had made the whole route from sea to sea; and I followed up my opposition in an article on the same subject, the first I ever wrote, in the "Fortnightly Review." John Morley was at that time editor of the "Fortnightly," and I had an introduction to him from Lytton, and managed to interest him in my Eastern ideas. Both these little ventures with speech and pen brought me credit and encouraged me to do more in the direction of what was now my propaganda. I was busy too with poetry; and, again, I had my wife's book of travels, "A Pilgrimage to Nejd," to arrange and edit. The multiplied work occupied me fully all the winter.

With home politics I troubled myself not at all, though it was a time of crisis, and Gladstone, with the General Election of 1880 at hand, was in the full fervour of his Midlothian preaching. My sympathies, as far as England was concerned, were still rather with the Tories, and on Oriental questions I looked upon Gladstone, little as I loved the Turks, as an ignoramus and fanatic. My personal friends, with the exception of two or three, Harry Brand and Eddy Hamilton, were all Tories, and my love for Lytton covered in my eyes the worst of Disraeli's Imperial sins. I clung to the thought that England in the East might yet, through the Cyprus Convention properly interpreted, be made an instrument for good, and I was swayed backwards and forwards in regard to her Imperial position by opposing hopes and fears. It was not till I had cleared my thoughts by putting them into print that I gradually came to any settled plan. One great pre-occupation, too, I had that year in the establishment of my stud of Arab horses at Crabbet, about which I was in constant correspondence with the world of sport, including a public one with the Jockey Club. Curiously enough, it was in connection with my views on horseflesh that I first came into epistolary communication with Mr. Gladstone. His well-known hobby about ancient Greece had made him curious to learn my opinion about the horses of antiquity, and especially the probable breeding of those of Greece and Troy; and a message was conveyed to me through Mr. Knowles, the editor of the "Nineteenth Century Review," asking a memorandum on their genealogy. This, and the accident of his naming Edward Hamilton, with whom I was intimate, his private secretary when he took office in April in succession to Disraeli, were the links which led to our correspondence later on Egyptian affairs.

A few extracts from a fragmentary journal I began to keep in 1880 will show the chaos of ideas, literary, social, and political in which during that year, I lived. The extracts are only such as have some relation to Eastern affairs, and I find them embedded in a mass of notes recording events of private and ephemeral interest no longer of any value. The first gives a picture of Lord Stratford de Redcliffe, for so many years our Ambassador at Constantinople, and who was now living in retirement and extreme old age with his two daughters on the borders of Kent and Sussex:

"*March, 1880.*– A visit to Lord Stratford de Redcliffe at Frant. Lord Stratford has given me a paper on reforms for Turkey, which he is thinking of sending to the 'Times,' and I read it in bed. It is an old man's work, rambling and vague, with hardly an occasional touch of vigour. Old men should write nothing but their recollections, and Lord S. is ninety-four. A wonderful old man, nevertheless, with a countenance of extreme benignity, a complexion of milk and rose leaves, clear blue eyes, and hair as white as snow. Though rather deaf, he still talks well. I wrote him in return a memorandum with my ideas for Asiatic Turkey, and later spent the morning with him listening to his old-world recollections. He was *Chargé d'Affaires* at Constantinople when Byron passed through on his Childe Harold journey, and had ridden with him every day for six weeks. Byron had been very agreeable, and there was nothing at that time *scabreux* in his conversation. He had also (before that) in 1805 met him at Lord's Cricket Ground at the Eton and Harrow match, both of them playing in the elevens on opposite sides. Byron played cricket 'as well as could be expected considering his infirmity.' He, Lord S., had never been willing to think there had ever been anything really wrong between B. and Lady Caroline Lamb. The impression Lord S. gives me is one of extreme kindness, gentleness, and benignity, quite foreign to his reputation. I had rather sit listening to these old-world confessions than to the talk of the prettiest woman in London."

"*March 16.*– Breakfasted with Rivers Wilson and discussed Colonel Gordon's character. All the world is agreed about his being a very wonderful man. He has ruled the Soudan for four years single-handed, and has repressed the slave trade completely. Now he comes home to England and nothing is done for him. Neither Lord Beaconsfield nor any of the Ministers will so much as see him. He made a mistake at starting (in his relations with them). Passing through Paris (on his way home) he called on Lord Lyons (at the Embassy), and begged him to see to the appointment of a European successor to himself in the Soudan, and in the course of conversation held out the threat that, if the English Government would not do this, he would go to the French Government. Whereupon a correspondence ensued with Lord Lyons, in which Gordon wrote a last very intemperate letter ending in these words: 'I have one comfort in thinking that in ten or fifteen years' time it will matter little to either of us. A black box, six feet six by three feet wide, will then contain all that is left of Ambassador, or Cabinet Minister, or of your humble and obedient servant.' This has stamped him (in official eyes) as a madman. Now he has left Europe, shaking the dust off his feet, for Zanzibar."

This little anecdote is very characteristic of Gordon and is in harmony with much of his correspondence, four years later, with Sir Evelyn Baring. Our officials always detested him, for he habitually violated the rules of their diplomacy and the conventions of their official intercourse. Some thought him mad, others that he drank, and others again that he was a religious fanatic who, when he was in doubt between two courses, consulted his Bible for an oracle, or as a last solution "spun a coin." Not one of them understood or trusted him. At the moment of which I am writing, the early spring of 1880, he was very angry with the English Government for the part it had taken in deposing Ismaïl. Gordon for some reason or other liked Ismaïl, and hated his successor Tewfik, and as soon as he learned at Khartoum what had happened, he had thrown up his Governorship, and was now especially angry because a Turkish pasha, and not a European, had been appointed in his place. Gordon was a man of genius, with many noble qualities, but he was also a bundle of contradictions, and the officials were probably right when they looked upon him as not being at all times quite of a sound mind. This, as will be seen, was the official opinion even at the very moment of his being charged at the Foreign Office with his last mission to Khartoum.

The following, too, of the same date, 16th March, is interesting: "Called on Cardinal Manning. Our conversation was on politics. He asked me which way I should vote at the Elections. I said, 'I should vote only on one consideration, a £5 note,' *Cardinal*: 'You mean you will not vote at all?' *I*: 'I can get up no interest in these things. I look upon European civilization as doomed to perish, and all politics as an expedient which cannot materially delay or hasten the end.' *Cardinal*: 'I take the same view, though probably on different grounds. Europe is rejecting Christianity, and with it the reign of moral law. The reign of force is now beginning again, as in the earliest ages, and bloodshed and ruin must be the result. Perhaps on the ruins the Church may again build up something new.' Talking of Asia, he said that Ralph Kerr had told him that the inhabitants of India attributed the mildness of our rule to fear. They respect the Russians because they govern by military law. *I*: 'The Russians are Asiatics. They govern in the Asiatic way – by fraud if possible – if not, by force. This Asiatics understand.' *Cardinal*: 'The Russians, as you say, are Asiatics; and I will tell you more: their Nihilists are Buddhists. Nihilism is a product not of the West, but of the East.'"

The General Elections, it must be remembered, of 1880 were fought to a very large extent on questions of Eastern policy. Gladstone in his Midlothian campaign had attacked with tremendous violence the whole of Disraeli's scheme of imperial expansion, and had denounced as grossly immoral his intervention at Constantinople and Berlin in favour of the Turks, his acquisition of Cyprus, his purchase of the Suez Canal shares, and his aggression on Egypt – as also Lytton's two Afghan campaigns and the Boer War still raging in South Africa. With regard to Egypt, Gladstone had as long before as the year 1877 made known his views in print, and in an article in the August number of the "Nineteenth Century Review" of that year, "Aggression on Egypt and Freedom in the East," had declared himself in the clearest and strongest terms opposed to the undertaking by England of any form of responsibility on the Nile. This article is so remarkable and so wonderfully prescient of evils he was himself destined to inflict upon Egypt that it deserves quoting. He objects in it to such aggression on various grounds: first, as increasing England's burden of Eastern rule, already too great; secondly, because extensions of imperial rule can only be effected by immoral means; thirdly, as regarded Egypt, that the pretence of protecting the route to India by occupying the Nile Valley was a false one, the route by the Cape of Good Hope being England's true line of communication; and, fourthly, because intervention of any kind, whether on the Suez Canal or at Cairo, must inevitably lead to farther and farther adventures in Africa. "Our first site in Egypt," he writes, "be it by larceny or be it by emption, will be the almost certain egg of a North African Empire that will grow and grow till another Victoria and another Albert, titles of the lake sources of the White Nile, will come within our borders, and till we finally join hands across the Equator with Natal and Cape Town, to say nothing of the Transvaal and the Orange River on the south or of Abyssinia or Zanzibar to be swallowed by way of *viaticum* on our journey – and then, with a great empire in each of the four quarters of the world … we may be territorially content but less than ever at our ease." He had made also a plea for the continuation of Mohammedan self-government at Cairo. "The susceptibilities which we might offend in Egypt," he says, "are rational and just. For very many centuries she has been inhabited by a Mohammedan community. That community has always been governed by Mohammedan influences and powers. During a portion of the period it had Sultans of its own. Of late, while politically attached to Constantinople, it has been practically governed from within, a happy incident in the condition of any country and one which we should be slow to change. The grievances of the people are indeed great, but there is no proof whatever that they are incurable. Mohammedanism now appears in the light of experience to be radically incapable of establishing a good or tolerable government over civilized and Christian races; but what proof have we that in the case of a Mohammedan community, where there are no adverse complications of blood or religion, or tradition or speech, the ends of political society, as they understand them, may not be passably obtained." Lastly, he had foreseen the quarrel which an attempt by England to seize Egypt would create with France: "My belief is that the day which witnesses our occupation of Egypt will bid a long farewell to all cordiality of political relations

between France and England. There might be no immediate quarrel, no exterior manifestation, but a silent, rankling grudge there would be like the now extinguished grudge of America during the Civil War, which awaited the opportunity of some embarrassment on our side and on hers of returning peace and leisure from weightier matters. Nations have long memories." He had ended his article by a solemn warning and an appeal to the hand of the Most High to confound the intrigues of Cabinets, and secure the great emancipation of the East. "No such deliverance," he concludes, "has for centuries blessed the earth. We of this country (England) may feel with grief and pain that we have done nothing to promote it. Whatever happens, may nothing still worse than this lie at our door. Let us hope … that to abdicate duty we may not have to add a chapter of perpetrated wrong."

With these noble declarations, reiterated in a score of speeches during the Election campaign of 1880, I could not but be in sympathy, had it been possible to take them as quite sincere or as representing a policy intended by the Liberal Party to be carried out when they should be in office. But Gladstone did not at that time inspire me with any confidence, and between Whigs and Tories there seemed to me to be but little difference.

"*March 20.*– John Pollen (then private secretary to Lord Ripon) dined with us. We talked of the Elections and agreed there was not much to choose between Whigs and Tories. I shall not vote. Though Lord Salisbury's policy is less contemptible than Lord Granville's or Gladstone's, it is coquetting too much with the Germans to please me. To bring Germany down to Constantinople would be a greater misfortune than anything Russia can accomplish."

"*April 6.*– Paris (the Elections being over and having resulted in a large Liberal majority). Godfrey Webb and I breakfasted with Bitters (my cousin Francis Gore Currie), and I then went to the Embassy. Sheffield (Lord Lyon's private secretary) very important about the new Liberal Government – what he said to Hartington, and what Granville said to him. Though I abstain from politics, I confess I think the Gladstonian triumph a great misfortune. They are so strong now that we shall have all sorts of experiments played with our British Constitution. The game laws, the land laws, and all the *palladiums* will be dismantled. Our policy in Asia will suffer. The Whigs know nothing of the East and will be afraid to reverse the Tory policy, and afraid to carry it logically out. They will try to reform Turkey, and, finding it impossible, will lose their temper and very likely drift into a war. Personally the change is annoying to me, as now Lytton will resign with the Ministry and we shall be baulked of our Indian visit next winter. But all these things are trifles in the march of history."

"*April 9.*– (Still at Paris.) A letter from Anne full of politics… 'Hartington is to be Premier, Goschen Admiralty, and Gladstone finance … nothing in the foreign policy will be changed! Cyprus kept, Russia thwarted, and Turkey administered from Gallipoli… Lord Ripon does not know his *own* place, if any. I hear Mme. de Novikoff[5] still described as the Egeria of Gladstone.'… Dined with Adams (first secretary of the Paris Embassy) and met there Rivers Wilson, who goes to-morrow to Egypt with Dicey, and Arthur Sullivan the composer – all pleasant company." (This was Wilson's final mission in which he arranged the law of liquidation.)

"*April 26.*– Home to England, where Gladstone is the talk of the hour. He has taken office (as Prime Minister) and has surrounded himself with ineptitudes, Childers, Bright, Granville! Hartington, who is a good second-rate man, takes the India Office and Ripon goes to India. This last arrangement is a secret."

Lord Ripon's appointment to India as Viceroy was the only quite sincere attempt made in foreign policy by Gladstone to carry out in office what he had preached when in opposition. Ripon was a thoroughly honest man, of no very brilliant parts but straightforward and in earnest. He took seriously the mission with which he was entrusted by the new Government of making and keeping

[5] Madame de Novikoff, a very charming woman, who was in the confidence of the Russian Government, had come to England for the first time a little before this date, her very earliest English visit being paid to us at Crabbet. She had brought an introduction to us from Madame de Lagrené, a Russian friend of ours living in Paris, and as yet knew no one. She stayed with us a week, but finding me unsympathetic with her anti-Islamic views, went on and soon after made a political capture of Mr. Gladstone.

the peace on the Indian frontiers, and of inaugurating a new policy having for its object to carry out the Queen's proclamation of self-government among the natives. To the astonishment, and indeed scandal, of the official world, he took with him as his private secretary Gordon, whom all looked upon as mad – than which no better proof could have been given of his *bona fides* towards Native India. Gordon, however, was not of the stuff of which private secretaries, even with a chief like Ripon, are made, and he had hardly landed at Bombay before he resigned. I do not think that Ripon was in fault in this, but rather Gordon's restless chafing against all rules and conventions. I shall have later to describe Ripon's viceroyalty when I come to my second Indian journey in 1884. Now it will be enough to say that, if it achieved comparatively little, it was through the pusillanimity of the Ministry at home rather than his own. He valiantly went on in the course traced out for him at the start, but like boys who sometimes in a race, to make a fool of their companion who is in front of them, hang back and stop, he found out to his confusion after a while that he had been running alone and that the Ministers who had changed their minds without letting him know had long been laughing at him for his persistence. It must have been a bitter moment for him when he, too, had to give in. The other appointments made were all, as far as the highest offices went, given by Gladstone to the Whigs. Lord Granville – the matter which interested me most – got the Foreign Office, an amiable old nobleman with a good knowledge of French, but very deaf and very idle, whose diplomacy was of the old procrastinating school of never doing today what could possibly be put off till to-morrow, or, as he himself was fond of putting it, of "dawdling matters out" and leaving them to right themselves alone. Of such a Minister nothing in the way of a new policy could be expected, and none was attempted either in Turkey, or Egypt, or elsewhere. The Cyprus Convention was neither repudiated nor turned to account for any good purpose, and beyond a little sham pressure put upon the Sultan in the matter of Montenegro and the Greek frontier, things were left precisely as they were. The only change made was that Layard, the author of the Convention, was recalled from Constantinople and Goschen appointed in his place, the same Goschen who had made the leonine arrangement for the bondholders in Egypt three years before, his own family firm of Göschen and Frühling being one of them. The only act of the new Foreign Secretary which showed that he remembered Mr. Gladstone's denunciations of the Turks was that, in order to prove that Gladstone had been right and Disraeli and Salisbury wrong about them, he in defiance of the ordinary rule in such matters at the Foreign Office published a secret despatch of Layard's which contradicted everything the Ambassador had written about the situation at Constantinople in his public despatches. In this unfortunate document he had laid bare the secret vices and weaknesses of the Sultan Abdul Hamid, his personal cowardice especially being insisted on and emphasized with details then unknown to the world, but now notorious, of his system of spy-government. Its publication was a gross act of treachery to Layard, and was, moreover, an act of folly from the effects of which our diplomacy at Constantinople has not yet recovered; Layard had been, so to say, Abdul Hamid's bosom friend and had received from him favours of a kind not usually accorded to European Envoys. The Sultan had shown himself to Layard as to a comrade on whom he could rely, and the disclosure of what he considered Layard's treachery alienated for ever his goodwill from England.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding the unpromising position at the Foreign Office, I was resolved in the interests of my propaganda to make a bid for sympathy for my plans with the new Prime Minister. I was encouraged to this by the appointment he had made on taking office of one of my most intimate friends, Eddy Hamilton (now Sir Edward Hamilton, K.C.B.), to be his private secretary, from whom I learned that, whatever might be the public exigencies of the moment abroad, Mr. Gladstone's sympathies with Oriental liberty were no whit abated. From Hamilton I had no secrets as to my own views and plans, and all that he thought necessary to win his master to them was that I should give them a wider publicity in print. There were other channels, too, through which it was judged that Gladstone might be influenced, and some of these are referred to in my journal.

"*June 12.*– Hamilton Aidé took me to call upon Mrs. L, who lives in a big house in M … Square, a plump, good-natured Irishwoman of fifty, impulsive, talkative, but without trace either of beauty or anything else. She is one of Gladstone's *Egerias*, and our visit was partly diplomatic, as I want to indoctrinate her with my Arabian ideas, and through her the Prime Minister. She is already enthusiastic about such Arabs as she has seen, and affects a serious interest in the East. She read us with much spirit a drama she had been writing about Herod, Cleopatra, and Julius Caesar – sad stuff, which she assured us Gladstone admired exceedingly.

"Rolland, John Pollen and Lawrence Oliphant to dinner. The last a very attractive man. He has just come back from Constantinople, where he has been trying to get a concession from the Sultan for lands beyond Jordan to be colonized by the children of Israel."

"*June 22.*– The Plowdens to dinner and Eddy Hamilton, who is now Gladstone's private secretary. Plowden goes to Bagdad to-morrow as Resident. I indoctrinated him and Eddy on the Eastern question."

"*June 26.*– Lord Calthorpe, Percy Wyndham, and Captain Levitt joined us at Crabbet, and we had a show of horses. Lord C. tells me he has shown my letter about Arab horse-racing to several members of the Jockey Club, and he will bring the matter forward at one of the club meetings next month; so that it is to be hoped we shall succeed. If I can introduce a pure Arabian breed of horses into England and help to see Arabia free of the Turks, I shall not have quite lived in vain. My fourth letter to the 'Spectator' (on the politics of Central Arabia) has appeared to-day, and my article in the 'Fortnightly' ('The Sultan's Heirs in Asia') is advertised… Later to the Admiralty, where Lord Northbrook complimented me on my letters (they were the first I had ever written to a newspaper). Sir Garnet Wolseley was there, a brisk little jerky man, whom it is difficult to accept as a great general. I reminded him of our visit to Cyprus. He said, 'I believe Lady Anne is writing a book.' 'Yes, but we have said nothing about Cyprus in it.' 'Oh, you didn't stay long enough.' 'We thought it best to say nothing.'"

The article here spoken of, "The Sultan's Heirs in Asia," was, as I have said, a bid for Gladstone's serious attention to my ideas, and through Hamilton's help, who brought it under his notice, it was completely successful, though characteristically the feature of it which interested him most was that which has proved least politically practical, and was to me the least important, namely, the future of the Armenian provinces as an independent state. The idea I propounded was, that in the same way as a large portion of European Turkey had been given its independence, so in the decline of the Ottoman Empire the Asiatic provinces should also be encouraged to form themselves into independent states, according to their prevailing nationalities; and I appealed by name to Mr. Gladstone to make good his words, so freely and so recently uttered in favour of Eastern liberty, by making use of the instrument devised by his predecessors in office, the Cyprus Convention, not for the selfish purposes of English imperialism, but for the good of the peoples of the East. Its publication in the July number of the "Fortnightly" led to my being invited to Downing Street, where I had an opportunity of pressing my views personally on the Prime Minister. It will be seen that I was not on that first occasion much impressed by him; but I was encouraged to develop my ideas, and from that time my opinion, conveyed to him generally through Hamilton, was of some account with Gladstone in regard to Eastern affairs.

"*June 27.*– Called on A. with whom I found Queensberry. He began at once to expound to us his religious doctrines, talking in an excited, earnest way. These doctrines seem to me mere Comtism. There is some sort of Supreme Being, not a personal God, and a conscience by which man is guided in his search of perfection. The principle doctrine, 'faith in humanity,' and the principal duty, 'the perfectioning of body and soul,' especially body. The Marquess is not a very lucid expounder, and proposed to recite us a poem instead – a poem he had written. While we were expecting this in came Philip Currie and a little old man with a long nose and very black eyes, Malkum Khan, the Persian Ambassador. These sat down and listened while Queensberry recited. The poem was in blank verse, vague, doctrinal, fantastic, beginning with the Matterhorn and going on to Humanity. When he had

finished the Oriental spoke. He said, 'Perhaps it would interest you to hear the story of a religion which was founded some years ago in Persia, and of which I was at one time the head. It will exemplify the manner in which religions are produced, and you will see that the doctrine of Humanity is one at least as congenial to Asia as to Europe. Europe, indeed, is incapable of inventing a real religion, one which shall take possession of the souls of men; as incapable as Asia is of inventing a system of politics. The mind of Asia is speculative, of Europe practical. In Persia we every day produce "new Christs." We have "Sons of God" in every village, martyrs for their faith in every town. I have myself seen hundreds of Babis suffer death and torture for their belief in a prophet whose doctrines were identical with those of Jesus Christ, and who, like Him, was crucified. Christianity is but one of these hundred Asiatic preachings, brought into notice through its adoption by the Greek mind and given a logical form and a material complexion. If it had remained an Asiatic faith it would long ago have perished, as a hundred moral and mystic teachings have perished before and after it. When I was a young man I, too, as I told you, founded a religion which at one time numbered 30,000 devotees. I was born an Armenian Christian, but I was brought up among Mohammedans, and my tone of thought is theirs. I was foster-brother to the Shah and when he came to the throne he made me his Prime Minister. At the age of twenty I was practically despotic in Persia. I saw the abuses of government, the decline of material prosperity in the country, and I was bitten with the idea of reform. I went to Europe and studied there the religious, social, and political systems of the West. I learned the spirit of the various sects of Christendom, and the organization of the secret societies and freemasonries, and I conceived a plan which should incorporate the political wisdom of Europe with the religious wisdom of Asia. I knew that it was useless to attempt a remodelling of Persia in European forms, and I was determined to clothe my material reformation in a garb which my people would understand, the garb of religion. I therefore, on my return, called together the chief persons of Teheran, my friends, and spoke to them in private of the need which Islam had of purer doctrine. I appealed to their moral dignity and pride of birth. There are in Persian two words, each signifying Man —*insan*, from the Arabic, and *adhem* (Adam), more strictly Persian in derivation. The second signifies Man as a genus, a particular kind of animal – the first man as an intellectual and distinguished being (the *homo* and *vir* of Latin). You all, I said, pride yourselves that you are more than *adhem*; you are also *insan*. And it is to enable you to justify that pretension that I will advise you to do this and that. They all found my reasoning good, and in a short time I had got together 30,000 followers. Under the name of a Reformation of Islam I thus introduced what material reforms I could. To my doctrine is due the telegraph, the reorganization of the administrative departments, and many another attempted improvement since gone to ruin. I had, however, no intention at the outset of founding a religion. The character of saint and prophet was forced on me by my followers. They gave me the title of "Holy Ghost," and the Shah that of "Reformer of Islam." I wrote a book, a bible of my creed, and enthusiasts maintained that I worked miracles. At last the Shah was alarmed at my power, which in truth had become superior to his own. He sought, in spite of our old friendship, to kill me, and my followers sought to kill him. For two months we both lived in great fear of assassination, and then we came to an explanation. I loved and revered the Shah, and I asked permission to travel. My followers took leave of me with tears, even the Mollahs kissing my feet. I went to Constantinople, thinking to get permission from the Sultan to reside at Bagdad, and I in fact went there and gained new converts from among the resident Persian and Bagdad Shiahs. But the Turks deceived me, and I had to leave my work unfinished. My followers in Persia urged me to return, but I was deterred through several motives; first, I feared to find my death for a religion in which I did not believe, secondly, my health broke down, and, thirdly, I had married a wife. I wrote to the Shah, who replied, offering me any appointment I would, so I would remain abroad; and I accepted the position of Ambassador-General to all the Courts of Europe.' It was strange to hear this little old man, in European clothes and talking very good French, recounting a tale so purely Oriental. I walked home with him afterwards (he lived on the other side of Hyde Park), and he detailed to me his ideas about the East and West, both of which he knows, and knows

thoroughly. I left him with the impression that he was the most remarkable man I had ever met, and more convinced than ever of the superior intelligence of the Eastern mind. Who is there in Europe that could have made one thus feel like a child?"

This chance meeting, at a fine lady's house in Belgravia in the middle of the London season, affected me profoundly, and to a certain extent revolutionized my ideas. I trace to it, and to other talks which I had later with this singular personage, the conviction which rapidly overcame me that in all my thought of freeing and reforming the East I had begun at the wrong end, and that, if I was to effect anything either for the Arabs or for any other of the Moslem peoples subject to the Turks, I must first make myself thoroughly acquainted with their religious ideas. As yet I had passed among them, in spite of my political sympathy, as a stranger to their more serious thought; without religious prejudice myself of the ordinary Christian kind, I had learned to respect Islam, but I did not comprehend it, nor had I ever discussed its teachings with any one learned in its law or conversant with its modern thought. I saw at once the weakness, nay the absurdity of my position, and I resolved before I went any farther to devote the following winter to a study of at least the main features of the Mohammedan doctrines as they affected Mohammedan politics. With this view I made my plans for the winter. My thought was to go to Jeddah at or about the time of the pilgrimage, and there inform myself as I best could, and then take any occasion that might offer for further action. I wished to penetrate once more into Arabia, if possible through Hejaz, or perhaps Yemen to Nejd. I had an idea that among the Wahhabis I might find a teacher who would give me the Arabian as opposed to the Ottoman view of Islam, and that I might devise with him a movement of reform in which I should suggest the political, he the religious elements. It was a sufficiently wild idea, but I entertained it seriously at the time, and the confession of having done so will explain to Egyptian readers how it came about that I took the line I did at Cairo a year later.

I was influenced, too, at that time in London by another learned Oriental, one Sabunji, whose acquaintance I had made in the character of Arabic teacher. He, too, like Malkum Khan, was of Christian origin, a member of one of the Catholic sects of Syria, and he had even taken priest's orders and served the Congregation of the Propaganda at Rome; but he had latterly thrown off the cassock and, like the Ambassador, was much more in sympathy with Islam than with his own faith. As an Arabic scholar he was very remarkable, and he had a wide acquaintance with the questions, half political, half religious, which were being discussed just then among Mohammedans. He had done the main work for the late Dr. Badger in compiling the Arabic-English Dictionary which goes by Dr. Badger's name, and in 1880 was carrying on in London an Arabic newspaper called "El Nakhleh," the Bee, in which religious reform was preached to Mohammedans once a month, on the most advanced lines of modern thought. There was a mystery about the financing of this little journal, and the motives prompting its issue, which I never quite fathomed. His own account of it was that his chief patron was the Sultan of Zanzibar, a very enlightened and liberal-minded ruler. But I was never quite satisfied with this explanation, and I have since had reason to believe that the funds to support it, and the suggestion of its politics came, in part at least, from the ex-Khedive Ismaïl. Ismaïl was at that time very angry with the Sultan for his betrayal of him to Europe, and the "Bee" was violent against Abdul Hamid, and denounced him especially as an usurper of the title of Emir el Mumenin and Caliph. I do not well remember whether it was from this Sabunji or from Malkum Khan that I first came to understand the historical aspect of the caliphal question and its modern aspects, but, opposed as I was to Ottoman rule, it struck me at once as one of high importance to the kind of reform I was beginning now to look for. There is notice in my journal of my having sent in a memorandum to Mr. Gladstone on the subject, and I have a letter from Hamilton, showing that the idea was considered one of importance by members of the Cabinet and generally in Downing Street.

"*July 3.*– A tea party at A.'s, a 'collection of mystics,' old Rolland, Dunraven, and Oliphant. The two latter and I had a conference in a back room which resulted in our agreeing to act in common

on the Eastern question, so as to influence public opinion in England. We are to have a preliminary meeting at Dunraven's on Thursday."

"*July 8.*– Called on Percy Wyndham and converted him to my political creed. Also received a visit on the same subject from Mr. Boyce, M. P. Dined with Dunraven, Oliphant, Otway, Percy Wyndham, Harry Brand, and Whittaker, editor of the 'Levant Herald,' at Limmer's Hotel, to arrange a course of action with a view to influencing public opinion in England respecting Asia. Nothing more definite settled than the formation of a committee for receiving news. Later to Bryce's, where I met one Robertson Smith, who has been lately in the Hejaz." (This was the well-known professor.)

"*July 13.*– Went to a party at Mrs. Gladstone's. We arrived early, before other people had come, and I had twenty minutes' conversation with the great man. I detailed to him my ideas about the regeneration of the East, in which he seemed to take an interest, as far as a man can who is totally ignorant of the A B C of a question. His remarks struck me as the reverse of profound, and his questions contrasted unfavourably with those put to me three years ago by Lord Salisbury. A British steamer had been fired on by some Arabs on the Tigris, and he began by remarking that he feared this fact showed a marked antagonism towards England on the part of Arabia. The state of the Ottoman Empire he considered most *critical*. Probably the East had never been in a more *critical* state than now. If the Treaty of San Stefano had been carried out Turkey could hardly have been more *critically* situated than she was. I succeeded however, I think, in grafting him with two ideas, one that the Caliphate was not necessarily vested in the House of Othman, the other that Midhat Pasha was a fool. He has evidently made up his mind about nothing, and will let himself drift on till the smash comes."

"*July 15.*– Attended a meeting of Philo-Asiatics. In the afternoon to Aldermaston, a fine park with a tiresome modern house; Sir Henry Layard doing the honours. I had a great prejudice against him, but find him agreeable and without pretension, considering his position. He talks well, especially of his travels, and he really understands the East, reminding me a little of Skene and Rolland, both fellow travellers of his in old days… Layard's memoirs would be the most interesting of any man's of the present century. His rise from the position of a wandering outcast among the Kurds, almost himself an outlaw, to that of British Ambassador to the Porte, contains all the romance of human life."

"*July 17.*– An interview with Sir Charles Dilke (Under-Secretary of State) at the Foreign Office. I explained to him my idea of going to Nejd this autumn with Abdallah Ibn Saoud, and to my surprise he seemed to acquiesce. Although our conversation was not a long one, it left me with the impression of Dilke being a superior man. His questions were plain and to the point, and, once understood, he wrote the draft of a despatch to Goschen at Constantinople, referring me for further details to Tenterden (the permanent Head of the Foreign Office), and I am now full of the notion of going to Arabia and heading a movement for the restoration of the Arabian Caliphate. People have been called great who have sacrificed themselves for smaller objects, but in this I feel the satisfaction of knowing it to be a really worthy cause."

Sir Charles Dilke, who was destined to play a considerable part in the events of 1882 in Egypt, had in 1880 been only a few months at the Foreign Office. He and Chamberlain, who were great political friends, represented with Bright the Radical element in the new government. Chamberlain got the Local Government Board and a seat in the Cabinet, and Dilke the Foreign Under-Secretaryship, which, with his chief, Lord Granville, in the House of Lords and an idle man besides, was a position of great power Dilke knew how to take advantage of. Neither of the two men belonged to the class from which Ministers in England are usually chosen, but were looked upon as middle-class men, and I remember the disgust with which Dilke's appointment was received at the Foreign Office, where aristocratic pretensions are traditional among the clerks. Dilke, however, soon showed his mettle by the way he took his work in hand, and, what was even more to the purpose with them, by certain Gallicisms in conversation which were also a Foreign Office characteristic, so that in a very few weeks he found himself not only tolerated but popular. The Abdallah Ibn Saoud referred to in my journal was a certain Abdallah Ibn Theneyyàn Ibn Saoud, of the old princely family of Nejd, who

had found his way to Constantinople, and had there applied to the British Embassy for help to gain or regain a political position in his own country. I had heard of him from Currie, and had jumped to the conclusion that this might be the opportunity I sought in Arabia, and so applied to the Foreign Office to put me in communication with him and favour my projected journey. The plan, however, came to nothing, though, as has been seen, not altogether disapproved at the Foreign Office, for when the matter was referred to Lord Tenterden, the permanent Under-Secretary, he demurred, on the ground that the thing if undertaken with the cognizance of the Foreign Office would be liable to be regarded as a "secret mission," and such missions were contrary to the traditions of the Office. And so the plan was abandoned. Just at this time, too, the news of the disgraceful defeat of the British army under Burrows at Candahar by the Afghans reached London, and I fancy made them doubly cautious in Downing Street. The defeat was a final blow to Lytton, and to the policy of adventure beyond the Indian frontier he had made his own, and at no time within recollection did the imperial fortunes of England seem so low. All the world was depressed by it, even I, little of a Jingo as I had become.

"*August 5.*– To Portsmouth by train, having got a telegram to say the Lyttons are expected to-night or to-morrow. Portsmouth is a strange, old-fashioned town, still without a decent inn; and we are at a pot-house called the 'Star and Garter.' In the house opposite there is a bust of Nelson, and from the windows one can see the 'St. Vincent' and the 'Victory.' Little as one may care for one's country – and Heaven knows I am no Chauvin – it is impossible not to be touched by these relics of England's greatness. I never till this moment quite realized the decay of her fortunes since sixty years ago. What a shock it would be for Nelson and his companions if he could read the papers to-day, full of dastardly congratulations at the discovery that not 2,000 but only 1,000 men were lost on the Helmund, and at General Burrows not having positively run away; of fears lest England should embark single-handed on a war with Turkey, and an abject hope that France may think fit to see us through our difficulties in the East – all this, with Lytton's arrival at Portsmouth, Lytton who, if things go wrong with India, will leave a name in history as the first of the unsuccessful Viceroys of the British Empress and the one most responsible for India's loss. All this, I say, gives one a feeling of sorrow impossible to describe. Yet I do not join with those who cry out on Lytton's policy, still less on its execution. His policy was a necessary one, and its execution has been bold and successful. He has been conspicuous in the history of England's decay only because he is himself conspicuous. He could not have stemmed the tide of events. He went with them, guiding as he could but powerless to do more. England's decay rests upon causes far more general than any one man or party of men can be responsible for. We fail because we are no longer honest, no longer just, no longer gentlemen. Our Government is a mob, not a body endowed with sense and supported by the sense of the nation. It was only by immense industry, immense sense, and immense honour that we gained our position in the world, and now that these are gone we find our natural level. For a hundred years we did good in the world; for a hundred we shall have done evil, and then the world will hear of us no more."

"*August 6.*– After several false alarms the 'Himalaya' was signalled; and, having fortunately met the rest of the small party of friends come to greet Lytton, we went out to meet her and were taken on board just opposite Osborne. At the gangway, brown as a berry and very ill dressed in clothes of four years ago and a flap-away Indian hat, stood Lytton with that cigarette in his mouth which cost him his Viceroyalty. On what trifles success depends! If he could have refrained from smoking out of season, and if he could have gone to church with his wife, all his sins, though they had been like scarlet, would have been forgiven him by the Anglo-Indian public. As it was, he had this against him throughout his reign, and it turned the scale when he was politically defeated. But for this he would never have been recalled. He himself, conscious of having done his best and done well, cares nothing for such things, and he is right. I could envy him this feeling almost as much as I envy him the delight of going home to Knebworth. When we had seen them on shore and taken tea with them at the inn, we wished them good-bye. 'Oh, the dear drunken people in the streets!' Lady Lytton exclaimed, 'how I love them!'"

"*September 7.*– Knebworth. In the morning I wrote and read, but in the afternoon I went down with Lytton to the fishing house and talked over the Eastern question, in which I find his views not very divergent from my own. We are both agreed that the day of England's *empire* is fast ending – for my own part I do not care how soon. Lytton has more patriotism."

"*October 29.*– Crabbet. Spent the day with Lytton … he read me his defence for the House of Lords. He has an immensely strong case, and should make one of the most remarkable speeches of the age if he is allowed to bring forward all the documents in his possession. He showed me these, the Russian correspondence taken at Kabul and the draft of a secret treaty between Shere Ali and the Russians. He also told me that when he was going to India Schouvalof called on him and proposed to him to divide Afghanistan between Russia and England."

This is nearly the last entry in my journal of 1880, which unfortunately I discontinued till two years later. The full explanation Lytton was never allowed to make in Parliament, and his speech, robbed of its strongest points, fell comparatively flat when he made it before the House of Lords. I will, however, add an extract from a letter he wrote me on the 18th of November, which will complete this chapter of my story. It is of value as giving a very accurate epitome of the political situation of the date: "I saw," Lytton writes, "in one of the papers the other day a statement that the new Sherif of Mecca (Abdul Mutalleb), who is completely a tool of the Sultan, is working actively under orders from Constantinople to put the Mohammedans against us in all parts of the world. The cry is now, 'The Caliph in danger.' This was to be expected, and I fear the opportunity has passed for the good which might have been effected a year ago through the Arabs. The only result of Gladstone's action, so far as I can see, has been to destroy our influence at Constantinople and transfer it to Germany, without substituting for it any other means of controlling the Mohammedan world. The Mansion House speech (Gladstone's), expected with so much curiosity, seemed to me a weak confession of utter failure in the policy of the Government. They drop Greece and Armenia, and everything else, with the admission that their fingers are scorched by the burning end of the stick at which they grasped so wildly nine months ago. And in Ireland they are drifting into great difficulties which may even break up the Cabinet. The fact is the policy which the Government wants to carry out is everywhere rejected by the Nation; and the policy which the Nation wants carried out the Government naturally shies at, not wishing to stultify its promises and declarations. So the result is, for the present, no policy at all. As for myself I keep silence, *morne et profond*, till Parliament meets, though my heart burns within me."

The last weeks of my stay in England that autumn were, however, less occupied with politics than with the publication of a volume of poetry, to which I had been persuaded by Lytton, and the proofs of which I left to him to correct. This was "The Sonnets of Proteus," which had a considerable success and which has since gone through many editions. It gave me almost at once a certain rank in the literary world which was not altogether without its influence on my subsequent relations with my political friends.

CHAPTER V
THE REFORM LEADERS AT THE AZHAR

I left England that autumn of 1880 on the 3rd of November, in the first place for Egypt, and without any more definite further plan than to go on from thence to Jeddah and educate myself in view of possible future opportunities. My wilder schemes in regard to the Arabs seemed for the moment impracticable, and all that I hoped for was to gain sufficient knowledge of the doctrine and modern tendencies of Islam to put it into my power to act should circumstances become more favourable. On leaving London I had arranged with Hamilton that we should correspond during the winter, and that I would let him know anything of special interest which might occur on my journey and which he might communicate to Mr. Gladstone, who was still, he assured me, though I had not seen him again, interested in my ideas. At the Foreign Office I was looked upon, though in a friendly way, more as a visionary than as anything seriously likely to affect the official view of Eastern policy, even under a Radical Prime Minister.

At Cairo, where I arrived a few days later, I found much change, and all, as it seemed to me, for the better. The old irresponsible tyranny of Ismaïl had given place to the comparatively mild *régime* of the Anglo-French *Condominium*. The finances had been regularized, and order put into most of the Administrations. I visited some of the same villages I had known in such terrible straits five years before, and found that the worst evils affecting their position had been put a stop to, and, though still poor and highly-taxed, there was no longer that feeling of despair among the fellahin which had made them pour out the history of their woes to me when I had first come among them as a sympathetic stranger. I went to the British Agency, and was delighted to find established there as Consul-General my friend Malet, who gave me a roseate account of the reforms that had been effected or were in project, for as yet little had been actually done except financially. All was going slowly but steadily on the road of improvement, and the only clouds he could see on the horizon were, first, in the Soudan, which was so great a drain upon Egypt's resources, and, secondly, in the Army, where there had been latterly symptoms of discontent. He spoke much in praise of the new Khedive, Tewfik, and took me to see him at the Palace, and I found him, if not very interesting, at least holding the language of a civilized and liberal-minded Prince. An echo of Malet's optimism may be recognized in my letters from Egypt of that date, and I find the draft of one I wrote to Hamilton of which the following is an extract:

"I find a great change here for the better since five years ago, and, whatever may be the shortcomings the late Government may have to answer for elsewhere, their policy in Egypt certainly was a success. The country people now look fat and prosperous, and the few I have talked to, people who in former years complained bitterly of their condition, now praise the Khedive and his administration. They seem, for once, to have gone the right way to work here, making as few changes as possible in the *system* of government and only taking care that the *men* who caused the disorder should be changed. It was a great stroke of policy getting rid of Ismaïl, and I feel little doubt that with proper management the present man will go straight. Egypt is so rich and such a cheap country to govern that its finances *must* come right, if it limits its ambition to its own natural prosperity. But there are one or two rocks ahead, the government of the Soudan for instance, which will always be an expense and will always be an excuse for maintaining an army. I cannot conceive why Egypt should charge itself with governing the Nile beyond the First Cataract, its old boundary. Putting down the slave-trade in Africa is an amusement only rich countries need afford themselves. It will also be a great misfortune if such protection and supervision as the Government gets from England should be withdrawn, at least for some years and until a new generation has grown up used to a better order of things than the old. I should like immensely to see Syria put under another such *régime*. That, too,

if there is no attempt to hold the desert, is a fairly rich country and might be made to pay its way. But it would require a very distinct protection from Europe to relieve it of the cost of an army. For police purposes a very small force would be sufficient, and I am convinced that people in England exaggerate immensely the difficulty of keeping the peace between the mixed Mohammedan and Christian populations there. These have all lain groaning together so long under the same tyranny that the edges of their prejudices have got worn down."

With regard to my plan of seeking Mohammedan instruction, I was from the outset singularly fortunate. Rogers Bey, a distinguished Eastern scholar whom I had known some years before as Consul at Damascus, was now an official of the Finance Office at Cairo, and from him I obtained the name of a young Alem connected with the Azhar University, Sheykh Mohammed Khalil, who came to me daily to give me lessons in Arabic, and stayed to talk with me often through the afternoons. It happened, however, that he was far more than a mere professor of the language of the Koran. Mohammed Khalil, of all the Mohammedans I have known, was perhaps the most single-minded and sincere and at the same time the most enthusiastic Moslem of the larger and purer school of thought such as that which was being expounded at that time at Cairo by his great master, Sheykh Mohammed Abdu. I like to think of him as he then was, a young man of about thirty, serious, intelligent, and good, without affectation, pious and proud of his religion, but without the smallest taint of Pharisaism or doctrinal intolerance or of that arrogant reserve which is so common with Mohammedans in dealing with persons not of their own faith. He was all the contrary to this. From almost the first day of our intercourse he made it his duty and his pleasure to teach me all he knew. His school of interpretation was of the very widest kind. He accepted as true creeds all those that professed the unity of God; and Judaism and Christianity were to him only imperfect and corrupted forms of the one true religion of Abraham and Noah. He would hear nothing of intolerance, nothing of bitterness between believers so near akin. The intolerance and the bitterness were the evil legacy of ancient wars, and he believed the world to be progressing towards a state of social perfection where arms would be laid down and a universal brotherhood proclaimed between the nations and the creeds. As he unfolded to me these ideas and based them on texts and traditions, declaring them to be the true teaching of Islam, it may be imagined how astonished and delighted I was – for they were very close to my own – and the more so when he affirmed that they were the views beginning to be held by all the more intelligent of the younger generation of students at his own university, as well as elsewhere in the Mohammedan world. He gave me, too, an account of how this school of enlightened interpretation had sprung up almost within his own recollection at the Azhar.

The true originator of the Liberal religious Reform movement among the Ulema of Cairo was, strangely enough, neither an Arab, nor an Egyptian, nor an Ottoman, but a certain wild man of genius, Sheykh Jemal-ed-din Afghani, whose sole experience of the world before he came to Egypt had been that of Central Asia. An Afghan by birth, he had received his religious education at Bokhara, and in that remote region, and apparently without coming in contact with any teacher from the more civilized centres of Mohammedan thought, he had evolved from his own study and reflection the ideas which are now associated with his name. Hitherto all movements of religious reform in Sunnite Islam had followed the lines not of development, but of retrogression. There had been a vast number of preachers, especially in the last 200 years, who had taught that the decay of Islam as a power in the world was due to its followers having forsaken the ancient ways of simplicity and the severe observance of the law as understood in the early ages of the faith. On the other hand, reformers there had been of a modern type recently, both in Turkey and Egypt, who had Europeanized the administration for political purposes, but these had introduced their changes as it were by violence, through decrees and approvals obtained by force from the unwilling Ulema, and with no serious attempt to reconcile them with the law of the Koran and the traditions. The political reforms had been always imposed from above, not suggested from below, and had generally been condemned by respectable opinion. Jemal-ed-din's originality consisted in this, that he sought to convert the religious

intellect of the countries where he preached to the necessity of reconsidering the whole Islamic position, and, instead of clinging to the past, of making an onward intellectual movement in harmony with modern knowledge. His intimate acquaintance with the Koran and the traditions enabled him to show that, if rightly interpreted and checked the one by the other, the law of Islam was capable of the most liberal developments and that hardly any beneficial change was in reality opposed to it.

Having completed his studies in 1870, and being then thirty-two years old, he passed through India to Bombay and joined the pilgrimage to Mecca, and, this duty accomplished, he came on to Cairo and afterwards to Constantinople. He remained on this first visit no more than forty days in Egypt, but he had time to make acquaintance with certain of the Azhar students and to lay the foundations of the teaching he afterwards developed. At Constantinople his great eloquence and learning soon asserted itself, and he was given a position in the *Anjuman el Elm*, where he lectured on all subjects, his knowledge being almost universal. He had great quickness of intellect and an astonishing memory, so that it is said of him that he could read a book straight off on any subject and master the whole contents as inscribed upon his mind forever. Beginning with grammar and science, his lectures went on to philosophy and religion. He taught that Sunnite Islam was capable of adapting itself to all the highest cravings of the human soul and the needs of modern life. As an orthodox Sunni, and with the complete knowledge he had of the *hawadith*, he was listened to with respect and soon got a following among the younger students. He inspired courage by his own boldness, and his critical treatment of the received commentaries, even those of El Hánafi, was accepted by them as it would hardly have been from any other. Their consciences he was at pains to free from the chains in which thought had lain for so many centuries, and to show them that the law of Islam was no dead hand but a system fitted for the changing human needs of every age, and so itself susceptible of change. All this stood in close analogy to what we have seen of the re-awakening of the Christian intellect during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries in Europe and its adaption of orthodox doctrines to the scientific discoveries of the day. It is strange, however, that in Western Islam the new spirit of criticism should have been initiated as it was, by one whose education had been made in such unprogressive lands as those of Central Asia, and at a university so far away.

Sheykh Jemal-ed-din's career at Constantinople was a brilliant but a short one. He was essentially a free lance, and, like most Afghans, a disregarder of persons and of those ceremonial observances which regulate among the Ottoman dignitaries the personal intercourse of the great with those who attend their levées. Although protected by certain of the Liberal Statesmen, and notably by Ali and Fuad Pashas, who saw in his teaching a support to their unorthodox political reforms against the old-fashioned Ulema, Jemal-ed-din had managed to give offence to the high religious authorities, and especially by his independent personal attitude to the Sheykh el Islam, and these soon found in his lectures matter for reproof and condemnation. Advantage was taken of certain passages in his lectures to denounce him to the Government as an atheist and a perverter of the law, and when the Afghan reformer had replied by a courageous demand to be confronted with his high accusers and heard in a public discussion the official sense of propriety was shocked and alarmed. The challenge was producing an immense excitement among the Softas, the younger of whom were all on Jemal-ed-din's side, and the quarrel seemed likely to lead to serious trouble. Notice was somewhat reluctantly given that he had better leave once more for Egypt and the Holy Places. It was thus under the cloud of religious persecution that he returned to Cairo, but not without having sown the seed of inquiry which was to mature some years later at Constantinople in the shape of a general demand among the Softas for constitutional reform. It was the religious part of the movement which was to culminate in the political revolution attempted by Midhat Pasha in 1876.

At the Azhar, when he returned to Cairo in 1871, Jemal-ed-din's reputation had of course preceded him, and, though Egypt was then in the darkest night of its religious unintelligence, for the moral corruption of the Government, especially in Ismaïl's reign, had infected all classes and had extinguished every tradition of courage and independence among the Ulema, considerable curiosity

was felt about him. The few friends he had made on the occasion of his first visit welcomed him, if not openly, in secret, and presently the wonderful fire and zeal of his conversation drew around him, as it had done at Constantinople, a group of young and enthusiastic followers. The most remarkable of these, his earliest disciples at the Azhar, were Sheykh Mohammed Abdu, who was to play so important a part in public affairs later and who is now Grand Mufti of Egypt, and Sheykh Ibrahim el Aghani the well-known publicist. To these he was able to communicate without reserve his stores of varied knowledge, and to inspire them with his critical spirit and something of his courage. Courage indeed was needed in those days for any man at Cairo to speak out. Ismaïl brooked no kind of opposition and wielded power so absolute in the country that independent speech, almost independent whispering, had disappeared from men's mouths. It was only the fellahin of the village, already despoiled of all, that dared complain, or those in the city too poor and insignificant to be of any political count. The highest religious authorities, as well as the highest officials, had long been silent about injustice and had chosen their part of acquiescence, content so long as they could get their share, each one however small, of the general plunder.

On this dark state of intellectual and moral things Jemal-ed-din's courageous teaching broke like an apparition of strange light, and his very courage for awhile secured him a hearing undisturbed by admonition from the Government. Perhaps his quarrel at Constantinople was a passport to Ismaïl's tolerance, perhaps he deemed this Afghan too insignificant a force to call for suppression. Perhaps, like Ali and Fuad Pashas, he thought to turn the new teaching to account in his long war with the European Consuls. Be this as it may, Jemal-ed-din was allowed during the whole of the remaining years of Ismaïl's reign to carry on his lectures, and it was only on Tewfik's accession and the establishment of the Anglo-French condominium that he was arrested on an executive order, sent untried to Alexandria, and summarily exiled. He had, however, already done his work, and at the time of which I am writing his principles of Liberal reform upon a theological basis had so far prevailed at the Azhar that they had already been adopted by all that was intellectual there among the students. The reformer's mantle had fallen upon worthy shoulders, shoulders indeed it may be said, worthier even than his own. My little Arabic instructor, Mohammed Khalil, was never weary of speaking to me of the virtues and intellectual qualities of him who was now his spiritual master, Sheykh Mohammed Abdu, the acknowledged leader at the Azhar, in Jemal-ed-din's succession, of the Liberal Party of reform.

I find a note among my papers that it was on the 28th of January, 1881, that I was first taken by my enthusiastic Alem to Mohammed Abdu's little house in the Azhar quarter, a day to be marked by me with an especially white stone, for it began for me a friendship which has lasted now for nearly a quarter of a century with one of the best and wisest, and most interesting of men. When I use these words of him it must not be thought that they are light or exaggerated judgment. I base them on a knowledge of his character gained in a variety of circumstances on very difficult and trying occasions, first as a religious teacher, next as leader of a movement of social reform and as the intellectual head of a political revolution; again, as prisoner in the hands of his enemies, as exile in various foreign lands, and for some years under police surveillance at Cairo when his exile had been annulled; lastly, by the strength of his intellect and his moral character reasserting himself as a power in his own country, resuming his lectures at the Azhar, placed in the judicature, named Judge of Appeal, and finally, in these last days, Grand Mufti at Cairo, the highest religious and judicial position attainable in Egypt.

Sheykh Mohammed Abdu when I first saw him in 1881 was a man of about thirty-five, of middle height, dark, active in his gait, of quick intelligence revealed in singularly penetrating eyes, and with a manner frank and cordial and inspiring ready confidence. In dress and appearance purely Oriental, wearing the white turban and dark kaftan of the Azhar Sheykhs and knowing as yet no European language, or, indeed, other language than his own. With him I discussed, with the help of Mohammed Khalil, who knew a little French and helped on my insufficient Arabic, most of those questions I had already debated with his disciple, and between them I obtained before leaving Cairo

a knowledge really large of the opinions of their liberal school of Moslem thought, their fears for the present, and their hopes for the future. These I afterwards embodied in a book published at the end of the year under the title of "The Future of Islam." Sheykh Mohammed Abdu was strong on the point that what was needed for the Mohammedan body politic was not merely reforms but a true religious reformation. On the question of the Caliphate he looked at that time, in common with most enlightened Moslems, to its reconstitution on a more spiritual basis. He explained to me how a more legitimate exercise of its authority might be made to give a new impulse to intellectual progress, and how little those who for centuries had held the title had deserved the spiritual headship of believers. The House of Othman for two hundred years had cared almost nothing for religion, and beyond the right of the sword had no claim any longer to allegiance. They were still the most powerful of Mohammedan princes and so able to do most for the general advantage, but unless they could be induced to take their position seriously a new Emir el Mumenin might legitimately be looked for. Certainly a new political basis was urgently required for the spiritual needs of Islam. In all this there was a tone of moderation in the expression of his views very convincing of their practical wisdom.

In the course of the winter I made with my wife our intended visit to Jeddah, where I gathered much information of the kind I sought as to the opinions of the various sects of Islam. No place accessible to Europeans could have been better chosen for the purpose, and I made the acquaintance of a number of interesting Moslems through the help of one Yusuf Effendi Kudsi, who had a connection with the English Consulate. Among them the most remarkable were Sheykh Hassan Johar, a learned and very intelligent Somali, Sheykh Abd-el-Rahman Mahmud from Hyderabad in India, Sheykh Meshaat of Mecca, several members of the Bassam family from Aneyzah in Nejd, and a certain Bedouin Sheykh, a highly educated man, from Southern Morocco. My stay in Jeddah, however, was but a short one, as I fell ill of a malarious fever very prevalent there, and this prevented any idea I may still have had of penetrating into the interior. The moment, too, I found was a most unfavourable one for any plan of this kind, through the new hostility of the Meccan authorities to England. Already the Sultan Abdul Hamid had begun to assert himself, a thing for many generations unknown to his Ottoman predecessors, as spiritual Head of Islam, and in Arabia especially he had become jealous of his authority, while his quarrel with our Government made him suspicious, more than of any other, of English influences. Only a few months before my visit to Jeddah he had made a vigorous assertion of his authority at Mecca by the appointment of a new Grand Sherif of strong reactionary and anti-European views. The former Grand Sherif Huseyn Ibn Aoun had been a man of liberal ideas and known for his friendly relations with the English Consulate, and had so incurred his displeasure and met a violent death. Whether this was in reality contrived by the Sultan, or perhaps his Valy, it is not possible precisely to say, but it was certainly believed to have been so when I was at Jeddah.

I learned the particulars of the Sherif Huseyn's death from his agent at Jeddah, Omar Nassif, who most certainly laid it to the Sultan's charge. According to this account, which I have since had confirmed to me from other quarters of authority, Huseyn had just ridden down from Mecca at the close of the pilgrimage, as the custom was, to Jeddah, there to give his blessing to the departing pilgrims. He had travelled down by night and was making his entrance on horseback to the seaport riding in state with an escort, partly Arab, partly Ottoman, intending to alight at Omar Nassif's house, when an Afghan pilgrim poorly dressed, came forward from the crowd as if to ask alms and stabbed him in the belly. The Sherif, though wounded, rode on and died in his agent's house in the course of the day, having, as I heard, been unskilfully treated for his wound which need not have been fatal. There were various circumstances which seemed to differentiate the case from one of fanaticism or common murder. The assassin was no Shiah schismatic, as was first supposed, but an orthodox Sunni, and he used language after his arrest which seemed to show that he considered himself commissioned. "There was an elephant," he said, when asked the reason for his deed, "the greatest beast of the forest, and to him was sent an ant, the least of living creatures, and the ant bit him and he died." Also

there was no open trial made of the assassin, who was executed within four days of his arrest, while everything was done to hush up as far as was possible and conceal the affair.

Huseyn's successor who was of the rival house of Zeyd, the Sherif Abdul Mutalleb, belonged to the extremest school of Mohammedan reaction. He was an aged man, old enough to have been Sherif at the time Mecca was occupied by the Wahhabis, when he had conformed, at least outwardly, to the Wahhabi doctrine. Now, in extreme age, he was reinstated as Prince in order to further the Pan-Islamic views held at Constantinople. Under Huseyn it would have been very possible for an Englishman to have travelled through the Hejaz without molestation, and both Doughty and Professor Robertson Smith had received his aid and protection. Now any such attempt would have been very dangerous, and, in fact, the French traveller Hüber lost his life in venturing in that same year. We consequently returned to Suez, and later by Ismaïlia into Syria.

Passing through Egypt I received the following letters from Hamilton in answer to two of mine. They are principally interesting as showing how the Government's attention to Eastern matters was already being diverted and distracted by their troubles nearer at home in Ireland. It is a curious and melancholy thing to observe how the necessity, as the Whigs in the Cabinet considered it to be, of putting down nationalism and liberty in Ireland reacted upon the fine feelings they had expressed so readily out of office of sympathy with national freedom in the East. Gladstone, whose inclination no doubt would have been for liberty in both directions, had weighed himself in the Cabinet by these Whig Ministers, his colleagues, who were all along bent on leading him in the opposite direction. Ireland throughout the history of the next two years proved the stumbling-block of his policy, and, as I will show in its place, the decision of coercion there was decided on in 1882 at the self-same Cabinet Council with the decision to coerce in Egypt. The connection of misfortune between the two countries was a fatality not a little tragical, both to the countries themselves and doubly so to English honour.

"10, Downing Street, Decr. 22, 1880.

"… I took the liberty of showing your letter to several who I knew would like to read it, including Lord Granville, Rivers Wilson, Pembroke, and Harry Brand. I think it especially pleased Rivers Wilson, who looks with a very tender eye on his work in Egypt, and who was naturally gratified to hear from an independent source that what he had so prominent a hand in had resulted in so much good. I am afraid he considers that his own contribution to the result has not been fully appreciated.

"Ireland has continued to monopolize all the time and energies of the Government, and I am afraid it is difficult to exaggerate the grave state of affairs in that distracted country. Thank goodness, we are now within hail of the re-assembling of Parliament. Whether or no the Government has erred on the side of over-patience and excessive forbearance remains to be proved, and it is not for me to venture to express an opinion. The present state of things is certainly a disgrace to this country; and the Government are driven reluctantly to hark back on the old stereotyped course of strong coercive measures. I am beginning, most unwillingly, to think that Ireland is not fitted for a Constitutional Government, and that, however much we may try to remove legitimate grievances, she will not be got into hand again without a return to something like a Cromwellian policy. It is heart-breaking work all round, and unless some extraordinary transformation can be effected, we shall probably have to submit in this country to any amount of shipwrecks of governments within the next few years. I feel very gloomy as to the look out. Would that we could apply to Ireland a regeneration such as you have found in Egypt… That wretched Ireland has nearly knocked the Government out of time as regards foreign policy. They will, however, still manage, I hope, to find a corner of room for Greece, and not let

that question entirely slide, which would inevitably mean war between Turkey and Greece. Greece could never contend single-handed with Turkey successfully, and Turkey at war would probably be the signal for a general revolt in Eastern Roumelia and Macedonia. I still trust some sort of compromise on the question of adjusting the territory of the kingdom of the Hellenes may be effected by the intervention of the Powers in the direction of a small slice northwards, and perhaps the handing over of Crete. There is no doubt that a means of strengthening and opening out Greece must be found, not only to keep the peace temporarily in the East, but to lay the foundations for some power that may grow into a set-off against the Slavic nationalities…"

"10, Downing Street, Feby. 11, 1881.

"Your letter has since its receipt made a little ministerial round. I read parts of it to Mr. Gladstone; and Lord Granville and Mr. Goschen have both had the benefit of perusing it themselves, and of perusing it, as I am told, with interest. Lord Granville, moreover, sent a copy of your postscript, which related to Indian matters, to Lord Hartington. I hope in having turned your information to official account I shall not be considered to have abused your confidence. I have shown it also to Harry Brand. His father, the Speaker, has had difficulties to encounter such as no predecessor in the Chair ever had before; and he has come out of the ordeal magnificently. What with unprecedented continuous sitting of the House for days and nights and wholesale suspensions of obstructive Members, we have been having most exciting Parliamentary times. I trust, however, that the neck of obstruction as of the Irish land-agitation has been fairly well broken; and when once the Coercive, or rather Protective, measures have been passed, and a fair, just and strong and comprehensive Land Bill has become law, we shall not be troubled again immediately with the Irish nightmare.

"Meanwhile of course all public attention has for the last few months been centred on that wretched God-forsaken country, and the public have not troubled their heads much with foreign affairs. However, the Greek question has not been forgotten. Lord Granville has been pulling the strings most diplomatically, and not, I hope, without success. Of course the great stumbling-block of making head with this difficult question has been the very shabby part which France has played, first blowing so hot and then blowing so cold. However, Bismarck has been induced to take the initiative in making a new proposal which may possibly lead to good results. The primary condition of all the Powers is of course to maintain the peace of Europe. If it were not that the outbreak of war between Turkey and Greece would almost inevitably lead to the outbreak of disturbances and fighting in Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia, and if it were not that Greece's chances single-handed in a combat would be very small, the natural preliminary to Greece raising herself in the European scale would be by an appeal to the sword. The modern Romans would not have had a united kingdom but for fighting for it, and the modern Greeks could hardly complain were they obliged to face similar difficulties and dangers. But apart from the dangers of a stand-up fight, Greece, having been made the special protégé of Europe, has a right not to be thrown overboard now. If the Berlin award cannot be enforced peacefully – and owing to France's action this seems to be admitted – I believe the massacre of the award has been termed in diplomatic phraseology, 'Le Barthélemy de St. Hilaire' – the best alternative seems to be to find some equivalent for Greece – I mean by compensating her elsewhere for what she does not obtain, Thessaly and

> Epirus, which she would accept and which the Powers would in concert help her to obtain. Such a proposal as this may possibly be the new departure. I am afraid your remedies, though far more effective, are too drastic for acceptance by Europe."

I do not remember what in my letters can have suggested this long digression about Greece, which did not particularly interest me at the time. The phraseology of the letter is so like Mr. Gladstone's own that I half think this and the previous letter must have been more or less dictated by him. For this reason I quote them almost *in extenso*, and because the long account of the difficulties of his Greek policy suggested to me the idea that perhaps he might, if there was a rising on the Greek frontier, also encourage one concurrently with it of the Arabs in Syria.

Our journey from Ismaïlia was an interesting one. Once across the Suez Canal we struck due eastwards, over a long track of sand dunes, to a very little known hill region called the Jebel Hellal. This, on a small scale, has some of the characteristics of Nejd, in vegetation and in the arrangement of its sand drifts, and we made friendly acquaintance there with the Aiaideh, the Teyyaha, and, further north, with the Terrabin tribes, as well as with those very Azazimeh with whom we had been so nearly having an encounter five years before. All these tribes were at that time independent of the Ottoman Government, living as they did in the no man's land which forms the frontier between Syria and Egypt. They had, however, as is always the case in independent Arabia, been at feud with each other and, with debts of blood on either side, the war had gone on and on, causing much disturbance even to the confines of Gaza. The Ottoman Government, to put an end to the trouble, had resorted to one of their common devices. They had invited the chiefs of the two principal tribes to a friendly conference with the Muteserif of Gaza, and had had them treacherously surrounded and captured, and were now holding them as hostages for the peace of the frontier in prison at Jerusalem. At that time the long tradition of English influence in Turkey was still alive among the Arabs, and as we passed through the tribes the relations of the imprisoned sheykhs besought my intervention with the Government to obtain their release. In pity for them I consented to do what I could, and I took with me the acting Sheykh of the Teyyaha, Ali Ibn Atiyeh, and the little son of the Sheykh of the Terrabin, who rode on with us to Jerusalem, making our way over the hills by no road so that we arrived at El Kuds, or rather at Bethlehem, without having entered a single town or village on all our journey. At Jerusalem I called at once upon our Consul, Moore, and obtained through him from the Pasha an order to visit the prisons, and found there the sheykhs I was in search of in an underground dungeon near the Mosque of Omar. They were in a pitiable condition, suffering from disease and long confinement, and I made an application to the governor on their behalf for an amnesty for them on condition that a general peace should be agreed to between the tribes, an agreement which I had got them to sign and seal. The Muteserif, however, declared himself incompetent to order their release, and referred me to his superior, the Valy of Damascus, as being in a position to do so; and to Damascus we therefore went, still accompanied by Ali Ibn Atiyeh and with our camel caravan, by way of the Jordan valley and the Hauran plain, a beautiful and interesting journey, for the whole country, there having been heavy rain, was a garden of Eden with flowers. In the Hauran we found war going on between the Ottoman troops and the Druses, but managed to slip by between the two armies without molestation and so arrived at Damascus, where we alighted at a little house in the Bab Touma quarter which I had purchased, with an acre of garden behind it, on our visit of three years before when we were starting for Nejd.

Our house at Damascus was next door to that of the well-known Englishwoman Lady Ellenborough, or, as she was now called, Mrs. Digby, who, after many curious adventures in the East and West, had married in her old age a Bedouin sheykh of one of the Anazeh tribe, and was living with her husband, Mijwel, at Damascus, being no longer able to bear the hardships of her former desert life. From her and from her excellent husband, whom we knew well, we received the advice that we should put our case for the release of the prisoners neither before the Consul nor directly before the Valy, but indirectly through the intermediary of their distinguished friend and our acquaintance of 1878, Seyyid Abd-el-Kader, whose influence at Damascus was more powerful on all things relating to the

Arabs than any other with the Government. Abd-el-Kader was then a very old man, and was leading a life of religious retirement and held in great reverence by all in the city, and amongst the Arabs in Syria especially, he had a large following, for he had often proved their protector. Mijwel assured me that it would be merely a matter of money with the Valy and that if the Seyyid would undertake the negotiation with a sufficient sum in hand it could be easily managed. I consequently called with him and Ali Ibn Atiyeh on Abd-el-Kader, whom we found with his eldest son Mohammed, a very worthy man, born to him while he was still in Algeria of an Algerian mother, and explained our errand, and the Seyyid gladly consented to be our intercessor with the Pasha, and if possible to arrange for the release of the Teyyaha and Terrabin sheykhs on the condition prescribed of a general peace between the tribes, and I left with him a bag containing 400 Napoleons in gold, which he considered would be a sufficient sum to obtain what we required. Bribery was so much a matter of course in dealing with Ottoman officials in those days that I do not think either the Seyyid or I or any of us had a scruple about offering the money. The sum was a large one, but my sympathy was strong with the imprisoned Bedouins, and I had it at heart to be able to send Ali Ibn Atiyeh back to Jerusalem with an order of release for them. So I made the sacrifice. As it turned out, however, the negotiation failed of the effect intended. A few days later the bag was brought back to me by Mohammed Ibn Abd-el-Kader untouched, with a message from his father that the Valy sent me his compliments and would have been very pleased to be agreeable to me in the matter but it was beyond his competence; it had already been referred to Constantinople, and it was there alone that the thing could be arranged.

The sequel of this little incident is curious, and has a direct bearing on events the following year in Egypt. Finding my local efforts vain, I took the Valy's advice and wrote to Goschen, our Ambassador at Constantinople, and laid the case before him, urging as a reason for his interesting himself in it, that possibly some day our Government might have need of securing the passage of the Suez Canal from possible attack on the eastern side should England happen to be at war with any other power. Goschen, if I remember rightly, took some steps in the matter, and when a few weeks later Lord Dufferin succeeded him at the embassy it was handed on to him, and eventually, after long waiting, what I had asked was granted, and the sheykhs were set free. My suggestion, however, about the tribes was to bear fruit later of a kind I did not at all contemplate or intend, for when in the summer of 1882, the military expedition under Wolseley was decided on, it was remembered by Goschen, or some one else connected with the Government, and, using my name with the Bedouins, a secret agent was sent precisely to the tribes I had befriended south of the Gaza to draw them into alliance with the English forces against the Egyptian Nationalist army. I was therefore, as they say, unworthily "hoist with my own petard." This was the famous Palmer mission, about which I shall have more to say in its place.

Syria and all the Arab frontier was at this time in a great state of political ferment. There were two currents of feeling there among Mohammedans, the one of fanaticism fostered by the Sultan, the other in favour of liberal reform, representing the two sides of the Pan-Islamic movement, and at Damascus it was represented to me that the feeling against the Sultan and the corrupt Ottoman administration was so strong that a general revolt might at any time occur. I spoke to Mohammed Ibn Abd-el-Kader about it, and found that he and his father were strongly on the liberal side and that, like the rest of the Arabic speaking Ulema, they favoured the idea of an Arabian Caliphate, if such could be made to come about; and the thought occurred to me that no one then living had a better title to be candidate for the Ottoman succession than Abd-el-Kader himself might have. I therefore begged Mohammed to sound the old Seyyid on the subject, and to ask him whether he would be willing, should such a movement come to a head, to be put forward as its leader. Mohammed did so, and brought back a message from his father to the effect that, though too old to take any active part in a movement of the kind himself, his sons would be willing, and he would not refuse to give his name as a candidate for the Caliphate, should such candidature be thrust upon him. There would, however, be no chance of success to the movement unless it should have support from without, the

Ottoman Government being militarily too strong, and it was arranged that I should communicate his answer confidentially to our Government and ascertain what attitude England would assume in case of a Syrian rising. This therefore I did, using my usual channel of communication with Mr. Gladstone, his private secretary Hamilton, asking what help the Arabian movement might count on. I suggested, in reference to Hamilton's letter already quoted, that such a movement might be favourably regarded by our Government, especially in connection with their difficulties with the Porte about Greece. Gladstone's interest, however, in the East and in foreign politics had by this time altogether cooled down, and Hamilton's answer was brief and discouraging. "I hope," he wrote, "that there is good prospect that the war between Greece and Turkey will be averted, and therefore I trust there will be no necessity to resort to your scheme in Syria. I can, I am afraid, only say that it is conceived that such a state of things might arise when something of the sort you suggest might be necessary, but that the case is not considered to have arisen. This is confused and enigmatic, but I fear I can say no more." With this I had to be content, and I made no delay in communicating the result to the Seyyid.

The rest of our journey that summer was without political interest. We again visited our friends the Anezeh Bedouins, whom we found encamped near Palmyra, but our dealings with them were merely about horses. The Anezeh care nothing about politics other than those of the desert and as little for the affairs of religion. They can hardly indeed be counted as even nominally Mohammedans, as they neither fast nor pray nor practice any Moslem observance. Their only connection with Islam is that they have in common with it the old Arabian customary law on which the law of the Sheriat was founded, but they do not, as far as I have ever been able to ascertain, hold any of the Moslem beliefs except vaguely and negatively the unity of God. They are without respect for Prophet or Saint or Koran, and know nothing whatever of a future life. With them we travelled northwards to the border of their wanderings and found ourselves at the beginning of the summer heat at Aleppo, and soon after once more in England.[6]

[6] It is worth recording that while at Aleppo on this occasion we made friends with two English officers afterwards prominently connected with Egypt and the Soudanese war, Colonel Stewart, who shared with Gordon in the defence of Khartoum against the Mahdi, and Colonel Sir Charles Wilson who succeeded to the command of the British army at Metemneh after the battle of Abu Klea. Stewart, at my suggestion, made a tour that summer among the Anazeh and Shammar Bedouins, but failed to get on good terms with them, the truth being that he was quite out of sympathy with Orientals. Wilson, a man of far wider ideals, accompanied us on our homeward journey as far as Smyrna, which we reached in the time of Midhat Pasha's arrest. Both were at that date Consuls in Asia Minor of the perambulating kind provided by the terms of the Cyprus Convention.

CHAPTER VI
BEGINNINGS OF THE REVOLUTION IN EGYPT

The summer of 1881 I spent almost entirely at Crabbet, writing the book which was the fruit of my winter experience: "The Future of Islam." It was composed somewhat in haste and under circumstances unfavourable to deliberate judgment, for in the very act of writing it, events crowded so closely on events, and portents upon portents that a calm forecast of Islam's destiny seemed at times almost impossible. Nevertheless, and in spite of many defects, I look upon the work as still of serious value, if only historically, as showing the condition of the Mohammedan hopes and fears of the day when it was written. In it I committed myself without reserve to the Cause of Islam as essentially the "Cause of Good" over an immense portion of the world, and to be encouraged, not repressed, by all who cared for the welfare of mankind. I gave an historical sketch of its origin, its glories, and its apparent decay, a decay which was very similar to that which had seemed to overtake Christendom four hundred years before, and which might be met as Christendom had met its troubles by a religious reformation and the freeing of its thought from the bondage of a too strict tradition impeding its evolution. I expounded the ideas, as I had learned them from Sheykh Abdu, of the liberal school of teaching, and appealed to all that was best among my own countrymen to sympathize with their hopes as against the party of reaction which, hide-bound in the old and evil ways, had nothing to offer but a recrudescence of fanaticism and a last desperate appeal against its many enemies to the sword. To England especially, as interested so largely in the future of Islam through India, I addressed myself, urging that her policy should be an active one of friendship with the better elements of Eastern thought in its struggle with the worse, not merely to profit by its decay for the extension of her own material interests. "The main point," I said, "is that England should fulfil the trust she has accepted (by her inheritance of the Mogul Empire and her long connection with Ottoman affairs) of developing, not destroying the existing elements of good in Asia. She cannot destroy Islam or dissolve her own connection with her. Therefore, in God's name, let her take Islam by the hand and encourage her boldly in the path of virtue. This is the only worthy course and the only wise one, wiser and worthier, I venture to assert, than a whole century of crusade."

The chapters of this little volume, as they came out in monthly numbers of the "Fortnightly Review," produced a considerable effect in England and also among the English-reading Moslems of India, and found their way, to some extent, in translation to Egypt. Already, while I was writing them, it had become clear that great events were imminent in the Mohammedan world and were even now in progress. Early in May the French Government with hardly a note of warning, and in pursuance of the secret arrangement made at Berlin three years before between M. Waddington and our Foreign Office, invaded Tunis and, on the fanciful pretext of protecting the Bey from a quite unreal danger threatened him by his subjects, occupied the western portion of the Regency and proclaimed a French Protectorate. This sudden act of aggression on a perfectly inoffensive and harmless neighbour was justified by nothing in the condition of the province either in the way of ill government or danger to Europeans or even financial embarrassment. The Bey himself was a mild and respectable personage, and had in no way forfeited the goodwill of his people. The seizure of his person by General Bréart, and the usurpation of his authority by the French Republic was an act of cynical illegality almost without parallel in the history of modern aggression upon weaker nations, if we except the invasion of Egypt by Bonaparte in 1799, and was generally condemned in England where the history of the Berlin betrayal was not as yet suspected. In the Mohammedan world it lit a flame of anger and dismay which gathered in intensity as the truth became slowly known. The western Tunisians, taken wholly by surprise at first, had hardly fired a shot against the French, and the Bey had been forced to sign the Treaty presented to him at the sword's point by Bréart, which surrendered the independence of

the Regency, before the real state of the case came to be understood. But in the eastern provinces the tribes of the desert took up arms, and before the middle of summer the revolt had spread to the Algerian Sahara and a wave of anger against Christendom was rolling eastwards which, as will be seen, had begun to affect Egypt dangerously, and remains in truth to this day responsible for precipitating the action of the liberal reformers there and of the army in demanding self government.

It is worth noting, as showing the complicity of our Government in this scandalous affair, that Lord Granville allowed himself to be content with an assurance given him by the French Government, that the occupation of the Regency was only for the restoration of order, though it was patent that order had not been so much as threatened, and that it would not continue a day longer than might be necessary to secure the safety of the Bey's Government – a line of falsehood closely imitated by Lord Granville himself the following year when the positions of France and England were reversed in Egypt. It is most noticeable too that, though Parliament was sitting at the time, Lord Salisbury, the leader of the opposition, maintained an absolute silence about Tunis, though his followers, who did not know his secret reasons, were clamorous for explanations. Bismarck was equally silent at Berlin, and no single Power of those who had been represented at Berlin dissented, though the Italian public was deeply aggrieved by the French action. The Sultan alone of them recorded his public protest, Tunis having been always reckoned as part of the Ottoman dominions. By the European Governments it was accepted speedily as a *fait accompli*.

The history of the rise of what in the summer of 1881 began to be known as the Egyptian National movement needs here to be told. It had its origin as a practical idea in the last desperate efforts made by the Khedive Ismaïl when he had quarrelled with Wilson to maintain himself in power against the consular tutelage in which he had, by his folly and his debts, placed himself. He sought to recover the moral status he had lost and the goodwill of his subjects by making to them a popular appeal for support, and in the spring of 1879 he proclaimed his intention of calling together an assembly of Notables. There is little doubt that his intention was, under the cloak of a national demand, to repudiate at least a portion of the debt, and though no one in Egypt, except perhaps certain European residents, thought him sincere, the idea of a constitutional form of government as a remedy for the ills they were suffering began from that time to be popularized at Cairo. Sheykhs Jemal-ed-din and his school had always maintained that the growing absolutism of Mohammedan princes in modern times was contrary to the spirit of Islam which in its essence was a Republic where every Moslem had the right of free speech in its assemblies, and where the authority of the ruler rested on his conformity to the law and on popular approval. Ismaïl was condemned by the Azhar reformers on the double ground of his being a breaker of the law and a political tyrant. In the spring of 1879 it had been much discussed among them in private how, and by what means, he could be deposed or even, if there were no other way, removed by assassination. It was the consciousness of his double peril, both at home and from Europe, and of the opinions held at the Azhar that determined him to appear as a Constitutionalist. Constitutionalism, it must, moreover, be remembered, was much in the air just then not only in Egypt, but at Constantinople, where an assembly had met convoked by decree of the Sultan only five years before. Little, therefore, as Ismaïl was trusted by the Reformers, his new move was one of which they could not but approve, and it was taken up and expounded by such printed organs of opinion as had furtively begun to be established at Cairo under their direction. Apart from the Azhar, there were not a few of the high officials who at this time were Constitutionalists, notably Sherif Pasha, Ali Pasha Mubarak and Mahmud Bey Sami el Barodi. Nor was this all. The Khedive's heir apparent and eventual successor, Mohammed Tewfik, had come under Jemal-ed-din's potent influence, and through him was in close communication with the Reformers, and had given them repeated pledges that if ever he came to the Khedivial throne he would govern on strictly constitutional lines. Ismaïl's latest Ministry, which lasted three months, included Tewfik and Sherif, Constitutionalists both, and they were actually in charge of the administration when the old Khedive was deposed.

Tewfik's accession was therefore greeted by Jemal-ed-din and the Reformers as a stroke of good fortune, and, though they regretted that it had not been in the power of the Egyptians themselves to depose the tyrant, they looked forward to the new *régime* with the confident expectation of men who had at last obtained a lever to their wishes. The new Khedive, however, like many another heir apparent when he has succeeded to power, was not long in changing his opinion, and a month had hardly elapsed before he had forgotten his promises and betrayed his friends. Tewfik's character was one of extreme weakness. The son of a woman who had been a servant only in his father's house, he had been from his childhood treated as of small account by Ismaïl and brought up by his mother in bodily fear of the unscrupulous Khedive, and in those habits of insincerity and dissimulation which in the East are the traditional safeguards of the unprotected. He had grown up in this way, in the harem more than with men, and had been unable to rid himself of a certain womanish timidity which prompted him always to yield his opinion in the presence of a stronger will than his own, and after yielding, to regain his ground, if possible, by indirect means and covertly as is the habit of women. He had, too, a large share of the womanish quality of jealousy and of the love of small vengeances. Otherwise, in his domestic life he was well-conducted as compared with most of his predecessors, and not unadorned with respectable virtues. As a ruler his was too negative a character not to be a danger to those who had to deal with him. His first impulse was always to conceal the truth and to place upon others the blame of any failure that might have occurred by his fault. His resentments were shown not by open displeasure, but by tale-bearing and false suggestion and the setting of one against another where he desired to prevail or be revenged. It has been said of him that he was never sincere, and that no one ever trusted him who was not betrayed.

When therefore on his accession Tewfik found himself placed between two forces with opposite ends in view, the force of his reforming friends urging him to fulfil his constitutional promises, and the force of the consulates forbidding him to part with any of his power, a power they intended to exercise in his name themselves, he consented first to his Minister Sherif's suggestion that he should issue a decree granting a Constitution and then at the instance of the Consuls refused to sign it. This led to Sherif's resignation, and the substitution in his place of a nominee of the Consulates, Riaz Pasha, on whom these counted to carry out their ideas of financial reform while leaving him full power, under the Rescript of 1878, to carry on the internal administration as he would, without check from any Council or Assembly, in the Khedive's name. The weakness shown by the Khedive in this, the first important decision of his reign, was the cause of all his future troubles. Had he remained loyal to his promises to the Reformers and to his Ministers, and summoned at that time a Council of Notables, he would have had his subjects enthusiastically with him and would have been spared the intrigues and counter intrigues which marked the next two years and prepared the way for the revolution of 1882. As it was, he found himself by his compliance deprived of all authority, and treated as a mere dummy prince by Consuls whose will he had obeyed and by his new Minister.

The character of Riaz has been much debated. At the time of my visit to Egypt in the autumn of 1881, his name was in execration with the Nationalists as the author of the violent but abortive measures which had been taken for their repression, but as I now think in part unjustly. Riaz was a man of the old *régime*

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.