

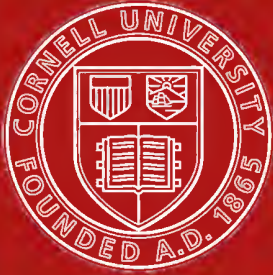
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THE MAHDI
1881-1885

THE WAR
IN
EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN

AN EPISODE IN
THE HISTORY OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE;

BEING
A DESCRIPTIVE ACCOUNT OF THE SCENES AND EVENTS OF THAT GREAT DRAMA,
AND SKETCHES OF THE PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN IT.

BY
THOMAS ARCHER, F.R.H.S.,
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"PICTURES AND ROYAL PORTRAITS," ETC.

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THE WAR

IN

EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN.

CHAPTER VI.

The Question of the Soudan and England. Opinion of the Ex-khedive. State of Affairs at Khartûm. Embarrassment of the British Government. Gordon Interviewed. The Vox Populi. Gordon agrees to return to the Soudan. Starts for Egypt. His Mission, and its Object. Zebehr Pasha again. The Journey and Arrival at Khartûm. Active Measures. Halfiyeh. Position of Berber. Discussions in England. Egyptian Financial Changes.

It is not to be wondered at that the Egyptian ministry was greatly perturbed. In the beginning of the year 1884 they had had to face the probability of an attempted invasion of Egypt itself by the savage and rebellious forces of the Mahdi. The condition of the Soudan provinces was almost hopeless so far as the maintenance of the authority of the government was concerned. It had become too evident that Egyptian troops could not stand before the wild and reckless onslaughts of the Baggara, the Hadendowa, and other fierce tribes of the desert, who had entered on the war stimulated by violent fanaticism, and seemed to be determined to pursue it to the death. The victories of the false prophet and his lieutenants had so raised his reputation that a host of new adherents followed his standard, and made up for the vast numbers who had been slain when they were confronted by sections of tribes as resolute and warlike as themselves, and who, though inferior in numbers, had been led by men with some knowledge of warfare and military tactics, and were provided with firearms in addition to the ordinary weapons; so that they were able to sustain the feeble courage or to threaten the cowardice of the untrained Egyptian recruits.

Nearly the whole of the Soudan was in a state of rebellion before the defeat of the followers of Osman Digma at El Teb and Tamai. The English government had maintained the declaration of the principle first laid down, and refused to recognize that they should be called upon practically to concern themselves either with the defence of the Soudan or its restitution to Egyptian rule. This, they contended, was the business of the Egyptian government if it was to be effected at all, and if it could not be accomplished with the means at the command of the viceroy and his ministry it had better be abandoned, when a small force of British troops would remain to assist in preventing any invasion of Egypt itself by the rebels.

The advice that had been seriously offered to the Egyptian government was that they should relieve the invested garrisons and relinquish the western provinces of the Soudan as quickly as possible. This advice was, as we have seen, in accordance with the expressed opinion of Lord Dufferin, and agreed in some measure with that held by General Gordon at the time that he had retired from the governor-generalship of the Soudan provinces.

It must be remembered, however, that Lord Dufferin had been very doubtful whether the Eastern Soudan could be safely relinquished, and the khedive himself was entirely opposed to the abandonment of a territory which had already cost so much, and might under better conditions be made to yield a large amount of national wealth. Of course it is easy for anybody to be wise after the event; but at the time just before the interposition of General Graham's force and our protection of Suakim, a good many people agreed with the ex-khedive Ismail when he was consulted by a visitor on the subject of the disaster in the Soudan.

This shrewd personage attributed the rebellion in that region to the weakness of the government at Cairo. His highness said that in every part of the Soudan much power is in the hands of a number of religious chiefs, who can easily be managed, but are dangerous if neglected. He contrived to keep them quiet in his time by a small monthly stipend, which the Control, unwisely, as he thought, discontinued. He was of opinion that recent misfortunes

might have been avoided if the railway from Suakim on the Red Sea, to Berber on the Nile, had been completed to the Soudan; and it was false economy that led to the abandonment of the scheme by the Control. The manner of sending the troops to the war had also, his highness contended, materially helped to the disaster. "Arabi's disbanded soldiers were sent up to reinforce Hicks Pasha like so many malefactors, deprived of their arms, dishonoured, and often led by officers who were forced to accept the task as a punishment, or even a form of exile. How could they fight with the material he had? I am not surprised at the calamity which has overtaken Egypt." To the question, "But does your highness think the Soudan should be at once abandoned?" "Certainly not," answered Ismail; "for the moment I think every exertion must be put forth to secure the part of the country still in the possession of Egypt, and the question of reconquest should be postponed till the enterprise can be undertaken in a regular and organized manner, and not piecemeal as a solitary and adventurous enterprise. Unless a stand is made it is impossible to foresee the possible consequences for Egypt. I think, in view of the present crisis of affairs, one of the princes—*e.g.* my son Prince Hassan—should be named Governor-general of the Soudan, with plenary and uncontrolled powers. He could do a great deal, although the weakness of the executive at Cairo might certainly impair his chances of success." "Might I ask," continued the interlocutor, "if your highness thinks English troops could be sent to the Soudan at the present juncture?" "No," answered Ismail; "such a step might involve still greater evils. Egyptian troops, if well officered, are best suited for the work of pacification." Ismail feared that a spirit of disaffection was rife among the Bedouin tribes of Egypt. "What, then, about the next move of the Mahdi? Will he descend upon Lower Egypt, or will he remain where he is?" "The Mahdi," said Ismail, "will probably advance from Obeid upon Dongola, and from Dongola to Berber, where he will entirely sever communications between the Soudan and Egypt." "But, Khartûm? Will that be taken *en route*?" "Not at all. It is quite possible

to reach Dongola without passing through Khartûm. He is at Obeid. He will probably advance northward, leaving Khartûm on his right, and seize Dongola. From Dongola it is quite easy to strike Berber, and at Berber he will be able to sever all communications between the base at Suakim on the Red Sea and Khartûm. It is impossible for Egypt to abandon her hold on her possessions in the south. It may be difficult to reconquer them. It is impossible to abandon them. The road must be kept open from Suakim to Berber, from Berber to Khartûm, and from Khartûm to Sennâr. And that is what leads me to attach great importance to the defeat of Captain Moncrieff at Tokar. That reverse at the hands of Bedouins shows that even close to the littoral of the Red Sea communications are not safe. The rising of these Bedouins should be suppressed at once."

It was rather an artful touch to suggest making either of the princes sole ruler of the provinces, especially as one of them had already been suspected of having on his own account, or as an agent of Ismail, increased the dissatisfaction that resulted in the rebellion of Arabi; but still there is much in the opinion which the ex-khedive expressed that showed which way the intention of the Egyptian ministry would be likely to turn, on their considering the subject of abandoning the Soudan.

The determination of the British government to restrict their operations to Egypt proper and the advice that they had given with regard to the abandonment of the Soudan was repeatedly considered in the Egyptian councils during the early part of January, 1884, and it was resolved to offer a partial compliance with the representations which had been so seriously urged. It was proposed to resign Darfûr, Kordofan, and the other provinces, which were already in the hands of the rebellious natives and the followers of the Mahdi, and to offer the Eastern Soudan to the sultan, but the Egyptian government strongly objected to retire from Khartûm. This decision may have been influenced by the opinion that the insurrection would eventually die out either because of dissensions among the tribes or from their probable disaffection when the Mahdi attempted to subject them to the

only kind of authority which would keep them under control. In such an event the possession of Khartûm might mean the opportunity of regaining the lost provinces.

But the avowed policy of the British government had been to limit intervention to the lending of a military force to the khedive for the purpose of suppressing a rebellion within his own proper territory, and to leaving a much-reduced but sufficient body of troops for the protection of foreigners and the support of the government during the reconstruction and reform of the internal administration. It did not include military aid in retaining or reconquering the extensive provinces which Egypt had never been able to govern with unquestioned authority, nor could it be interpreted to mean the detention of a British army to protect Egypt while the government of the khedive concentrated its resources for the recovery of the Soudan.

The proposals of the Egyptian ministry were answered by a decided message requiring that all the Egyptian forces should be recalled to the territory within a line drawn at Wady Halfa (the second cataract of the Nile, 350 miles north of Khartûm), and that they should be concentrated for the defence of the country, in which, as an implied concession, they would be assisted by British troops should the invasion of this line be threatened. It was also represented that there would be no objection offered to the cession of the Eastern Soudan to Turkey so long as it was taken over at the expense of the Turkish government and that no part of the cost of taking possession should fall upon Egypt. This message had the intended effect of causing a crisis in the Egyptian cabinet. Cherif Pasha and his ministry resigned, and a new cabinet was formed under Nubar Pasha, the man of whom Gordon said that he would have to be made prime minister if anything was to be done to hold the Soudan provinces. Mustapha Pasha Fehmi was appointed minister of finance.

But events were too rapid and circumstances too difficult to be controlled either by the advice of the British government or the compliance or redetermination of the Egyptian ministry. Colonel Coetlogon, who had cleared the White Nile of the rebels and had

returned to Khartûm to take the command there, sent a message imploring the Egyptian government, as it could not relieve the garrison, to give orders for its retreat, as with almost a third part of the troops disaffected and surrounded by a hostile population they would soon be shut up within the place, unable either to retreat or to escape.

The reply of the Egyptian ministry was a telegraphic instruction that all the troops in the Soudan should be collected, Khartûm evacuated, and the stores destroyed. This was much more easily said than done, and it is possible that Nubar Pasha was aware of it.

When our government were informed that these orders had been sent they were also apprised of the enormous difficulties that lay in the way of obeying them. The civil population of Khartûm was about 11,000, the garrison under the command of Colonel Coetlogon amounted to about 6000, and, as the civilians at all events would have to make the journey by the river, several months would be required to obtain boats and make preparations for leaving the place.

After the destruction of the army of Hicks Pasha the whole Soudan was in a blaze, and though Colonel Coetlogon, on whom the command at Khartûm devolved, was doing his best to defend Khartûm and to prepare for abandoning it, it soon became a question whether he would be able to do either with the force at his disposal. All kinds of opinions had been expressed as to the best course to be adopted, but, unhappily, the rebellion did not stay while either of the recommendations that had been put forward could be reduced to practice. It was suspected in some quarters that Egyptian policy would be to let things drift and to rely on England being in some way compelled to go to the rescue. It was at one time supposed that Khartûm would be given up and Berber made the frontier post; but many who knew the country, and among them Sir Samuel Baker, thought that Khartûm could be made impregnable, a dozen steamers on the White and Blue Niles, at whose junction it is situated, putting it beyond the reach of attack. He proposed having a strong garrison at Dongola, just above the third cataract, and between Dongola

and Khartûm, a chain of fortified forts which would ensure the safety of the Nile valley, while it might be worth while to secure the aid of Abyssinia by offering her the coveted port of Massowa on the Red Sea.

This, however, was at the end of 1883, and by the time that the Nubar Pasha ministry had been formed the revolt had spread to both sides of the Blue Nile, telegraphic communication with Sennâr had been cut off, and a week later Lupton Bey reported that the natives in his province had rebelled, and the road between Messera er Rek and Dem Suleiman was stopped. Berber itself had been attacked by 4000 Bishareen Arabs, who had been repulsed by the Bashi-Bazouks of the garrison. Colonel Coetlogon's message had said that it might be possible to evacuate Khartûm if orders reached him at once, but that it would soon be impossible. Not only were the garrison and the Arab and foreign Christian population of the town to be considered, but the evacuation of the province would have to be effected, and the entire force south of the proposed frontier exceeded 40,000.

It was reported that all the military and civil officials knew that the town, without large supports, was untenable. Those of the inhabitants who held large stores of merchandise naturally wished that the town might be held to the bitter end. The total of soldiers in the place was 6100 men, of whom 2000 were Shaggeyas, known to be disaffected, and black troops who were not trustworthy. The whole garrison was demoralized on account of the long arrears of pay due to them. The earthworks were about 8000 mètres in extent.

The population, slaves, and servants would have to be saved before the army marched. To effect this there were only two small and old steamers which could go to Berber. It was evident that the evacuation would take months to accomplish, and the river was low.

On the 14th of January the steamer *Ismailia* arrived at Khartûm from Equatorial Africa, and on board was Dr. Bohndorf, a gentleman who had travelled for five years in the equatorial provinces. He reported that Jean Maria Schuver, a Dutch

explorer who had left Khartûm in the previous July on the same steamer, had quitted the vessel in opposition to the authorities, and had tried to reach Lupton Bey in the Bahr Gazelle by a short cut, but had been attacked and killed by the Dingas. Lupton Bey was completely cut off. The enemy was approaching toward Khartûm from more than one direction. In a few days it was deemed very improbable that the retreat of the inhabitants could be effected. A deadlock seemed to be imminent if it had not already occurred. Colonel D. Stewart, who had been so excellently employed in the personal inquiry and report with respect to the provinces of the Soudan in 1883, of which we have already noticed the importance, had come to England after the completion of the commission with which he had been intrusted, and the report which was at that time compiled in the intelligence branch of the quartermaster-general's department of the war office and afterwards published, contained much of the valuable information that he was able to impart to the government.

As the inquiries which Colonel Stewart had undertaken were completed there was no further occasion for him to remain in the Soudan, especially after affairs at Khartûm had been placed in the hands of officers appointed by the khedive.

The repeated declarations of the British government that it would undertake no responsibilities in the Soudan were maintained, and the ministry was anxious not to take any step that would seem to encourage the Egyptians to rely on their interposition for the purpose of aiding in the suppression of the Mahdi's rebellion, or the protection of the provinces beyond the actual Egyptian territory; but they were now urged on both sides to overpass the boundary-line which they had marked as the limit of their policy. The Egyptian government was apparently waiting either helplessly or intentionally without affording any adequate assistance to Khartûm, and it was only after the emphatic advice of the English cabinet that the order to retreat was sent to Colonel Coetlogon, too late for him then to be able to obey the instructions without immediate and effectual aid, which was not forthcoming.

Omdurman.

White Nile.

The United Rivers.

Tuti.

Isle of Tuti.

The Blue Nile.

KHARTŪM, THE CHIEF TOWN OF THE SOUDAN - LOOKING NORTH.

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At the same time, as we have seen, the attempts of the Egyptian forces to relieve the garrisons at Tokar and Sinkat, and to protect Suakim, had been entirely inadequate, and Baker Pasha was preparing to proceed against the rebels in the Eastern Soudan with what proved to be another inadequate force.

It was then that our ministry was being assailed not only by opponents in parliament, but by a large section, if not by a majority in the country, and by many of the more influential newspapers. Public opinion appeared to be changing if that of the government was not, and it cannot be denied that the position which the ministry had assumed was one exceedingly difficult if not altogether untenable. We had an army of protection, if not of occupation, in Egypt, where the government of the country had been remodelled under a scheme of reformed administration which they had initiated. Our influence was paramount, so that the "advice" to abandon the Soudan provinces was followed by a resignation of the Egyptian ministry, and the appointment of another cabinet ready to carry out the behests of the protecting power, which was thereby compelled to take a more active part in Egyptian policy. Our representative at Cairo, Sir Evelyn Baring (who had succeeded Mr. Malet), was ready to insist on advice being followed, though it was opposed to the wishes and sentiments of the khedive and most of his ministers, and not in complete accordance with the opinion of those who had had most experience of the country, including Sir Samuel Baker and General Gordon. The policy of our government was strained by the force of events, and the refusal to take some further measures for the relief of the imperilled garrisons grew fainter.

No government could have foreseen the extraordinary spread of the Mahdi's insurrection. Any government would perhaps have been justified, at the time of the intervention to suppress Arabi, in announcing that the occupation of Egypt by their troops would be solely for the purpose of protecting foreign residents; and as it had been asked for by the Egyptian government, and complacently endorsed by the European powers, that its purpose was defined, and should not be changed into that of affording

permanent and exterior aid to the khedive in dealing with revolted provinces. But conditions changed with such rapidity that the very position we had been obliged to assume in relation to the organization of a better government for the prevention of future rebellion, seemed to necessitate the abandonment of the policy which had been announced, namely, limited and temporary protection both of loyal Egyptians and of foreigners. We had remained to settle the consequences of our interposition in an internal rebellion, and now were face to face with an insurrection not only in the distant western provinces, but in the eastern district, where the seaboard from Massowa to Suakim, and inland as far as the White Nile, was threatened.

Neither the pressure of events, made almost irretrievable by the delays and incapacity of the Egyptian government to deal with them, nor the persistent and repeated censure of the opposition, nor the change of opinion which was to be observed in the country, drove Mr. Gladstone's ministry to what their opponents called prompt, but which they would have designated rash action. They were determined to do nothing which would amount to an armed intervention necessitating the continued occupation of the country, and they would not recede from their refusal to interpose for the purpose of enabling Egypt to retain Khartûm and the western provinces. At the same time they had prepared to take another step which, as was afterwards proved, indefinitely increased their responsibility, and gave a new argument to the few opponents who declared that we ought never to have meddled with Egyptian affairs at all nor fired a shot at Alexandria. It was determined that though we could not consistently aid in the retention of Khartûm and the other strongholds of the Soudan provinces by the Egyptian government, we might, in accordance with advice which had been so peremptory as to put an end to a ministry, assist in the evacuation of these places and the establishment in them of a native government of some kind.

It is not surprising that, directly this solution of the difficulty appeared possible, the thoughts of the responsible ministers should turn to General Gordon, whose remarkable successes in China and

his extraordinary achievements in the Soudan, no less than his courage, honesty, and singleness of purpose, seemed to them most eminently to qualify him for conducting such an enterprise as that of bringing out the inhabitants of Khartûm in safety, and exercising some influence upon the natives of the adjacent provinces.

That the government had been looking ahead further than their assailants had given them credit for, was afterwards shown when it transpired that months before Colonel Coetlogon's message asking for aid had reached Cairo they had proposed to the Egyptian government that General Gordon should be commissioned to go to the Western Soudan; but the suggestion was not received with favour either by them or by our own representative at Cairo. They thought that under the circumstances then existing it would not be desirable for General Gordon to go out, and it was to be regretted, as events showed, that our government did not either abandon the proposal altogether or insist on its being accepted promptly. This, however, would have been undertaking the kind of responsibility which they had all along denied and refused, and as General Gordon himself was by no means anxious to go at that time the matter remained in abeyance.

At the end of 1883, and at the opening of 1884, however, General Gordon's reluctance had considerably diminished, and at the same time his name was being publicly mentioned as that of the man who could, if any man could, undertake the difficult task of bringing the inhabitants of Khartûm safely to Suakim or to Cairo, and pacifying the surrounding population. The plan was being everywhere talked about, and it was strongly advocated by the press, for in the first days of January the representative of an influential evening newspaper published a statement by General Gordon himself which is of so much importance in estimating the position of affairs, and also the attitude of Gordon in relation to them, that the greater part of it may with advantage come into this narrative:—

“So you would abandon the Soudan? But the Eastern Soudan is indispensable to Egypt. It will cost you far more to retain your hold upon Egypt proper, if you abandon your hold

of the Eastern Soudan to the Mahdî or to the Turk, than it would to retain your hold upon Eastern Soudan by the aid of such material as exists in the provinces. Darfûr and Kordofan must be abandoned. That I admit; but the provinces lying to the east of the White Nile should be retained, and north of Sennâr. The danger to be feared is not that the Mahdi will march northward through Wady Halfa; on the contrary, it is very improbable that he will ever go so far north. The danger is altogether of a different nature. It arises from the influence which the spectacle of a conquering Mohammedan power established close to your frontiers will exercise upon the population which you govern. In all the cities in Egypt it will be felt that what the Mahdî has done they may do; and as he has driven out the intruder and the infidel, they may do the same. Nor is it only England that has to face this danger. The success of the Mahdi has already excited dangerous fermentation in Arabia and Syria. Placards have been posted in Damascus calling upon the population to rise and drive out the Turks. If the whole of the Eastern Soudan is surrendered to the Mahdi, the Arab tribes on both sides of the Red Sea will take fire. In self-defence the Turks are bound to do something to cope with so formidable a danger, for it is quite possible that if nothing is done the whole of the Eastern question may be reopened by the triumph of the Mahdi. I see it is proposed to fortify Wady Halfa, and prepare there to resist the Mahdî's attack. You might as well fortify against a fever. Contagion of that kind cannot be kept out by fortifications and garrisons. But that it is real and that it does exist will be denied by no one cognizant with Egypt and the East. In self-defence, the policy of evacuation cannot possibly be justified.

There is another aspect of the question. You have 6000 men in Khartûm. What are you going to do with them? You have garrisons in Darfûr, in Bahr Gazelle, and Gondokoro. Are they to be sacrificed? Their only offence is their loyalty to their sovereign. For their fidelity you are going to abandon them to their fate. You say they are to retire upon Wady Halfa. But

Gondokoro is 1500 miles from Khartûm, and Khartûm is 350 only from Wady Halfa. How will you move your 6000 men from Khartûm—to say nothing of other places—and all the Europeans in that city through the desert to Wady Halfa? Where are you going to get the camels to take them away? Will the Mahdi supply them? If they are to escape with their lives, the garrison will not be allowed to leave with a coat on their backs. They will be plundered to the skin, and even then their lives may not be spared. Whatever you may decide about evacuation, you cannot evacuate, because your army cannot be moved. You must either surrender absolutely to the Mahdi or defend Khartûm at all hazards. The latter is the only course which ought to be entertained. There is no serious difficulty about it. The Mahdi's forces will fall to pieces of themselves; but if in a moment of panic orders are issued for the abandonment of the whole of the Eastern Soudan a blow will be struck against the security of Egypt and the peace of the East which may have fatal consequences.

The great evil is not at Khartûm, but at Cairo. It is the weakness of Cairo which produces disaster in the Soudan. It is because Hicks was not adequately supported at the first, but was thrust forward upon an impossible enterprise by the men who had refused him supplies when a decisive blow might have been struck, that the Western Soudan has been sacrificed. The Eastern Soudan may, however, be saved if there is a firm hand placed at the helm in Egypt. Everything depends on that.

What, then, you ask, should be done? I reply, Place Nubar in power. Nubar is the one supremely able man among Egyptian ministers. He is proof against foreign intrigue, and he thoroughly understands the situation. Place him in power, support him through thick and thin, give him a free hand; and let it be distinctly understood that no intrigues either on the part of Tewfik or any of Nubar's rivals will be allowed for a moment to interfere with the execution of his plans. You are sure to find that the energetic support of Nubar will sooner or later bring you into collision with the khedive; but if that sovereign really desires, as he says, the welfare of his country, it will be necessary

for you to protect Nubar's administration from any direct or indirect interference on his part. Nubar can be depended upon; that I can guarantee. He will not take office without knowing that he is to have his own way; but if he takes office it is the best security that you can have for the restoration of order to the country. Especially is this the case with the Soudan. Nubar should be left untrammelled by any stipulations concerning the evacuation of Khartûm. There is no hurry. The garrisons can hold their own at present. Let them continue to hold on until disunion and tribal jealousies have worked their natural results in the camp of the Mahdi. Nubar should be free to deal with the Soudan in his own way. How he will deal with the Soudan of course I cannot profess to say, but I should imagine that he would appoint a governor-general at Khartûm with full powers, and furnish him with two millions sterling—a large sum, no doubt, but a sum which had much better be spent now than wasted in a vain attempt to avert the consequences of an ill-timed surrender. Sir Samuel Baker, who possesses the essential energy and single tongue requisite for the office, might be appointed governor-general of the Soudan; and he might take his brother as commander-in-chief.

It should be proclaimed in the hearing of all the Soudanese, and engraved on tablets of brass, that a permanent constitution was granted to the Soudanese by which no Turk or Circassian would ever be allowed to enter the province to plunder its inhabitants in order to fill his own pockets, and that no immediate emancipation of slaves would be attempted. Immediate emancipation was denounced in 1833 as confiscation in England, and it is no less confiscation in the Soudan to-day. Whatever is done in that direction should be done gradually, and by a process of registration. Mixed tribunals might be established, if Nubar thought fit, in which European judges would co-operate with the natives in the administration of justice. Police inspectors also might be appointed, and adequate measures taken to root out the abuses which prevail in the prisons.

With regard to Darfûr, I should think that Nubar would

probably send back the family and the heir of the Sultan of Darfûr. If subsidized by the government and sent back with Sir Samuel Baker, he would not have much difficulty in regaining possession of the kingdom of Darfûr, which was formerly one of the best governed of African countries. As regards Abyssinia, the old warning should not be lost sight of—‘Put not your trust in princes;’ and place no reliance upon the King of Abyssinia, at least outside his own country. Zoula and Bogos might be ceded to him with advantage, and the free right of entry by the port of Massowa might be added; but it would be a mistake to give him possession of Massowa, which he would ruin. A commission might also be sent down with advantage to examine the state of things in Harrar, opposite Aden, and see what iniquities are going on there, as also at Berbera and Zeila. By these means, and by the adoption of a steady, consistent policy at headquarters, it would be possible—not to say easy—to re-establish the authority of the khedive between the Red Sea and Sennâr.

As to the cost of the Soudan, it is a mistake to suppose that it will necessarily be a charge on the Egyptian exchequer. It will cost two millions to relieve the garrisons and to quell the revolt; but that expenditure must be incurred any way; and in all probability, if the garrisons are handed over to be massacred and the country evacuated, the ultimate expenditure would exceed that sum. At first, until the country is pacified, the Soudan will need a subsidy of £200,000 a year from Egypt. That, however, would be temporary. During the last years of my administration the Soudan involved no charge upon the Egyptian exchequer. The bad provinces were balanced against the good, and an equilibrium was established. The Soudan will never be a source of revenue to Egypt, but it need not be a source of expense. That deficits have arisen, and that the present disaster has occurred, is entirely attributable to a single cause—and that is the grossest misgovernment.

The cause of the rising in the Soudan is the cause of all popular risings against Turkish rule wherever they have occurred. No one who has been in a Turkish province and has witnessed

the results of the Bashi-Bazouk system, which excited so much indignation some time ago in Bulgaria, will need to be told why the people of the Soudan have risen in revolt against the khedive. The Turks, the Circassians, and the Bashi-Bazouks have plundered and oppressed the people in the Soudan, as they plundered and oppressed them in the Balkan peninsula. Oppression begat discontent; discontent necessitated an increase of the armed force at the disposal of the authorities; this increase of the army force involved an increase of expenditure, which again was attempted to be met by increasing taxation, and that still further increased the discontent. And so things went on in a dismal circle until they culminated, after repeated deficits, in a disastrous rebellion. That the people were justified in rebelling nobody who knows the treatment to which they were subjected will attempt to deny. Their cries were absolutely unheeded at Cairo. In despair they had recourse to the only method by which they could make their wrongs known; and, on the same principle that Absalom fired the corn of Joab, so they rallied round the Mahdi, who exhorted them to revolt against the Turkish yoke. I am convinced that it is an entire mistake to regard the Mahdi as in any sense a religious leader—he personifies popular discontent.

All the Soudanese are potential Mahdis, just as all the Egyptians are potential Arabis. The movement is not religious, but an outbreak of despair. Three times over I warned the late khedive that it would be impossible to govern the Soudan on the old system after my appointment to the governor-generalship. During the three years that I wielded full powers in the Soudan I taught the natives that they had a right to exist. I waged war against the Turks and Circassians who had harried the population. I had taught them something of the meaning of liberty and justice, and accustomed them to a higher ideal of government than that with which they had previously been acquainted. As soon as I had gone the Turks and Circassians returned in full force; the old Bashi-Bazouk system was re-established; my old employés were persecuted; and a population which had begun to appreciate something like decent government was flung back to suffer the worst

excesses of Turkish rule. The inevitable result followed; and thus it may be said that the egg of the present rebellion was laid in the three years during which I was allowed to govern the Soudan on other than Turkish principles.

The Soudanese are a very nice people. They deserve the sincere compassion and sympathy of all civilized men. I got on very well with them, and I am sincerely sorry at the prospect of seeing them handed over to be ground down once more by their Turkish and Circassian oppressors. Yet, unless an attempt is made to hold on to the present garrisons, it is inevitable that the Turks, for the sake of self-preservation, must attempt to crush them. They deserve a better fate. It ought not to be impossible to come to terms with them, to grant them a free amnesty for the past, to offer them security for decent government in the future. If this were done, and the government intrusted to a man whose word was truth, all might yet be re-established. So far from believing it impossible to make an arrangement with the Mahdi, I strongly suspect that he is a mere puppet put forward by Ilyas, Zebehr's father-in-law, and the largest slave-owner in Obeid, and that he has assumed a religious title to give colour to his defence of the popular rights.

There is one subject on which I cannot imagine anyone can differ about. That is the impolicy of announcing our intention to evacuate Khartûm. Even if we were bound to do so we should have said nothing about it. The moment it is known that we have given up the game, every man will go over to the Mahdi. All men worship the rising sun. The difficulties of evacuation will be enormously increased, if, indeed, the withdrawal of our garrison is not rendered impossible.

The late khedive, who is one of the ablest and worst-used men in Europe, would not have made such a mistake, and under him the condition of Egypt proper was much better than it is to-day. Now, with regard to Egypt, the same principle should be observed that must be acted upon in the Soudan. Let your foundations be broad and firm, and based upon the contentment and welfare of the people. Hitherto, both in the Soudan and in

Egypt, instead of constructing the social edifice like a pyramid, upon its base, we have been rearing an obelisk which a single push may overturn. Our safety in Egypt is to do something for the people. That is to say, you must reduce their rent, rescue them from the usurers, and retrench expenditure. Nine-tenths of the European employés might probably be weeded out with advantage. The remaining tenth—thoroughly efficient—should be retained; but whatever you do, do not break up Sir Evelyn Wood's army, which is destined to do good work. Stiffen it as much as you please, but with Englishmen, not with Circassians. Circassians are as much foreigners in Egypt as Englishmen are, and certainly not more popular. As for the European population, let them have charters for the formation of municipal councils, for raising volunteer corps, and for organizing in their own defence. Anything more shameful than the flight from Egypt in 1882 I never read. Let them take an example from Shanghai, where the European settlement provides for its own defence and its own government. I should like to see a competent special commissioner of the highest standing—such a man, for instance, as Mr. W. E. Forster, who is free at once from traditions of the elders and of the foreign office, and of the bondholders—sent out to put Nubar in the saddle, sift out unnecessary employés, and warn evil-doers in the highest places that they will not be allowed to play any tricks. If that were done it would give confidence everywhere, and I see no reason why the last British soldier should not be withdrawn from Egypt in six months' time.

I hope you will explain that I did not wish to press my opinions upon the public. I am very reluctant to say anything calculated to embarrass the government in a very difficult crisis; but when you appealed to me I did feel moved at the thought of the poor Soudanese, whom I knew so well and loved so much; and I thought that for once I might, for their sake, depart from the resolution which I had formed in my mind to leave these things to be governed by the Higher Power which cannot err, without comment on my part. They are a good people, the poor Soudanese, and if I can do anything for them I shall be only too

glad. But although I have spoken to you quite frankly, I should be much obliged if, when you publish these remarks, you would let it be distinctly understood that I do not wish to depart again from the rule which I have mentioned."

Our government, doubtless, felt that they could only maintain the refusal to interpose for the purpose of maintaining the Egyptian rule in the Soudan by not suffering themselves to be driven either by the imperfect conclusions which had begun to influence a large proportion of the public, or by the opposition, who were constantly urging them to a course which would have resulted either in withdrawing the British troops and leaving the khedive to shift for himself in Egypt, with the probability of renewed disturbances at Cairo and other parts of the country, or in engaging in military operations which would involve active occupation of Egypt, the establishment of a British protectorate, and probably the actual administration of the affairs of the country. The persistency with which the ministry were urged both by the opposition and the public had the effect of closing their mouths, while demands for a distinct statement of their ultimate intentions were made while the course of events rendered a declaration of their future course more and more difficult if not altogether impossible. There is no need to occupy these pages with a detailed account of the proceedings in parliament which harassed the ministry, at a time, too, when the questions of the provisions of a new extension of the franchise, and a redistribution of parliamentary representation, were being keenly discussed, and the affairs of Ireland claimed earnest and unremitting attention.

On the 15th of January Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at Newcastle, declared that the government would leave neither Ireland nor Egypt to become a prey to anarchy. He maintained that in spite of all drawbacks and delays, such as the outbreak of cholera, the collapse of the Egyptian administration, and the defeat of the Egyptian forces in the Soudan, for none of which the English government were responsible, the duty of that government was clear—to fulfil the pledges already given, of leaving Egypt to the

Egyptians so soon as order was re-established and institutions with some reasonable prospect of stability were created. They could not leave Egypt to anarchy, but, on the other hand, they did not, and ought not to withdraw any of the assurances they had given. The task was likely to be more difficult than they had supposed, and to take a longer time than they had anticipated.

This was just before the engagement of the services of General Gordon to go to Khartûm, and at that time, as we have seen, the condition of the beleaguered garrison and the people at Sinkat was desperate, and General Baker Pasha was preparing to go to its relief, with what result we already know.

Notwithstanding General Gordon's alleged previous reluctance to undertake the mission that was now offered him, he exhibited his usual amazing energy, promptitude, and fearlessness directly he had consented to go to Khartûm. On the 7th of January he had come from Brussels to England on a short farewell visit to his sister, for he had accepted a high commission from the King of the Belgians to go to the head of the Congo to endeavour to suppress slavery there and to organize the government of the territory. He had only been at Southampton a few hours when, in reply to inquiries put to him by the editor of an evening paper,¹ he made the communication which we have read. On the 16th he returned to Brussels to take his final instructions, and was ready to start on his journey to the Congo when he received a telegram from the government, which brought him back to London on the 18th. A few hours of earnest consultation decided him to undertake the arduous duty proposed by the ministry, and on being asked when he could start for the Soudan he replied that he should be ready to go by that night's Indian mail train from Charing Cross. There were only a few minutes in which to take leave of his friends, and much of his baggage had to be sent after him. At Charing Cross he was met by the Duke of Cambridge, who had known him from boyhood, by Lord Wolseley, his comrade in the Crimea, Colonel Brocklehurst, and Mr. Robert Gordon, his nephew and Lord Hartington's secretary. Lord Wolseley carried the

¹ *The Pall Mall Gazette.*

general's portmanteau, Lord Granville took his ticket for him, and the Duke of Cambridge held open the carriage door. He left London, at all events, with the sense that he was sped on his way by the good wishes of friends and comrades, and that the hearts of his countrymen beat in sympathy with him in the work that it was now known he had undertaken. That he entirely shared the views of the government is improbable. He must have known that the pressure of rapidly changing conditions in the rebellious province to which he was going, and the difficulties that might arise because of official complications at Cairo, would make it necessary for him to have a free hand, and that he could not be bound by anything like an unalterable programme. This freedom was accorded and understood; but inevitably when a change of circumstances came which seemed to necessitate a course that the government thought would cancel their declarations of the motives and the policy which led to their having sent a representative to the Soudan, complication arose, and the strongly-expressed advice of the envoy was contrary to the opinion and to the principles on which the government had interposed for the purpose of evacuating the garrisons of the Soudan provinces. Gordon's own views changed on successive occasions—or, at all events, the practical conclusions at which he seemed to have arrived at a later date differed very considerably from those which he had been commissioned to carry out. These vicissitudes of expediency were among the difficulties which beset the government and appeared likely to become insuperable, especially as the conditions of affairs at Berber and Khartûm could only be known by messages which for a long time gave no ground for supposing that it was necessary, even if it had been practicable, to afford any assistance of a kind that would have been outside the scope or the purpose of Gordon's endeavour. At a later period of the year the difficulties were increased by the means of regular communication being interrupted, and by several messages which were sent to and from the distant and beleaguered town being intercepted.

General Gordon had little doubt of the success of his mission, so far as the evacuation of Khartûm went, when he started on his

journey, though Sir Samuel Baker had said that the effort would be too late. It is probable, also, that though he was not less certain of the establishment of a settled government in the Soudan, he did not entirely agree with the conclusions of the ministry, though he apparently accepted without demur the terms of his instructions. He is reported to have said just before his departure from London: "I go to cut the dog's tail off. I've got my orders, and I'll do it *coûte que coûte*." It was with his usual calm and singularly undemonstrative confidence that he said good-bye to the friends who saw him off by the train, which was delayed for a quarter of an hour that there might be a last word or two on the subject of his mission, before he and Colonel Stewart, who had been appointed his military secretary, started on that long last journey to the Soudan.

Nine days afterwards a characteristic telegram was received from Cairo by the garrison at Khartûm signed "Gordon," and saying: "You are men, not women. Be not afraid. I am coming."

When Gordon resigned his governor-generalship of the Soudan in 1879, and, after concluding the mission to Abyssinia which he had undertaken at the request of the new khedive, left Massowa for England, he had formed, and with some reason, an unfavourable opinion of Tewfik Pasha. He somewhat resented the deposition of Ismail, who had always treated him personally with consideration, and had placed the utmost confidence in him. "You say I do not trust Englishmen," the ex-khedive had said on one occasion. "Do I not trust Gordon Pasha? I trust him thoroughly, for he is an honest man, and not a diplomatist, but an administrator." Gordon was one of those whom Ismail had deceived by failing to support him, and by allowing the influence of officials at Cairo to thwart the plans of the governor-general, but there was no ill feeling. The subject of Ismail's rule was one of those about which Gordon changed his mind. "It is a blessing for Egypt that he is gone," he said in 1879.¹ Yet some of his later expressions intimate that he was afterwards strongly in favour of a restoration of Ismail to the vicerealty.

¹ Vol. i. p. 211.

We know that if he had found it difficult to continue in office under Ismail and his ministry, he found it impossible under Tewfik, with the renewed opposition of Riaz, Cherif, and Nubar, who endeavoured to interfere with his government of the Soudan. He had determined to resign before he consented to go to Abyssinia as an envoy of the new khedive. The manner in which the ministers received his communications of the result of his mission had confirmed his resolution to leave the country which had nearly cost him his life, but where he left many good friends and grateful memories among the people over whom he had been placed in authority. "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin," he telegraphed to one of the corrupt and retrogressive pashas who had been appointed in the provinces which he had so lately left, after having cut off the slave-dealers in their strongholds and secured the grateful affection of the formerly oppressed people. In April, 1879, he had said: "If the liberation of slaves takes place in 1884, and if the present system of government goes on, there cannot fail to be a revolt of the whole country." In April, 1880, just a year later, he wrote, "I have learned with equal pain and indignation that the khedive and his subordinate officers have permitted the resuscitation of the slave-trade in Darfûr and the other provinces of Central and Equatorial Africa, and that fresh parties of slave-hunters are forming at Obeid in Kordofan, and that every order which I gave concerning the suppression of this abomination has been cancelled." He had then left Gessi to finish the work that remained to be done in the Bahr Gazelle, and it was completed, but the appointment of Raouf Pasha as governor-general seemed to be bringing back the old order of things. Gessi, as we have seen, left the Bahr Gazelle in the autumn of 1880. He with great difficulty made his way to Khartûm. In April, 1881, he died in Suez.¹ From that time the western provinces of the Soudan may be said to have been lost to Egypt. The work that Gordon had effected was undone. In the following month (May, 1881) the "Mahdi" had begun to make his pretensions; the slave-dealers and slave-owners saw that here was an opportunity

¹ Vol i. p. 214.

for an insurrection that would restore their power and influence. We have seen how Gordon longed for rest, how in his half-humorous way he had a dream of coming to England to find a period of leisure without making engagements, or going out to dinner, but with full liberty to lie late in bed, to read and stroll about, and to eat oysters for lunch. He had at anyrate come to very definite conclusions as to the position of any European entering on important service for an oriental state, and he formulated his experience briefly as follows:—

1. Any foreigner entering the service of an oriental state may be sure that no native official will ever be punished, except in name, for anything he may do; he may be certain also that, unless he can hold his own by his own right hand, he will fall; and that it is not in the power, even if it is in the inclination (?) of the ruler of that state to help him.

2. A foreigner cannot go one-tenth as far in the use of—or rather abuse of—his authority as a native; the people will put up with the one, but not with the other, if he exceeds a certain limit.

3. A foreigner, seeing axiom No. 1, is obliged, if he is to hold his place, to depart from European rules, and use, to some extent, arbitrary (*i.e.* oriental) means for defence and offence.

4. A foreigner, if conjointly charged with natives to carry out any work, may rest assured that his great enemies are those with whom he takes counsel, and that they are ready to be crushed if they can bring him down with them, and he may generally be sure that the ruler is not likely to do more than regret (?) his fall.

5. A foreigner, to succeed, must so regulate his affairs that no gain, but sheer loss, to the many would be incurred by his fall. (I mean *tangible* gain—patriotic sentiments, or advantage to the country, or glory, are sentiments which never weigh in the scale. Actual coin is Allah, and “there is none but” it.) When men reason thus, then fomenters of trouble find no hearers; but neglect this, and every one is ears. This is very natural and not indigenious to the East. When a foreigner has so regulated affairs that his fall will be a loss to the many, *then* he may afford to look

his enemies in the face, and not need the smile of the sultan or ameer.

These are my views formed from experience; and they are true for Turkey, Egypt, and China, and, I expect, for all the East.

P.S.—Joseph was the first foreigner in the service of Egypt; he took good care to have the masses indebted to him through his having the means to help them. A minister of finance should never fall—for he holds the purse.

The Egyptian people are a servile race, as foretold they should be; and not only do they not deserve a better government than they have, but they would not be content under a better government. The government is the outcoming of the people, it fitly represents them; it is a fallacy to suppose a good government would alter their nature—it can never do so. If the people were raised the bad government would disappear. It is a fault to attempt a remedy in the branches, seek it in the roots.”

Gordon had only a few weeks to call his own after his return to England at the end of December, 1879, and he had very great difficulty in evading the assiduous attentions of people who desired to lionize him and interview him, while the newspapers were loud in their praise of the late Governor-general of the Soudan, for whom somebody had invented the title of “the uncrowned king.”

In the spring of 1880 the government of Lord Beaconsfield had been succeeded by that of Mr. Gladstone, and the Marquis of Ripon had been appointed Viceroy of India in place of Lord Lytton. Everybody who heard of it was surprised that the noble lord had requested General Gordon to accept the appointment of private secretary, and were far more surprised that the man who had so recently claimed and exercised almost uncontrolled power over a vast province should have accepted such an office. It was believed that some extraordinary changes were to be effected in the administration of the affairs of the government of India; that the condition of Central Asia would receive prompt and decisive attention; that the Afghan question would be committed to the new secretary for consideration, and that with him would rest its

practical settlement. Various speculations were afloat to account for the appointment of so famous and energetic a man to fill what had been regarded, if not as an inferior, at all events as a comparatively irresponsible and subordinate post, and "society" in Calcutta was in a flutter at the probability of this clear-eyed, simple-minded, plain-living satirist of shows and frivolities coming into its midst with a personal influence which would not be snubbed down or ignored, and a position and reputation so high that it would be impossible to affect indifference, especially if it should turn out to be true that he had accepted the secretaryship that he might have an opportunity of settling the Anglo-Russian frontier.

But the public wonder and the half dismay of Indian fashionable circles were soon dissipated. The one was turned into curiosity, the other was relieved, by the sudden announcement that Gordon had relinquished the secretaryship almost before he could have fulfilled any of its duties. He had left London with the viceroy in the latter part of May, and the public who had followed the telegraphic reports of the journey had scarcely learned that it had terminated at Bombay when the intelligence also arrived that Gordon had resigned. Anybody who knew him must have known that, though he had accepted the appointment in good faith and because he never thought about his own personal demands in relation to any work that he believed it might be his duty to do, he would never be able to submit to the merely subordinate work of a secretary. It was not reasonable to suppose that a man who had been a kind of sultan over a large territory requiring absolute authority on the part of its governor, would be able to carry out the orders of a superior in a direction which he might be convinced was altogether a wrong one, and yet refrain from either interference or remonstrance, except perhaps in the way of a suggestion made with bated breath. It was certainly a good thing that he discovered the mistake he had made before it had become deplorable by a collision between him and his superiors who represented the government. Evidently he had found out, not only that it would be disastrous for him to abide by his hasty decision, but that it was actually impossible. He explained his

resignation of the post in a few words, in which he simply acknowledged that he had made a mistake. "Men at times, owing to the mysteries of Providence, form judgments which they afterwards repent of. This is my case in accepting the appointment Lord Ripon honoured me in offering me. I repented of my act as soon as I had accepted the appointment, and I deeply regret that I had not the moral courage to say so at that time. Nothing could have exceeded the kindness and consideration with which Lord Ripon has treated me. I have never met anyone with whom I could have felt greater sympathy in the arduous task he has undertaken."

It had been evident to everybody—so everybody said—that a man like Gordon could not become a comparative cipher and occupy the private secretary's office in Government House; but it had not seemed impossible to himself until he began to reflect on the limitations to which he would be subject in the discharge of his duties. That he should have formed a judgment that he afterwards (and even very soon afterwards) repented of was, it may be said, not altogether outside his experience any more than it was outside that of others. In the Soudan he had to deal with such a network of treachery, greed, and unscrupulous falsehood that it was exceedingly difficult to form immediately, judgments which were not afterwards either cancelled or greatly modified by circumstances, or the crooked conduct of the men by whom he was surrounded. These changes of judgment were among the causes of the uncertainty which attended the subsequent relations between him and the government after he had gone out to Khartûm.

Gordon had intended to leave Bombay for Zanzibar, where he proposed to help the sultan, Syed Burghash, against the slave-dealers, when a telegram reached him from Mr. Campbell, the agent in London of Mr. Hart, the Chinese commissioner of customs, to whom the message had been sent from Gordon's former colleague, Li Hung Chang. This telegram ran, "I am directed to invite you to China. Please come and see for yourself. This opportunity for doing really useful work on a large scale

ought not to be lost. Work, position, conditions can all be arranged with yourself here to your satisfaction. Do take six months' leave and come." The answer returned to London was, "Inform Hart Gordon will leave for Shanghai first opportunity. As for conditions, Gordon indifferent."

It must be remembered that General Gordon was still an officer in the British service, and, of course, had to apply to the war-office for leave to go to China, where his friend "Li," who had been the imperialist governor-general of the Kiang provinces co-operating with the commander of the "ever-victorious army" to quell the Tai-ping rebellion, was anxiously awaiting that commander who had been known all over Europe as "Chinese Gordon."

The war-office authorities naturally hesitated to grant leave of absence to an officer of the British service unless he could state his purpose in going to China and the position he was to hold there, for it was with Russia that the Chinese were contemplating hostilities in connection with the operations at Kashgar. In answer to these inquiries he could only reply, "I am ignorant;" but that there might be no obstacle in the way, he sent in the resignation of his commission, and sailed for Hong-Kong. He certainly had no reason to complain of any undue restraint being placed upon him by the military authorities, especially as the news of his intention was likely to, and afterwards did, cause great anger and excitement in Russia. His resignation was not accepted, and he received permission to go on condition that he should not enter on any military service. Even to this he would not pledge himself. All he would say was, "My fixed desire is to persuade the Chinese not to go to war with Russia, both in their own interests and those of the world, and especially those of England. To me it appears that the questions in dispute cannot be of such vital importance that an arrangement could not be come to by concessions on both sides. Whether I succeed in being heard or not is not in my hands. I protest, however, against being regarded as one who wishes for war in any country, far less in China. In the event of war breaking out I could not answer how I should act for the present; but I shall ardently desire a speedy peace. Inclined

as I am, with only a small degree of admiration for military exploits, I esteem it a far greater honour to promote peace than to gain any petty honours in a wretched war."

Li Hung Chang, of whom Gordon had said that he was the ablest man in China, had risen to the highest position in the empire, and was now little less than prime minister, but with the suspicion in the Celestial court that he was possessed of an overweening ambition, and of a damaging inclination to adopt the methods and progressive policy of foreign teachers, even to the extent of seeking the permanent aid of foreign arms, and yet fortunately he and Prince Kung, of whom he was guardian, were in favour of peace, while his rival minister Tso and Prince Chun were advocating war. General Gordon arrived at Hong-Kong on the 2d of July, and after a short stay with Sir John and Lady Hennesey at Government House, went to visit the viceroy at Canton, where he distinctly told his numerous friends in answer to their inquiries that his visit was unofficial, that he was there on a holiday to see his old friend Li, and that his views would be opposed to a proposal to form an Anglo-Chinese military force in case of war, as he should strongly advise the Chinese to use their own army. He spoke in the same way at Tientsin and at Peking, where Li Hung Chang received him with effusive welcome, falling on his neck and kissing him, with the conviction that he had now a powerful supporter in the man who, seventeen years before, had earned a right to speak in Chinese councils. Gordon lost no time before conferring with the nobles and mandarins, he himself being one of them by the imperial rank bestowed on him after the suppression of the Tai-ping rebellion. He was resolute and outspoken in advising peace. His voice prevailed, and perhaps mainly because he gave formal expression to his advice in a memorandum which strongly opposed the employment of a foreign force, as he contended that China possessed a long-used military organization, a regular military discipline which should be left intact, as it was suited to her people, who in numbers had the advantage over other powers, were inured to hardships, and could be made formidable by being armed with breech-loaders, to the

use of which they should be taught to become accustomed. His memorandum went much further than this, for it entered with considerable minuteness into the system on which the Chinese army should be trained, the arms and artillery which should be furnished to it, the manner in which such arms and munitions might be provided, and the methods by which the army should operate in the field and under the conditions of actual warfare, some of the tactics which he recommended having been apparently taken from his observations of the natives in the Soudan. One passage of the document is very peculiar:—"China should have a few small-bored, very long range wall-pieces, rifled and breech-loaders. They are light to carry, and if placed a long way off will be safe from attack. If the enemy comes out to take them the Chinese can run away; and if the enemy takes one or two, it is no loss. Firing them in the enemy's camp a long way off would prevent the enemy sleeping; and if he does not sleep, then he gets ill and goes into hospital, and then needs other enemies to take care of him, and thus the enemy's numbers are reduced." One could well fancy that there is a little of Gordon's frequently irrepressible satirical humour here; but in effect the advice is a part of his recommendation of a system of harassing warfare with large bodies of infantry able to march unencumbered by much baggage or by any heavy artillery, and well armed with breech-loaders carrying about 1000 yards.¹ The concluding words of the memorandum were: "China wants no big officer from foreign powers. I say big officer because I am a big officer in China. If I stayed in China it would be bad for China, because it would vex the American, French, and German governments, who would want to send their officers. Besides, I am not wanted. China can do what I recommend herself. If she cannot I could do no good."

The authorities at the war-office were indulgent to him, and, it must be confessed, they strained their rules to the utmost; but as he did not give any guarantee that he would not take up arms in

¹ This document appears *in extenso* in *The Story of Chinese Gordon* by A. Egmont Hake, and on the advice which it contains the Chinese army was afterwards formed.

China, they were compelled to send a message that his leave had been cancelled. He was on his way home when the intimation reached him at Shanghai, and the leave was then extended to give him time to get back to England by the end of February, 1881.

For some time he had been cherishing the intention of taking the longed-for holiday rest in Syria and Palestine, but he had no sooner reached home than he was caught by some of the moving questions of the hour—the condition of Ireland and the Irish,—the evacuation of Candahar. To Ireland he went on a visit, and came to his own conclusions on the subject of the troubles, but he had already been devoting his attention to a proposal on the part of the King of the Belgians to organize an international expedition to the Congo, of which his majesty desired that he should take the command. The scheme was not then matured, and Gordon, after a brief holiday at Lausanne, accepted an offer to proceed to Mauritius as commanding royal engineer. A good many of his friends were highly pleased that he had undertaken this post, because they regarded it as a method of reserving him, as it were, in case some important duty should demand a man of unusual qualifications, energy, and resource. Just before taking this appointment Gordon had received intelligence of the death of Gessi in the French hospital at Suez; and the news was a blow to him, for he knew that his work in the Soudan would now be undone. On his way out Gordon stayed at Suez to visit the grave of his brave lieutenant and faithful follower.

At Mauritius the work was somewhat irksome because of official routine, but the ten months passed there brought in reality something like the needed rest, and as much leisure as Gordon would have been likely to take. It was a quiet, peaceable, and by no means an unhappy time, during which he was greatly interested in those marvellous islands the Seychelles, made some curious speculative researches as to the geographical position of the Garden of Eden, and as a more professional occupation planned and put forward some very excellent schemes for the defence of the Indian Ocean. While thus occupied, in March, 1882, he was raised to the rank of major-general, and at about the same time, or

earlier, a request had reached him from the Cape government to assist in terminating the war in Basutoland.

Gordon had offered his services a year before—that is to say, while he was taking his brief holiday at Lausanne in the spring of 1881 he had received an intimation from the government of the Cape of Good Hope offering him the command of the Colonial forces at a salary of £1500 a year. But he was not inclined to undertake military service merely, as he believed that the condition of affairs in Basutoland would offer a field for his talent in mediation and the removal of the causes of hostilities; he had, therefore, telegraphed to the premier of the Cape government, “Chinese Gordon offers his services for two years at £700 a year to assist in terminating war and administering Basutoland.” This overture was not accepted, but a year later, affairs in Basutoland having become serious and another Colonial government having come into authority, it was thought to be of the utmost importance to secure the services of some one of proved ability, firmness, and energy; and on the 23d of February, 1882, Sir Hercules Robinson telegraphed to the Earl of Kimberley to inquire whether Colonel Gordon, R.E., C.B., would be permitted to go out to the Cape for the purpose of consulting with ministers as to the best measures to be adopted with reference to Basutoland, and should he be prepared to renew the offer made to their predecessors. Leave was immediately granted by the war-office, and the premier of the Cape then telegraphed to Gordon asking him if he was disposed to renew the offer which he made to the former ministry in April of the previous year. They did not expect him to be bound by the salary then stated, and urged him, should he agree, to go out at once in order to learn the facts, the knowledge of which would be requisite for him to render them advice and assistance. By so doing, they said, he would confer a signal favour on the colony, leaving his future action unimpeded. This seemed to be plain enough. Gordon had refused the mere command of the forces, but had offered to assist in terminating the war and administering the country. That was the offer which the Colonial government had now accepted if he could be induced to repeat it, and, in

compliance with the urgent request contained in their telegram, he started immediately, and reached the Cape in May. This is not the place in which to enter into an account of Gordon's experiences under a government which appears to have acted in the spirit of the lower type of parochialism, and to have treated him much as a pompous board of guardians might treat a minor parish official if they had first asked his advice and then found that it was opposed to some local personal interest which they had not the courage to disturb. He had no sooner arrived there than he found that ministers were apparently under the fear of Mr. Orpen, who was the Administrator of Basutoland, for, though they did not approve of that gentleman's policy, they thought that it was too popular to be immediately traversed.

If Gordon would for a time take the position of commandant-general, which he had previously refused, they would be able to avail themselves by and by of his invaluable counsel and well-known ability and integrity. He was never careful of his own personal claims, and as he was already sufficiently acquainted with the condition of affairs in Basutoland to have arrived at the conclusion that prompt and decisive measures were necessary, and to believe that the policy which was being pursued was not likely to put an end to the hostility of the natives, he consented to remain, in the expectation that he would shortly be permitted to take some part in the work for which he had been summoned. In a very short time he had made investigations which convinced him that the primary mistake had been that of transferring Basutoland from the Imperial to the Colonial government without consulting the Basutos themselves, and he proposed that they should be assembled and permitted to discuss the terms of an agreement with the Colonial governor. No reply was made to his memorandum, nor to subsequent representations on the very matters which he had been sent for to examine and advise upon. He had been requested to examine and report on the Colonial force, and in his reply he showed that by a system of economy—which began by cutting down his own salary one-third—the force of 1600 men might be increased to 8000, and yet £7000 be saved

to the colony. Nothing followed. He was asked to go up country and report on some matters there, and was afterwards told to draw up suggestions of remedies for the evils which he pointed out. He did so; no notice was taken. Possibly he was too earnest and too rapid for the Colonial ministry, or they may have differed entirely from his conclusions; but as they had professed to disagree with the condition of things which he had been sent for that he might improve them, something should have been done. The ministry did nothing except to treat the man, whom they had solicited to hurry to their aid, with an indifference that was unbearable whether it arose from sloth, trepidation, or arrogance.

On the 18th of July the ministry requested him to go to Basutoland. In reply he sent a memorandum containing propositions for a convention. He felt that if he went it was due to himself that he should go prepared with some definite proposal in which he would be sustained by the authority of the government. No answer. He had, however, sent a private note to the premier, saying that it was useless for him to go, unless the government were prepared to acknowledge his presence and take account of his proposals. He heard no more of it, though he afterwards offered to resign his office as commandant-general and to go as resident to the territory of the hostile chief Masupha for two years at a salary of £300 a year, as he believed that in time he should be able to gain the old chief's confidence and restore order to the country. No doubt this proposition seemed too wild and unconventional to require any answer, and by that time it began to be recognized that Gordon was not a likely man to be induced to appear to endorse a policy to which he was entirely opposed. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that he had made the relative position of the government and himself extremely awkward by letting it be known that having proposed a convention, and exposed the provocation and oppression to which the natives were subjected by unjust laws put in force by incompetent and brutal magistrates, he should refuse to lead a force against the Basutos unless improvements were made both in the laws and in the choice of those who administered them.

Little as he cared about personal consequences, he would perhaps scarcely have said this unless he had felt that it would either produce a crisis or preface his resignation. In August, however, the secretary for native affairs, Mr. Sauer, went up to Williams-town and asked Gordon to go with him into Basutoland, where he was to meet Mr. Orpen the ministerial representative. Gordon contended that as he was opposed to Mr. Orpen's policy, and as the government had taken no notice of the convention which he had suggested, he could be of no possible use there. Still Sauer persisted, and Gordon reluctantly consented to accompany him. They reached Basutoland in September, and had an interview with Letsea the chief, who assumed to be an ally of the government and hostile to Masupha. Gordon was more than ever convinced that the policy of encouraging hostility between the tribes was utterly mistaken, and he handed to Mr. Sauer a memorandum to that effect. Mr. Sauer, after having considered the memorandum, asked Gordon if he would go as a private individual to Masupha and see what he could do. It must be remembered that Mr. Sauer was an important official, that he knew what were Gordon's views, and that the government, also knowing them, wished him to accompany the secretary. Gordon was not a man to shrink from such an attempt as Sauer now persuaded him to undertake, even though he had no credentials nor instructions, and his mission was non-official and merely tentative. He went, as usual, unarmed, and as usual impressed the savage chief with his honesty of purpose and the truth of his representations. Had this not been the case Gordon might never have returned alive, for while he was negotiating with Masupha, the emissaries of those who had the management of the policy that was being pursued, had incited Letsea to send his son Lethrodi with a number of men to attack the old chief. It is not desirable to speculate on the possible motives of the immediate instigators of such an act. That Gordon had gone to see Basuto on a mission of peace was known, but that was the moment chosen treacherously to renew hostilities. Doubtless Gordon's expressions of indignation and astonishment were equal to those of the old chief himself, who with a fine instinct

seemed instantly to acquit his visitor of either knowledge of or participation in the base act, and suffered him to depart unmolested. Masupha apparently knew better than the Cape ministry what was due to a gentleman and a brave, upright, and distinguished man. Gordon departed for the nearest station from which he could telegraph his resignation to the under-colonial-secretary at Cape Town. This was on the 26th of September, 1882, and his resignation being accepted he left South Africa only a little more than five months after he had been induced to take office there by the persuasion that he could place at the disposal of the colonial government qualifications which all the world, except that government, had been able to appreciate. It may, of course, be contended that by his experiences and the positions which he had held Gordon had learned to take an attitude which in an officer holding any other than the highest position in a regular government would appear to be somewhat masterful, and his own character and disposition were not favourable to habits of submission or circumlocution. That he was accustomed to advance his own views with much plainness when he thought that occasion called for a personal expression of them is well known, but after allowing for all this the conduct of the Cape government cannot be defended. Had he not been allowed to remain under a misconception of the position he was to occupy he would probably have resigned as promptly as he did when he discovered that he had himself made a mistake in accepting the post of private secretary to Lord Ripon, and his explanation would then have involved nobody but himself, as when people complained on that occasion that he had suppressed his motives for resigning, he said at once that, in such a position with a turbulent spirit like his, he would be likely to do more harm than good, and would only too probably hamper the viceroy, and involve him in difficulties.

It must have been with a sense of relief, not unmingled with a certain feeling of disdain, that Gordon left the Cape. His experiences there had apparently tended to increase his reserve, but had not embittered his temper. He had learned not to fear and not

to care much what man could do to him, and he had very little regard for the opinions of the Cape high officials, who had received his resignation with a certain pompous alacrity, which vainly attempted to imply a snub, as it was defeated by the calm imperturbable brevity of Gordon's last note. Now he wanted to be alone, or, at all events, to seize, while he could, the opportunity for a time of seclusion; and soon after his return to England he went to Palestine and settled outside Jerusalem. There he lived chiefly on bread and fruits, reserving tobacco, in the form of cigarettes, for special occasions, and devoted the greater part of his pay to the relief of the poor and distressed. Most of his time was devoted to research in subjects which interested him deeply. It was with an eagerness that was almost a passion that he pursued the survey of the Holy Sepulchre, the Tabernacle, and the walls of Jerusalem. He had taken the holy sites in hand, to prove them not the holy sites at all, greatly to the horror and scandal of clerical tourists. But he was no mere iconoclast; he worked as one seeing sermons in stones and good in everything—with the faith of a Christian, but the eye and brain of an engineer. The Bible was his guide, and he did not care for sites if he had a map. "In reality," he said, "no man, in writing on these sites, ought to draw on his imagination; he ought to keep to the simple facts, and not prophesy or fill up gaps." Among the subjects in which he took the deepest interest was the proposed Jordan Canal, and he went thoroughly into the details of that great scheme.¹ He was resting, and at peace, but his was not a nature to remain long satisfied with occupations which may be said to have been chosen for his own gratification. His activity would soon seek a wider scope. He had continued to keep up his acquaintance with public affairs, and was noting events with an interest as keen as ever. It was scarcely likely that he would remain long without some application being made to him to undertake important work, and the scheme for a mission with Stanley on the Congo was in the future—in the immediate future, as it turned out; for, while he was planning how he would return and resume, at the east end of London, the

¹ A. Egmont Hake: *Story of Chinese Gordon*.

work among the poor which he had formerly carried on at Gravesend, he had letters from the King of the Belgians reminding him of the scheme for administering certain territory on the Congo and establishing an anti-slavery mission in memory of the dead son of the sovereign, who had obtained his promise to take the control if the assent of his government and of the other powers were secured.

It took a very short time for Gordon to prepare for leaving Palestine. He sailed from Jaffa by the first ship, a battered merchantman that was nearly wrecked on the voyage, and was very soon at Brussels, where the final arrangements for the Congo enterprise were rapidly completed, the plans discussed, and full instructions and authority placed in his hands. It has been significantly said, that but for the excitement of popular feeling by the publication of the opinions expressed by General Gordon to the representative of a newspaper, and the strong opinion in favour of his being sent out to the Soudan by the government, he would probably have been discussing the programme of the Belgian mission with Mr. Stanley on the banks of the Congo, instead of finding himself beleaguered in Khartûm; but neither the newspaper editors nor the public, whose enthusiasm was aroused, were aware that the government had made overtures to secure his services some time before, when he might have achieved prompt and complete success in the undertaking for which he was required, but that Gordon himself was reluctant to accept the appointment, and the Egyptian ministry were absolutely opposed to the results which it was mainly intended to accomplish. Gordon had desired to induce Sir Samuel Baker to undertake the duty, and as late as the 12th of January had written to him a letter in which he had given a general view of the situation, from which it was evident that he regarded the intervention of Turkish troops as desirable if not inevitable. He said:—“If the sultan allows the Mahdi to be head of the government, he virtually abdicates all authority over the Hedjaz, Syria, Palestine; therefore if we prevent his action, or refuse propositions such as I have made, we virtually upset the sultan in the countries

I have named. I take it for granted that you will go; and I would recommend, (1) permission to be got from the sultan to engage 4000 of his reserve troops, both officers and men, which will be under your brother's command, and be volunteers with a promise of remuneration at end of their services; (2) that some 2000 Beloochees under the native officers should be enlisted in India, who have been soldiers of her Majesty, old sturdy warriors; for your cavalry, you can horse them in Hedjaz, Palestine, and Syria; (3) that her Majesty's government will allow you to purchase from her Majesty animals, paying a percentage on all purchases; (4) that her Majesty's government should allow military store officers to aid you, but not to go into the field."

We have already seen what was the course of events at Suakim and in the Eastern Soudan up to a date beyond that at which Gordon arrived in Khartûm, and we may now glance at the situation of the latter place at the beginning of 1884 previous to his arrival in the southern provinces. The only Englishman at Khartûm, except Colonel Coetlogon, who was of course in the Egyptian service, was Mr. Power, the special correspondent of the *Times*, and in December, 1883, Sir E. Baring telegraphed to Earl Granville asking permission to employ this gentleman as temporary consular agent, that there might be somebody to send information of what was going on from time to time. This proposal was approved by the foreign minister, and from that time until the arrival of Gordon, and afterwards, Mr. Power occupied an official position, apparently without discontinuing to represent the *Times*. There had ceased to be any hope that even a remnant of the army of Hicks Pasha had escaped, and later reports (at the end of January, 1884) seemed to give even a more sinister aspect to the supposed causes of his immediate defeat. A Greek merchant who escaped from Obeid and arrived at Khartûm declared that he was present at the battle, and affirmed that from the time General Hicks left Duem large bodies of Arabs camped each night on the place or "seriba" occupied by General Hicks the night before. He frequently wished to turn and disperse these men, but Alladeen Pasha assured him that they

were friends following to back up the Egyptian army. On the sixth or seventh day General Hicks sent back a small body; they were fired upon by the Arabs; and then General Hicks again insisted that these men should be dispersed. Alladeen refused, and General Hicks then drew his sword and threw it on the ground, saying that he resigned, and would no longer be responsible if the governor-general did not permit his orders to be obeyed. General Hicks said that from the time he left Duem Alladeen caused his orders to be disobeyed. After some time he was persuaded to resume the command; but things went on as before, the body of Arabs in rear always growing larger. After some small engagements Kashgil was reached. Here an ambuscade had been formed for days, and the guide told to lead the army thither. When the Arabs opened fire from behind rocks and trees they were wholly concealed, and the guns in position could fire with impunity. The shells and bullets of the Egyptians were harmless, so thick were the rocks and trees. General Hicks wheeled his army to gain the open, but found the defile blocked by Alladeen's so-called friends the Arabs, who had been following him for days. These had got into cover and opened fire on the army. The Arabs from behind their cover kept up a fire for three days, and in the whole affair lost no more than from 270 to 300 men. The Egyptian soldiers were then lying on the ground dying or in convulsions from thirst, and the Arabs found them in groups of twenty or so unable to rise. They were all speared on the ground. General Hicks's staff and escort had water, and were in a group on horseback. When the Arabs came out of cover General Hicks charged, leading his staff and shooting down all the rebels in his way. They galloped past towards a sheikh supposed by the Egyptians to be the Mahdi. General Hicks rushed on him with his sword and cut his face and arm; the man had on a Darfûr steel mail-shirt. Just then a club thrown struck General Hicks on the head, and unhorsed him; the horses of the staff were speared, but the officers fought on foot till all were killed. General Hicks was the last to die. The Mahdi was not in the battle, but came to see General Hicks's body. As each

sheikh passed he pierced it with his lance, an Arab custom, that he might say he assisted in his death.

The report added that the Mahdi had a large standing army of 35,000 paid men, and could obtain 30,000 in three days when he called for them.

At the end of November, 1883, it was not easy to say whether there was any security against the rebellion anywhere above Assouan, Siout, or Minieh. The remains of the Egyptian troops were to be concentrated at Khartûm, where Colonel Coetlogon had arrived with the movable column employed in clearing the White Nile bank as far as Duem. He calculated that when he had collected his whole force within the place the total of the available troops would be not more than 4000, in the only spot where Egyptian authority was likely to keep any footing, and where the success at El Obeid was already causing so much disaffection among the populace that the colonel was seriously thinking of attempting a retreat down the river to Berber, whence he thought that he might reach Suakim, although, as was afterwards known, the route from Berber to the sea would probably have been impassable to a body of disheartened troops, harassed at every step by a horde of enemies already exulting over the news of a victory over the army which had been annihilated at Kashgil on the 5th of November. The opinion of the military authorities at Cairo as represented by General Stephenson, Sir Evelyn Wood, and General Baker, who met to discuss the subject officially, was that the Egyptian government would find it impossible to hold the Soudan with the force at their disposal, and that it would be eventually necessary, after withdrawing the garrisons, to fall back from Khartûm to Egypt proper; but that Khartûm should, if possible, be held long enough to allow the more advanced posts and detached garrisons in the Soudan to rejoin, while the Egyptian government should try to render as much support as possible from Suakim. We have seen, however, that aid from Suakim became impracticable, because of the extension of the insurrection to the Eastern Soudan, and the disasters which occurred there. Had it been practicable to keep open the route between Suakim and Berber, or had the

railway, which had been talked about so long before, been completed between these two points, the conditions might have been very different; but as it turned out, everything tended towards the isolation of Khartûm, which alone was not worth preserving even if its preservation had been possible, with the whole of the surrounding provinces in arms and their chiefs so far committed to the revolt that they were determined to stand the hazard.

On the 25th of November Colonel Coetlogon telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Wood, "Khartûm and Sennâr cannot be held in two months' time. There will be no food. All supplies are cut off to save what remains of the army of the Soudan. A retreat on Berber should be made at once, and by a combined movement from Berber and Suakim that route should be opened. Reinforcements arriving could not reach Khartûm except by land, and for that a very large force is necessary, and no supplies for them if they did arrive. The river route cannot be relied upon, as it can be stopped any day where mountains overhang the river, which at that point is narrow and shallow. We have only two steamers that could do towing work. Both are small, of no power, and old. To carry a force by river would be very difficult in a month's time even if unattacked. The troops that are left are the refuse of the army, mostly old and blind. Again I say the only way of saving what remains is to attempt a general retreat on Berber. This is the real state of affairs here, and I beg of you to impress it on his highness the khedive."

At this very time, or at least the next day, two telegrams were sent to Earl Granville from Sir E. Baring, who had succeeded Sir E. Malet as governor-general at Cairo: one was to assure his lordship that the Egyptian government fully understood that the whole responsibility of any operations in the Soudan must rest on them, and that they must rely wholly on their own resources; and the other that intelligence from Suakim had arrived, that fears were entertained for the garrisons of Tokar and Sinkat, as the troops refused to go to their relief. There was small hope, therefore, of organizing a movement towards Berber with Egyptian troops, and the army of Sir Evelyn Wood had been, as we have

seen, enlisted under the distinct promise to the recruits that they should not be called upon to serve in the Soudan.

It would appear that the whole disaster in the Soudan may be attributed to the determination of the Egyptian government to send Hicks Pasha to operate in Kordofan. Sir Samuel Baker had advocated the White Nile being made the boundary of Egypt's authority. As early as April, 1883, the Earl of Dufferin had told the Egyptian minister for the Soudan that the disturbances which had then taken place were mainly to be attributed to the misgovernment and cruel exactions of the local Egyptian authorities at Khartûm, and that whatever might be the pretensions of the Mahdi to a divine mission, his chief strength was derived from the despair and misery of the population. Lord Dufferin added that if the Egyptian government were wise it would confine its efforts to the re-establishment of its authority in Sennâr, and would not seek to extend its dominion beyond that province and the bordering river banks. This would have diminished and ultimately put an end to the drain on the Egyptian treasury, and if Dongola, Khartûm, and Sennâr had been endowed with a just and humane administration, the ultimate recovery of so much of the abandoned territories as it might have proved desirable to reannex, might have been easily effected at a later period.

General Hicks had to contend with innumerable difficulties and annoyances, and was frequently thwarted by the jealousies, the apathy, and the incapacity of the local authorities with whom he had to act. His means of transport were also deficient; the steamers placed at his disposal were in an unsatisfactory condition; nor were his troops any of the best, though under his leading they do not seem to have fought badly. Over all these impediments, however, he successfully triumphed, and Lord Dufferin, on the day that he left Egypt, telegraphed to Earl Granville the news of the general's victory at Marabiyeh, which took place on the 29th of April, 1883, and led to the complete re-establishment of the authority of the Egyptian government in Sennâr. Lord Dufferin was distinctly of opinion that had General Hicks's offensive operations terminated here, all would have been

comparatively well. A deep river and a considerable tract of desert separated the liberated territory from the Mahdi's headquarters, and breathing time had been gained for effecting the defensive operations suggested by Colonel Stewart, and for the establishment of a just and decent administration at Khartûm and Sennâr, as well as for negotiations with some of the disaffected tribes.

On the 29th of December a "black nun," a lay sister of an Austrian convent at Obeid, arrived at Khartûm after twenty-one days' journey. She stated that there was no army or body of soldiers existing in Kordofan, and that the Mahdi was mustering his forces for an advance on Khartûm. She also declared that not one Egyptian soldier escaped massacre, and that the only European prisoner brought in was a Pomeranian Uhlan servant of Major Seckendorf, and that he was well treated by the Mahdi, as also were all the missionaries at Obeid; but that though the Mahdi personally treated the whites well, the tribes generally were bent on their massacre.

The position at Khartûm was evidently dangerous, and it had there been heard that Berber had already been attacked by a body of Bishareen Arabs, who, though they had been repulsed by the Bashi-Bazouks, had probably not retreated to any great distance. As early as December 18th Admiral Sir William Hewett had reported that the road from Suakim to Berber was closed, and that it was probable that an organized army other than Egyptian, to the number of 15,000 men, would be necessary to re-open the country. This was the intelligence conveyed to him by Suleiman Pasha, the governor-general and commander-in-chief of the army at Suakim, who also stated that all supplies would have to be imported for such an army as would be required to fight its way and keep the route open to Berber.

It may be mentioned here that in the first days of December the Egyptian government had proposed to send, and afterwards did send, Zebehr Pasha to Suez. He had raised some black troops, who were sent to Suez, where they were made somewhat reluctantly to embark for service at Suakim. They having shown

signs of mutiny because Zebehr himself was not to command them, he having been recalled to Cairo, they were only overawed and compelled by the Egyptian troops, under the command of Majors Kitchener and Chermide. The Egyptian troops were commanded by English officers, otherwise the black recruits would doubtless have proceeded to open hostilities. On the 9th of December Sir E. Baring wrote to Lord Granville that it had been proposed to send Zebehr, and said:

“Under ordinary circumstances his employment by the Egyptian government would have been open to considerable objection, and I should have thought it my duty to remonstrate against it. Under present circumstances, however, I have not thought it either necessary or desirable to interfere with the discretion of the Egyptian government in this matter. Whatever may be Zebehr Pasha’s faults, he is said to be a man of great energy and resolution. The Egyptian government considers that his services may be very useful in commanding the friendly Bedouins who are to be sent to Suakim, and in conducting negotiations with the tribes on the Berber-Suakim route and elsewhere. I may mention that Baker Pasha is anxious to avail himself of Zebehr Pasha’s services. Your lordship will, without doubt, bear in mind that up to the present time the whole responsibility for the conduct of the affairs in the Soudan has been left to the Egyptian government. It appeared to me that, under present circumstances, it would not have been just, whilst leaving all the responsibility to the Egyptian government, to have objected to that government using its own discretion on such a point as the employment of Zebehr Pasha. I make these remarks as the employment of Zebehr Pasha may not improbably attract attention in England.”

There could be no question that public opinion in England would be excited by the proposal, and subsequently, when the proposition was made by the Egyptian government to send Zebehr to Khartûm, the Anti-slavery Society appealed to Earl Granville against it, quoting the declarations of General Gordon with regard to the influence which Zebehr had exercised in maintaining the slave traffic.

Things were going from bad to worse around Khartûm, and the impression gaining ground that there would be no interposition to save the Soudan to Egypt, it was rumoured that Menelek of Shoa, assisted by the Gallas, would probably seize Harrar, and that the Somalis might turn the Egyptians out of Berbera and Zeila. An engagement had taken place between the rebels and the garrison of Gazeerah on the Atbara, in which the latter succeeded in beating off their assailants, but destroyed the fortified encampment at Gazeerah and made their way to Berber. On the 30th of December, 1883, Mr. Power telegraphed to Sir E. Baring from Khartûm, saying:—

“The European and loyal population are beginning to think that they have been either forgotten or abandoned by the government at Cairo. The state of affairs here is very desperate; we know that twenty-three days ago the Mahdi was assembling a great army to attack us, and to an Arab, Obeid is only an eleven days’ march from here. Some do the distance in nine days. What numbers he will bring I cannot say, but we have here, including gunners and sentries, in all but 3000 to hold 4 miles of earthworks, on which are a few old bronze guns and one Krupp field-piece; this number of men would not properly man the walls, and it leaves us without any reserve or relief to move to a threatened place in case of attack. It also forbids us having any guard in the city, which, in case of attack, will be at the mercy of an undisguisedly rebel population. At present we are not strong enough to seize the well-known ringleaders or agents of the Mahdi. This is well known to the government, yet over forty days have elapsed since it heard the news of our situation here, and there are as yet no signs of a relieving column arriving. We have not yet even heard if they have arrived at Assiout, eight hours from Cairo. On the 27th of last month (November) the khedive telegraphed most distinctly that Zobeir Pasha and his Bedouins had left Cairo two days before. He said that Baker was leaving Suez, yet I find that the papers of the 4th instant state that neither one nor the other have left Cairo, and that Zobeir was, before leaving, to raise, arm, and, I suppose, train 1000

negroes. In three days this town may be in the hands of the rebels, yet there has been an attempt made to prevent the Kawah and Duem garrisons from joining us. . . . On Christmas Day Ibrahim Pasha told me that every house in Khartûm had arms in it, and we are not strong enough to have domiciliary visits carried out. Colonel Coetlogon is indefatigable in his efforts to provide that nothing should be left undone for the safety of the town. All the works have been carried out under his personal supervision, and he is continually inspecting the working gangs while at work; he has driven a deep ditch and parapet 1400 metres long across the level space or plain left dry by the subsidence of the river; but for him this broad avenue into the town would have been left open and unprotected, so now the fortification runs from river to river. There is here a small portion of the population, European or otherwise, whose loyalty is undoubted. These men would undoubtedly be ready to defend their property and families here, and act as police to keep the mob in check, in case of attack, but there are no arms to serve out to them, there being but a few hundred rifles in the arsenal, not enough to provide for accidents amongst the soldiers."

Now, on the 1st of December Earl Granville had telegraphed to Sir E. Baring asking whether, if General Gordon were willing to go to Egypt, he would be of any use either to the consul-general or to the Egyptian government, and if so, in what capacity; and the reply received the next day had been:—"The Egyptian government is very much averse to employing General Gordon, mainly on the ground that the movement in the Soudan being religious, the appointment of a Christian in high command would probably alienate the tribes who remain faithful. I think it wise to leave the whole responsibility of Soudan affairs to them, and not to press them on the subject."

On the 9th of January Colonel Coetlogon telegraphed to the khedive strongly urging an immediate withdrawal from Khartûm. One-third of the garrison were unreliable, and if it had been twice as strong it could not have held Khartûm against the whole country, which, without a doubt, was all opposed to

Egyptian government. Preliminary instructions had been given to prepare for a retreat. The Egyptian governor and commander of troops entirely agreed with him.

On the following day Earl Granville asked whether General Gordon or Sir Charles Wilson would be of any assistance under the altered circumstances of a new ministry having been formed at Cairo; but the answer received in a few hours was that it was not thought that the services of either of them could be utilized at present. On the 14th of January Earl Granville telegraphed: "Can you give further information as to prospects of retreat for army and residents at Khartûm, and measures taken?" and on the 16th the answer came:—"With reference to your lordship's telegram of the 14th instant, I hope soon to be able to telegraph fully, as the subject of the withdrawal from Khartûm is now being discussed. There can be no doubt, however, that very great difficulties will be encountered. It was intended to despatch Abd-el-Kader, the new minister of war, to Khartûm; he at first accepted, but now declines to go. The Egyptian government would feel greatly obliged if her Majesty's government would select a well-qualified British officer to go to Khartûm instead of the war minister. He would be given full powers, both civil and military, to conduct the retreat." This, of course, was the same thing as leaving the government here to appoint Gordon at once.

We have already noted what were the instructions to General Gordon contained in a letter from Earl Granville setting forth the objects of his mission. It was first arranged that Gordon should not go to Cairo on his way to Khartûm, as he had no desire to have an audience with the khedive Tewfik, and thought it better in some respects that he should go entirely untrammelled, so that he might not be subjected to any Egyptian official restrictions; but Earl Granville had, on the 19th of January, sent to Sir E. Baring saying:—"I inclose copy of the instructions which I have addressed to Major-general Gordon, who proceeds to-night to Egypt, accompanied by Lieutenant-colonel Stewart, to report to her Majesty's government on the state of affairs in the Soudan. General Gordon will be under your instructions, and will perform such

other duties beyond those specified in my despatch as may be intrusted to him by the Egyptian government through you. He will report to you his arrival in Egypt, but as he is anxious not to go to Cairo I have to request you, if possible, to make arrangements for meeting him at Ismailia, in order to concert with him whether he should proceed direct to Suakim, or go himself or despatch Colonel Stewart to Khartûm *via* the Nile."

It may be noted that Gordon was thus officially to take instructions through the British consul-general at Cairo, who, however, replied that it would be useless for General Gordon and Colonel Stewart to go to Suakim, where General Baker was doing all that could be done with the means at his disposal; but that they should first go to Cairo with Sir Evelyn Wood and General Watson, who would meet them at Port Said, and after discussing matters should proceed to Khartûm. Daily conferences were being held on the subject of the Soudan, and instructions had already been sent by the Egyptian government to Khartûm to commence at once sending to Berber all the civil officials and non-combatants who were desirous of leaving, and for whom transport could be provided. Endeavours were also being made to secure the co-operation of the heads of tribes. Discretion had been left to the garrison of Sennâr either to retire by the Kassala route, or cut its way through to Khartûm. Very few Europeans remained at Khartûm, and the real difficulty was in withdrawing the native civil population who wished to leave, and the garrison, with the wives and children of the soldiers.

General Gordon on his way to Port Said, drew up a memorandum in which he distinctly set down the position of affairs and his own opinions with regard to them as follows:—

"MEMORANDUM BY GENERAL GORDON.

" I. I understand that her Majesty's government have come to the irrevocable decision not to incur the very onerous duty of securing to the peoples of the Soudan a just future government. That, as a consequence, her Majesty's government have determined

to restore to these peoples their independence, and will no longer suffer the Egyptian government to interfere with their affairs.

“ 2. For this purpose, her Majesty’s government have decided to send me to the Soudan to arrange for the evacuation of these countries, and the safe removal of the Egyptian employés and troops.

“ 3. Keeping paragraph No. 1 in view, viz. that the evacuation of the Soudan is irrevocably decided on, it will depend upon circumstances in what way this is to be accomplished.

“ My idea is that the restoration of the country should be made to the different petty sultans who existed at the time of Mehemet Ali’s conquest, and whose families still exist; that the Mahdi should be left altogether out of the calculation as regards the handing over the country; and that it should be optional with the sultans to accept his supremacy or not. As these sultans would probably not be likely to gain by accepting the Mahdi as their sovereign, it is probable that they will hold to their independent positions. Thus we should have two factors to deal with—namely, the petty sultans asserting their several independence, and the Mahdi’s party aiming at supremacy over them. To hand, therefore, over to the Mahdi the arsenals, &c., would, I consider, be a mistake. They should be handed over to the sultans of the states in which they are placed.

“ The most difficult question is how and to whom to hand over the arsenals at Khartûm, Dongola, and Kassala, which towns have, so to say, no old standing families, Khartûm and Kassala having sprung up since Mehemet Ali’s conquest. Probably it would be advisable to postpone any decision as to these towns till such time as the inhabitants have made known their opinion.

“ 4. I have in paragraph 3 proposed the transfer of the lands to the local sultans, and stated my opinion that these will not accept the supremacy of the Mahdi. If this is agreed to and my supposition be correct as to their action, there can be but little doubt that as far as he is able the Mahdi will endeavour to assert his rule over them, and will be opposed to any evacuation of the government employés and troops. My opinion of the Mahdi’s

forces is, that the bulk of those who were with him at Obeid will refuse to cross the Nile, and that those who do so will not exceed 3000 or 4000 men, and also that these will be composed principally of black troops who have deserted, and who, if offered fair terms, would come over to the government side. In such a case, viz. 'Sultans accepting transfer of territory and refusing the supremacy of the Mahdi, and Mahdi's black troops coming over to the government,'—resulting weakness of the Mahdi. What should be done should the Mahdi's adherents attack the evacuating columns? It cannot be supposed that these are to offer no resistance, and if in resisting they should obtain a success, it would be but reasonable to allow them to follow up the Mahdi to such a position as would ensure their future safe march. This is one of those difficult questions which our government can hardly be expected to answer, but which may arise, and to which I would call attention. Paragraph 1 fixes irrevocably the decision of the government, viz. to evacuate the territory, and, of course, as far as possible, involves the avoidance of any fighting. I can, therefore, only say that, having in view paragraph 1, and seeing the difficulty of asking her Majesty's government to give a decision or direction as to what should be done in certain cases, that I will carry out the evacuation as far as possible according to their wish to the best of my ability, and with avoidance, as far as possible, of all fighting. I would, however, hope that her Majesty's government will give me their support and consideration should I be unable to fulfil all their expectations.

"5. Though it is out of my province to give any opinion as to the action of her Majesty's government in leaving the Soudan, still I must say it would be an iniquity to reconquer these peoples and then hand them back to the Egyptians without guarantees of future good government. It is evident that this we cannot secure them without an inordinate expenditure of men and money. The Soudan is a useless possession, ever was so, and ever will be so. Larger than Germany, France, and Spain together, and mostly barren, it cannot be governed except by a dictator, who may be good or bad. If bad, he will cause constant revolts. No one who

has ever lived in the Soudan can escape the reflection—‘What a useless possession is this land!’ Few men also can stand its fearful monotony and deadly climate.

“6. Said Pasha, the viceroy before Ismail, went up to the Soudan with Count F. de Lesseps. He was so discouraged and horrified at the misery of the people that at Berber Count de Lesseps saw him throw his guns into the river, declaring that he would be no party to such oppression. It was only after the urgent solicitations of European consuls and others that he reconsidered his decision. Therefore I think her Majesty’s government are fully justified in recommending the evacuation, inasmuch as the sacrifices necessary towards securing a good government would be far too onerous to admit of such an attempt being made. Indeed, one may say it is impracticable at any cost. Her Majesty’s government will now leave them as God has placed them; they are not forced to fight among themselves, and they will no longer be oppressed by men coming from lands so remote as Circassia, Kurdistan, and Anatolia.

“7. I have requested Lieut.-colonel Stewart to write his views independent of mine on this subject. I append them to this report.”

This was dated Steam Ship *Tanjore* at sea, January 22, 1884, and the following “observations” by Colonel Stewart accompanied it:—

“1. I have carefully read over General Gordon’s observations, and cordially agree with what he states.

“2. I would, however, suggest that, as far as possible, all munitions of war be destroyed on evacuation.

“3. I quite agree with General Gordon that the Soudan is an expensive and useless possession. No one who has visited it can escape the reflection: ‘What a useless possession is this land, and what a huge encumbrance on Egypt!’

“4. Handing back the territories to the families of the dispossessed sultans is an act of justice both towards them and their people. The latter, at any rate, will no longer be at the mercy of foreign mercenaries, and if they are tyrannized over, it will be more

or less their own fault. Handing back the districts to the old reigning families is also a politic act, as raising up a rival power to that of the Mahdi.

"5. As it is impossible for her Majesty's government to foresee all the eventualities that may arise during the evacuation, it seems to me as the more judicious course to rely on the discretion of General Gordon and his knowledge of the country.

"6. I, of course, understand that General Gordon is going to the Soudan with full powers to make all arrangements as to its evacuation, and that he is in no way to be interfered with by the Cairo ministers. Also that any suggestions or remarks that the Cairo government would wish to make are to be made directly to him and her Majesty's minister plenipotentiary, and that no intrigues are to be permitted against his authority. Any other course would, I am persuaded, make his mission a failure.

"(Signed) D. H. STEWART,

"Lieutenant-Colonel, 11th Hussars."

"I have received my orders," General Gordon had said just before leaving London. These orders, which were sent him from the foreign office on the 18th of January, were:—

"Her Majesty's government are desirous that you should proceed at once to Egypt, to report to them on the military situation in the Soudan, and on the measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in that country, and for the safety of the European population in Khartûm.

You are also desired to consider and report upon the best mode of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Soudan, and upon the manner in which the safety and the good administration by the Egyptian government of the ports on the sea-coast can best be secured.

In connection with this subject, you should pay especial consideration to the question of the steps that may usefully be taken to counteract the stimulus which it is feared may possibly be given to the slave-trade by the present insurrectionary move-

ment and by the withdrawal of the Egyptian authority from the interior.

You will be under the instructions of her Majesty's agent and consul-general at Cairo, through whom your reports to her Majesty's government should be sent, under flying seal.

You will consider yourself authorized and instructed to perform such other duties as the Egyptian government may desire to intrust to you, and as may be communicated to you by Sir E. Baring. You will be accompanied by Colonel Stewart, who will assist you in the duties thus confided to you.

On your arrival in Egypt you will at once communicate with Sir E. Baring, who will arrange to meet you, and will settle with you whether you should proceed direct to Suakim, or should go yourself or despatch Colonel Stewart to Khartûm *via* the Nile."

Orders not very easy to interpret in any case where prompt and active measures might be necessary. The sending of reports, and awaiting instructions and replies from the consul-general at Cairo, who himself might have to wait for answers to his telegrams to the foreign office in London, did not leave much margin for exercising necessary and immediate action for the purpose of evacuating a beleaguered town already almost hopelessly environed, and for effecting the task of bringing the people and the garrison through a hostile country, or embarking them for the Nile journey in boats, more of which had yet to be provided. It may be conceded that all such instructions given by a government comparatively ignorant of the obstacles that may be in the way of carrying out their instructions, and with little knowledge of the vicissitudes that must accompany the endeavour to achieve the desired results, are mostly so vague and guarded as to paralyse active efforts, if the words are taken in their literal significance. The interpretation of them makes all the difference; and the man who does nothing rather than seem to exceed his authority may well retire behind the official sentences, while the earnest man may accept them with his own translation of their meaning, and should he succeed may rise to great reputation and reward, while, should he fail, the government may be screened by the same

sentences, and he may be severely reprimanded, and be thereafter spoken of as rash and self-willed for not having observed the terms of the mission with which he had been intrusted.

We have seen, however, what construction Gordon put upon the terms of his instructions, and that interpretation contained in the memorandum which he wrote immediately after he had embarked on his journey across the Mediterranean had been sent to the foreign office, when he awaited further consultations at Cairo.

The instructions he had received were sufficient as to quantity, but they contained only uncertain references to what proved to be the actual situation. Gordon himself had evidently not calculated on the rapidity with which the insurrection spread, and by the very terms of his orders it was necessary to wait for fresh directions at a time when a delay of a day or two might change the merely probable into the inevitable. In other words, at the time that Gordon undertook the mission the work that he had gone to do could only be effected by quite different methods to those which he had at first considered applicable, and it had also become necessary that anyone undertaking it should be really and not only nominally Governor-general of the Soudan provinces and with unquestioned authority. The shadow of support from England misled and confused the whole policy which Gordon might have adopted. The necessity for relinquishing each proposition that he made in deference to the policy which had been declared by the British government in relation to Egypt left him at last without resources, especially as at a critical time the despatches sent to Khartûm were intercepted, and the messages sent to and from the place never reached him or the consul-general at Cairo; and Gordon's bitter complaints that he was to be abandoned were made while the government was without trustworthy information, and while the ministry, reluctant to move a finger in contradiction of their former refusal not to interfere in the Soudan, were, too late, preparing to send an expedition for his rescue.

When Gordon reached Cairo on his outward journey, though he seemed to have no great expectation of being able to fulfil

his mission without some fighting, he was sanguine of ultimate success. Some further instructions from Sir E. Baring were given him after his arrival at Cairo, and Gordon then concurred in the policy of abandoning the Soudan, and suggested the addition to the instructions the words, "That it should on no account be changed." These instructions, after referring to those already given by Lord Granville, said:—

"I have now to indicate to you the views of the Egyptian government on two of the points to which your special attention was directed by Lord Granville. These are: (1) The measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in the Soudan, and for the safety of the European population in Khartûm. (2) The best mode of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Soudan.

These two points are intimately connected, and may conveniently be considered together.

It is believed that the number of Europeans at Khartûm is very small, but it has been estimated by the local authorities that some 10,000 to 15,000 people will wish to move northwards from Khartûm only when the Egyptian garrison is withdrawn. These people are native Christians, Egyptian employés, their wives and children, &c. The government of his highness the khedive is earnestly solicitous that no effort should be spared to ensure the retreat both of these people and of the Egyptian garrison without loss of life.

As regards the most opportune time and the best method for effecting the retreat, whether of the garrisons or of the civil populations, it is neither necessary nor desirable that you should receive detailed instructions.

A short time ago the local authorities pressed strongly on the Egyptian government the necessity for giving orders for an immediate retreat. Orders were accordingly given to commence at once the withdrawal of the civil population. No sooner, however, had these orders been issued than a telegram was received from the Soudan, strongly urging that the orders for commencing the retreat immediately should be delayed. Under these circum-

stances, and in view of the fact that the position at Khartûm is now represented as being less critical, for the moment, than it was a short time ago, it was thought desirable to modify the orders for the immediate retreat of the civil population, and to await your arrival.

You will bear in mind that the main end to be pursued is the evacuation of the Soudan. This policy was adopted, after very full discussion, by the Egyptian government, on the advice of her Majesty's government. It meets with the full approval of his highness the khedive, and of the present Egyptian ministry. I understand, also, that you entirely concur in the desirability of adopting this policy, and that you think it should on no account be changed. You consider that it may take a few months to carry it out with safety. You are further of opinion that 'the restoration of the country should be made to the different petty sultans who existed at the time of Mohammed Ali's conquest, and whose families still exist;' and that an endeavour should be made to form a confederation of those sultans. In this view the Egyptian government entirely concur. It will, of course, be fully understood that the Egyptian troops are not to be kept in the Soudan merely with a view to consolidating the power of the new rulers of the country. But the Egyptian government has the fullest confidence in your judgment, your knowledge of the country, and of your comprehension of the general line of policy to be pursued. You are therefore given full discretionary power to retain the troops for such reasonable period as you may think necessary, in order that the abandonment of the country may be accomplished with the least possible risk to life and property.

A credit of £100,000 has been opened for you at the finance department, and further funds will be supplied to you on your requisition when this sum is exhausted. In undertaking the difficult task which now lies before you, you may feel assured that no effort will be wanting on the part of the Cairo authorities, whether English or Egyptians, to afford you all the co-operation and support in their power."

These instructions following Gordon's own memorandum obviously change his position from that of being only an adviser who

is to report what course he considers to be best to follow, to that of an active agent intrusted with considerable authority, and expected to carry out the plan which he had proposed to the best of his ability under the conditions mentioned. Earl Granville had already authorized Sir E. Malet to consult with Gordon and to give any further instructions that might be founded on a better knowledge of the country than the English government possessed, and this very considerable alteration in the instructions purported to have been made by the adoption of the views of the Egyptian government. The khedive and his advisers were even then prepared to go a great deal further still; but only under the impression that they were in accord with the views of the British government, an impression which was afterwards confirmed by the virtual endorsement of Lord Granville in the name of the ministry.

Gordon had been met at Port Said on the 24th of January by Sir Evelyn Wood. They had been subalterns together in the Crimea, and now here they were, after nearly thirty years, grasping hands and united in the work of delivering Egypt from internal anarchy and external insurrection. That Gordon Pasha, the ex-governor-general of the Soudan, had come to deliver the country from the Mahdi, was soon repeated by the more loyal Arabs with a kind of éxultation; and the assurance of the khedive and the Egyptian ministry in the practical ability and immense influence of Gordon was not less than that of the natives who had served with him and called him the just pasha. The great question was, whether he had come too late.

There was no further delay at Cairo. The two days spent there were only just sufficient for the necessary conferences with the khedive, the ministers, and the consul-general, and almost before they had ended, the khedive, at Gordon's own request, gave him a firman appointing him Governor-general of the Soudan with full powers, civil and military. Sir E. Baring in reporting this to Earl Granville said, "Under the circumstances it was very necessary that this step should be taken." Surely this was the beginning of confusion and misconception; for, if Gordon was the plenipotentiary of the khedive, and England was not to interfere

in affairs of the Soudan, the English government had no longer the authority to control the governor-general appointed to rule over those provinces, even though his mission was to endeavour to carry out the policy for securing which the British ministry had insisted on the resignation of a former Egyptian government. From that moment the whole scheme, undertaken too late, became contradictory, and the mischief remained to the bitter end.

It is true that in his original instructions Gordon found, "You will consider yourself authorized and instructed to perform such other duties as the Egyptian government may desire to intrust to you," but then followed, "and as may be communicated to you by Sir E. Baring." It is difficult to see how the Governor-general of the Soudan, appointed by the khedive and representing the authority of the Egyptian government, was to wait for all his instructions through the British consul-general at Cairo, unless it was to be understood that Britain became responsible for the government of Egypt in the Soudan, and for practically carrying out the operations which had been insisted on even though it might be necessary to revert to active interference and military intervention.

We were about to interfere either a great deal too much or not nearly enough. The khedive in a letter to Gordon respecting his appointment, dated the 26th of January, said:

"Excellency,—You are aware that the object of your arrival here and of your mission to the Soudan is to carry into execution the evacuation of those territories, and to withdraw our troops, civil officials, and such of the inhabitants together with their belongings as may wish to leave for Egypt. We trust that your excellency will adopt the most effective measures for the accomplishment of your mission in this respect, and that after completing the evacuation you will take the necessary steps for establishing an organized government in the different provinces of the Soudan, for the maintenance of order and the cessation of all disasters and incitement to revolt. We have full confidence in your tried abilities and tact, and are convinced that you will accomplish your mission according to our desire."

It is said that the khedive in conversation with the Baron de Malortie on January 29th remarked: "I could not give a better proof of my intention than by accepting Gordon as governor-general with full powers to take whatever step he may judge best for obtaining the end my government and her Majesty's government have in view. I could not do more than delegate to Gordon my own power and make him irresponsible arbiter of the situation. Whatever he does will be well done, whatever arrangements he will make are accepted in advance, whatever combination he may decide upon will be binding for us; and in thus placing unlimited trust in the pasha's judgment I have only made one condition, *that he should provide for the safety of the Europeans and the Egyptian civilian element.* He is now the supreme master, and my best wishes accompany him on a mission of such gravity and importance, for *my heart aches at the thought of the thousands of loyal adherents whom a false step may doom to destruction.* I have no doubt that Gordon Pasha will do his best to sacrifice as few as possible; and, should he succeed, with God's help, in accomplishing the evacuation of Khartûm and the chief ports in the Eastern Soudan, he will be entitled to the everlasting gratitude of my people, who at present tremble that help may come too late. To tell you that he will succeed is more than I or any mortal could prognosticate, for there are tremendous odds against him. But let us hope for the best, and, as far as I and my government are concerned, he shall find the most loyal and most energetic support."

It has been mentioned that Abd-el-Kader, who had been commander at Khartûm when Hicks Pasha reached it, and who was recalled on the appointment of Alladeen, or Ali-ed-Din, was now minister for war at Cairo. He had been requested to go to Khartûm, and some preliminary preparations had been made for his conducting the evacuation of the province; but he probably saw that the task would be beyond his capability, or would be too difficult and dangerous for him to undertake it. At all events, he declined to go.

Before the khedive had held the conversation with Baron de

Malortie Gordon had started on the journey. He had risen early on the morning of the 26th and called on the khedive, by whom he was most cordially received, as he was also by Nubar Pasha. He then went with Sir Evelyn Wood, Colonel Stewart, and Major Watson to have a long conference with Sir E. Baring on the whole situation in the Soudan. On the 26th he set out.

“Everything has gone most satisfactorily with Gordon. He leaves in good spirits,” wrote Sir E. Baring to Earl Granville at 4:55 P.M. on the 26th of January; and on the 1st of February, by which time Gordon had reached Assouan, Sir E. Baring wrote:— “Gordon’s suggestions have been followed in every particular. Although under my instructions, he has, as a matter of fact, been left the widest discretionary power. His visit to Cairo was most useful, as it will enable the authorities here to help him much more than would otherwise have been possible. There is no sort of difference between his views and those entertained by Nubar Pasha and myself.”

Before Gordon left Cairo he desired to be confronted with Zebehr. The story of this man’s doings, his influence, and the fate which overtook his son, who had been instigated to rebellion while Gordon and Gessi were endeavouring to suppress the raids of the slave-hunters, has been told in previous pages. Zebehr had left the Bahr Gazelle and taken his wealth and his complaints to Cairo, where the official pashas had contrived to pocket a considerable proportion of the former, amounting to many hundreds of thousands of pounds, while promising to gain the ear of the government to his alleged grievances. In Cairo, however, he was detained as a kind of prisoner under surveillance. The private papers which Gordon and Gessi had found supplied evidence which established Zebehr’s guilt; but the result had been that he went unpunished, except in being detained at Cairo with a pension,¹ and judging from his subsequent assumption it seemed possible that the papers which condemned him had either been given up to him or destroyed.

That Zebehr entertained deep resentment against General Gordon may easily be believed, for Gordon had punished with

¹ Vol. i. p. 214.

death the treachery of the pasha's son and the slave-hunting chiefs who were his associates,¹ and had, of course, confiscated the property of the rebellious chief in the Soudan. Gordon was quite aware that there was enmity against him in the heart of "the black pasha," probably a "blood feud," because of the slaying of Zebehr's son; but, as we know, he had long entertained the belief that only native rulers could successfully govern the Soudan provinces under any conditions that would be likely to prevail, and he had already turned his thoughts to the probable results of reinstating Zebehr in a position of authority, with a fair salary and under direct responsibility to the Egyptian and indirectly to the British government. If enough control could be maintained over the once powerful pasha to forbid his re-embarking in slave-raiding expeditions or permitting his associates to resume their iniquitous oppressions for the sake of gain, Zebehr would, he thought, be the man to be received with confidence by the tribes and to "smash up the Mahdi." It was apparently for the purpose of discovering what were the grounds of complaint which Zebehr had against him, and, therefore, how far it might be possible to induce the former pasha to co-operate with him, that Gordon sought for an interview or conference to be held at the British embassy in the presence of Sir Evelyn Baring, Nubar Pasha, Sir Evelyn Wood, Colonel Stewart, Colonel Watson, and Giegler Pasha, Mr. Aranghi acting as interpreter. There had been a good deal of conversation between Sir E. Baring and Gordon as to the manner in which Zebehr should be treated, and Gordon had told the British consul-general that, considering Zebehr's great influence in the Soudan, circumstances might arise which would render it desirable that he should be sent back there; but Sir Evelyn Baring said in his report to Earl Granville, "It would certainly not be desirable to send him there now, for he is manifestly animated by a feeling of deep resentment against General Gordon." This statement was borne out by the fact that, at Gordon's suggestion, Sir Evelyn informed Zebehr that he would be allowed to remain in Cairo, and that the future treatment he would receive at the hands of the Egyptian

¹ Vol. i. pp. 192-211.

government depended in a great measure upon whether General Gordon returned alive and well from the Soudan, and upon whether, whilst residing at Cairo, Zebehr Pasha used his influence to facilitate the execution of the policy adopted by the government.

It would appear, therefore, that Gordon desired to confront Zebehr before witnesses representing the government, in order that the pasha should make any complaints against him and state the reasons for hostile feelings. It might be a preliminary step for removing such obstacles as would prevent Zebehr from acting with measurable loyalty towards him should he eventually seek to re-install the ex-pasha in a position of authority at Khartûm.

The scene which took place at the conference was very remarkable. The British consul with judicial air; the seriously attentive Egyptian minister, Nubar, watchful, as being not certain of his ground, but probably quite aware that Zebehr was by no means deficient in the native accomplishment of unscrupulous and almost illimitable lying, and that he would certainly exercise it on the occasion; the British officers, less gorgeous than the pashas, among whom Zebehr himself was a picturesque figure as to costume, with his shining yet shadowy, sinister, thin, scowling face, the black skin drawn about the temples and above the close bushy eyebrows, the short thick moustache beneath the fleshy yet pointed nose, and above the protruding somewhat sensuous mouth, the under lip of which hung and protruded in the excitement of waiting to listen to the questions put to him. A marvellous contrast to the somewhat slight and small, yet well-knit figure of the plainly dressed, fair-skinned man, who was there to learn what accusations would be brought against him; the man of fair complexion, honest outlooking blue eyes, at once searching and dreamy, as of one who saw, as it were, two worlds at once—of fearless, somewhat abrupt, but friendly and not ungentle speech and bearing. Gordon's was a presence which seldom failed strongly to impress anyone who met him and spoke to him. A Swedish traveller, who was passing through the Soudan while the English pasha was governor-general, gave in a few words a graphic description of him, which well illustrates much that we now know of his peculiar influence:—

“After passing through the courtyard, filled with soldiers, I came first into a little room, where two clerks were at their desks. Through this I was led into a large square room with windows on two sides and very little furniture, as is generally the case in Egyptian work-rooms. A divan ran round three of the walls. The room was almost filled by officials, merchants, priests, and officers, who were waiting to talk to Gordon, while black servants, offering coffee and cigarettes, made their way through this crowd of visitors. In the midst of the room, at a large square table, sat a man dressed in black. His back was turned to the window and his right arm rested on the table.

“That was Gordon. What did he look like? From what I had heard of him I imagined him to be the type of a true Briton—tall and large-limbed, bearded, and of strong sharp features, who, by a look, a gesture, could control his savage or half-savage surroundings. But he was not that, by any means.

“A short, slender man with a fine, pale, almost beardless face, whose thoughtful, far-away, almost dreaming, but nevertheless energetic look, gave his whole being a striking expression of seriousness. He was like a scholar, who, in his lonely study, conceives and works up a new and grand idea. He offered me a chair, and after refreshments had been offered to me, he asked me about my journey.

“His voice was sort and low. He spoke in short, abrupt sentences, was cool and distant, and while speaking looked at me with steady questioning eyes. It was as if he tried to read in my face whether he might trust me or not. I had hoped that he would take some interest in my travels, but I was disappointed. Gordon’s is a remarkable nature of steady individuality. . . . Gordon is one of the great men of our time, who are greater than they are esteemed. Our interview was short. Gordon remained reserved, almost cold, and yet it seemed as if kindness lay hidden under the reserve. I met him several times afterwards, and each time he appeared to become more friendly.”

But to return to the meeting assembled at the British Agency.

The usual courtesies having been exchanged, Gordon Pasha desired Zebehr Pasha to make any complaints against him which he might wish to make now in the presence of Sir E. Baring and Nubar Pasha, and added that his statements would be written down.

Zebehr Pasha. I want to know why my property in the Soudan was confiscated?

Gordon. Because you wrote a letter to your son, Suleiman, inciting him to revolt.

Zebehr. Produce the letter, and then I will speak.

Gordon. It was produced at the court-martial. The khedive has the letter.

Zebehr. When you went as governor-general to the Soudan, I solemnly intrusted my son Suleiman to you, and told you he was thenceforth your son. He was only sixteen years of age.

Gordon. The question at present is about the letter. Do you deny its existence?

Zebehr. I wrote to my son, but in the letter I did not incite him to rebel.

Gordon. Well, I say that you did incite him.

Zebehr. Then, if such a letter exists, what you did was right. Produce the letter.

Gordon. The court-martial condemned Suleiman to death; they had your letter before them.

Zebehr. Who was the president of that court?

Gordon. Hasan Pasha Hilmi.

Zebehr. And who was over him?

Gordon. I was.

Zebehr. Produce the letter. Where is it? If such a letter existed, I ought to have been myself brought before a court-martial, and also condemned to death.

Gordon. That letter was given to the present khedive, and was kept with the proceedings of the court.

Zebehr. You are the subject of a great and just nation; there is no nation greater than England. I intrusted my son to you. Why did you not write and tell me, at the time, of the letter?

Gordon. We do not write to tell a man of his sin when we have his letter before us. As for the letter, you had better ask the khedive.

Zebehr. For your own honour you ought not to have given up the letter, but kept it privately yourself.

Gordon. But I gave it to the proper court.

Zebchr. Your name is known everywhere. You have been writing against me in the papers and in your books. Produce the letter.

Gordon. Ask the khedive, your master, for it. I had fifty copies of the trial printed, giving the whole history, and containing that letter.

Zebchr. Why did you print it?

Gordon. Because I wanted to show the peoples of Soudan that I was fighting, not about the slave-trade, but against rebels, and to settle who was to govern the Soudan.

Zebchr. My son met you at Darra with 4000 men, and you refused his help.

Gordon. That is not the question.

Zebchr. But my property was seized eight months before you found that letter.

Gordon. Yes, but even before I found that letter, I had had enough evidence to prove that you had been inciting your son to rebel.

Zebchr. Produce the letter.

Gordon. Well, there! That ends that business. Zebchr says that if the letter is found I am justified.

Zebchr. My son sent you nine emissaries from Darra; you shot them. He sent two more, and you shot them also.

Gordon. Then you have finished with the question of the letter. Now I will ask you if your son Suleiman did not kill the whole of the black garrison in the Bahr Gazelle?

Zebchr. My son came to you at Darra, and offered you 4000 men. He—

Gordon. That does not matter. Answer my question. During my absence from the Soudan, while I was at Aden—never mind where—did not your son Suleiman kill 200 black troops?

Zebchr. When you were governor-general I told my son to obey you—

Gordon. Did your son kill those 200 Egyptian soldiers?

Zebchr. My son offered these troops, 4000 men, to you, and you refused, and you dismissed—

Gordon. Did your son kill those 200 men? That is the point.

Zebchr. It was not my fault. You recommended my son to the khedive, who made him a colonel, and after that—

Gordon. Answer my question.

[Nubar Pasha repeats question to Zebchr.]

Nubar Pasha. Zebchr says that his son was no longer under his influence, but under the orders of Gordon Pasha. While under his father, Suleiman did no such things, but while under Gordon Pasha he could not answer for him.

Gordon. I want an answer to my question. (Repeated.)

Zebehr. You recommended my son—

Nubar. Zebehr says he was not responsible for Suleiman, as the latter was then a colonel under Gordon Pasha.

Gordon. Then I understand, Zebehr Pasha, that you do not deny that your son rebelled, or that, if he rebelled, he was liable to be put to death. I say your son did kill these 200 black troops in the Bahr Gazelle.

Zebehr. But what about my property having been confiscated?

Gordon. I told you before, that the letter is my justification for the confiscation. That ends the first question. If the letter is found, it will show that not only was all your property liable to be confiscated, but that you, too, were in danger of being put to death. On the other hand, if the government will allow me, I say that if the letter does not exist, and if your property has been unjustifiably confiscated, I shall then recommend the Egyptian government to compensate you for your loss. I shall be first to see that reparation is done to you.

Zebehr. I did not come to Cairo for money, but to see what was the will of the government, and to enlist men. As to my son—

Gordon. That is unnecessary. I treated your son with every consideration. I was not unkind to him; I did my best for him.

Zebehr. But you killed my son whom I intrusted to you. He was as your own son.

Gordon. Well, well, I killed my own son. There is an end of it.

Zebehr. And then you brought my wives and women and children in chains to Khartûm, a thing which, for my name in the Soudan, was most degrading.

Gordon. I differ from you. They were not in chains. I gave them every facility in the matter. But there! there is no use in Zebehr Pasha continually saying one thing and I another.

Zebehr. The greatness, the justice of England is known throughout the Soudan, but you did not treat me justly.

Sir E. Baring. General Gordon, have you any other questions to ask him except on these two points?

Gordon. No.

Sir E. Baring. Then I wish to explain to Zebehr Pasha that I called this meeting at my house at General Gordon's request; that General Gordon had heard that Zebehr had certain complaints to make against him; and that although it was not particularly my business to hear these complaints, at the same time, as General Gordon wished it, I was quite willing to be present at the discussion between General Gordon and Zebehr Pasha.

[Zebehr rose and kissed Sir E. Baring's hand.]

At present, the conversation, which has been rather desultory, has ranged over two points. The first point was whether Zebehr's property was justly or unjustly taken away from him. In respect to this point, if I understand rightly, the whole difference of opinion between General Gordon and Zebehr lies as to the existence of a certain letter which, General Gordon alleges, was a letter from Zebehr to his son Suleiman inciting him to rebellion. Is that correct, General Gordon?

Gordon. Quite correct.

Sir E. Baring. Zebehr denies the existence of that letter. General Gordon says that if that letter does not exist, and if, in fact, Zebehr Pasha was condemned upon evidence which, in default of the letter, would not have been conclusive, that he then thinks Zebehr should be compensated for his losses—

Zebehr. Compensation cannot be given to me for the honour of my wife and family; that is lost for ever.

Sir E. Baring. Zebehr recognizes, on the other hand, that, if that letter does exist, then that all that was done to him was justly done.

Zebehr. If that can be proved, that I incited my son to rebellion in the letter, I do not want to live; put me to death with the sword.

Sir E. Baring. General Gordon, to whom did you give the letter?

Gordon. To the present khedive and to the court-martial.

Sir E. Baring. Then it must be in the government archives.

Gordon. Yes; but, happily for me, I had it printed—in fact, fifty copies—and there is a copy at Khartûm.

Sir E. Baring. But the original would be annexed to the proceedings of the court. All we can do is to have a search made for it. Sir Evelyn Wood, will you see to that?

Sir E. Wood. Yes; and failing that, shall I get certificates from the people still alive who saw the letter?

[A short discussion ensued, and it was decided, first, to try and find the letter, and then to consider what would have to be done.]

Gordon. It will, of course, be fully understood that the mere fact of the letter not being found in the archives will not satisfy me that it never existed.

Sir E. Baring. Of course, I fully understand that. The second point refers to Zebehr's son. General Gordon put to Zebehr a very direct question, namely, whether his son had been a party to the killing of 200 black Egyptian troops in the Bahr Gazelle. Zebehr's answer is that whatever his son may have done, he, Zebehr, is not responsible for his actions;

but he does not, as I understand it, specifically deny what General Gordon alleges—that his son killed these 200 men. Is that correct, Zebehr?

Zebehr. I do not by any means deny it. I deny my responsibility for my son's conduct.

Sir E. Baring. Then Zebehr does not deny the action of his son, but only his own responsibility for his son's action. I do not think that we need discuss these two points any further.

This in effect ended the conference; but at a later date, and when Gordon was asking that Zebehr might be sent to join him at Khartûm and to aid him in putting an end to the insurrection and establishing a settled government in the Soudan, a request with which the government believed that they could not safely or reasonably comply, the subject came up again.

It must not be supposed that Gordon afterwards had any doubt either that the letter which had been found on Zebehr's son had proved that "the black pasha" really instigated the rebellion, or that the letter itself, of which he had a number of copies, had been before the khedive and the court which tried Zebehr, but he may have doubted whether it was regarded as of weighty importance. He may have suspected that it had been treated with comparative indifference or had been destroyed, and with other evidence cancelled, after Zebehr's services in the Russo-Turkish war; and if so, Zebehr would not have scrupled to declare that any such alleged document was a forgery by which Gordon was imposed upon, or that he probably had a hand in concocting it. To such a man as Zebehr there is a boundless tract of lying always open, and he lied with such solemn assurance, and such appearance of placability and sense of injured innocence, that, whatever may have been the case in Egypt, a good many people in this country began to doubt whether Gordon had not made a mistake, and were ready at any-rate to give half credence to the pasha whom Gordon himself was so anxious to receive as a colleague and as a successor. It may have been that this professed readiness on the part of Zebehr to abandon the feeling which he had entertained on condition that his property in the Soudan was restored to him, and to be ready and willing to go to assist Gordon, for whom he found compliments

enough, gave rise to some suspicions. Whether this had any effect on our ministry or on the Egyptian ministry is a question, but the fact remains, that even though Sir E. Baring at last became converted to Gordon's opinions, and earnestly represented that the despatch of Zebehr to Khartûm would be the best, if not the only solution of the increasing difficulty, and the means of averting impending danger, Zebehr was not sent, and the government continued to refuse to reinstate him.

The object of General Gordon in seeking an interview with Zebehr Pasha before official witnesses was to discover what were the probabilities against securing the co-operation of the ex-chieftain in restoring a regular government to the Soudan. The result was not very promising, and we shall see that though Gordon tentatively sent proposals to Zebehr to make him sub-governor, the offer was not accepted. At a council held immediately after the interview, and consisting of Sir E. Baring, Nubar Pasha, Sir Evelyn Wood, Colonel Stewart, and General Gordon; Lieutenant-colonel Watson of the Egyptian army was asked what he thought of sending Zebehr and Gordon together to the Soudan. He answered, that not himself alone but natives thoroughly acquainted with both men were of opinion that such a policy would entail the death of one or other of them. This being the case, and with the recollection of what Gordon had indignantly said of Zebehr when it was proposed to send him back to the Soudan in 1879; remembering, too, that one of the first precautions suggested by Gordon when he undertook the mission to Khartûm was that Zebehr should be under careful surveillance; and perhaps, above all, recalling Gordon's memorandum in reply to a proposition of Cherif Pasha to employ Zebehr at Suakim, it is not to be wondered at that Sir E. Baring and others in authority at Cairo could not participate in the opinion that the former chief of the slave-trade could with safety be placed in a position which would give him an opportunity for attaining almost absolute power, and would enable him to defy the Egyptian government, if he chose to repudiate obligations which there would be no adequate authority to enforce. It is true that Sir E.

Baring afterwards came to the conclusion that Gordon was right in his opinion that Khartûm and the Soudan provinces should not be abandoned, and that Zebehr was the only man who could effectually be sent to succeed Gordon for the purpose of re-establishing the local governors and establishing a settled government; but in the opinion of the English government this conclusion was never sustained by reasons which outweighed the objections previously urged, and the probable consequences of taking such a course. With regard to the proposed employment of Zebehr at Suakim General Gordon had said on the 22d of January in a memorandum written on his voyage to Alexandria: "My objection to Zebehr is this. He is a first-rate general and a man of great capacity, and he would in no time eat up all the petty sultans and consolidate a vast state, as his ambition is boundless. I would therefore wish him kept away, as his restoration would be not alone unjust, but might open up the Turco-Arabic question. Left independent the sultans will doubtless fight among themselves, and one will try to annex the other; but with Zebehr it would be an easy task to overcome these different states and form a large independent one."

Colonel Stewart had said on the same subject: "Zebehr's return would undoubtedly be a misfortune to the Soudanese, and also a direct encouragement to the slave-trade. As he would be by far the ablest leader in the Soudan, he could easily overturn the newly erected political edifice, and become a formidable power."

The plain facts of the main narrative of Gordon's enterprise show not only that as he advanced he rapidly changed his estimate of its scope and purpose, but that he found he had not completely estimated the situation in which he would be placed and the difficulties with which he would have to contend. The insurrection was wider and more powerful than he expected, and the tribes had been committed more completely to the cause of the Mahdi or to the cause of emancipation from Egyptian rule than he had thought probable. He did not modify his previous opinions—he contradicted them. Zebehr, whom he had denounced, and whose restoration to power in the Soudan he had regarded as a course

to be urgently opposed, he came to think was the only man who could give him effectual aid. He had distinctly said that it would be unnecessary to send either British or Indian troops to his aid; but when the British government could not consent to be responsible for the appointment of Zebehr, he sent word that either a British or an Indian force should be despatched. It was not till he had realized the actual condition of affairs that General Gordon saw grounds for an entire change in his plans, the reasons for which could not be estimated by the government in England, unacquainted with the country and with the serious growth of the rebellion. They were unprepared to abandon the policy which they had distinctly declared. Though events were even then forcing them to consider the necessity for sending a British force to Suakim, they hesitated to send troops for the relief of Sinkat and Tokar, because they were uncertain whether the safety of Gordon and the plan for evacuating Khartûm might thereby be endangered, or as Mr. Gladstone asked on the 12th of February, "would an attempt of relief have the effect of endangering the measures for the extrication of the 29,000 men who after all must be regarded as of more weight than the 500 in Sinkat?" Such a question showed a want of definite information which prevented any action being taken for fear of doing the wrong thing first; but it was not unreasonable in view of the fact that there was a vast horde of Soudanese between Suakim and Kassala, extending very near to the route between Suakim and Berber, and that another great body of rebels occupied the country between the White and Blue Nile, threatening Sennâr, and extending towards Khartûm.

The tribes under Osman Digma who occupied this territory, threatened Suakim, and eventually closed the route to Berber, were the Hadendowas, who proved to be even more formidable foes than the Baggaras, led by the fierce dervishes who were under the immediate command of the Mahdi. The Hadendowas were, in fact, the people who provided camels for the Suakim-Berber routes before the rebellion. They are Soudanese, but with little Arab blood, as, like their neighbours the Bishareen, they sprang from an African (Hamitic) race, as their dark-brown skin

and their close bushy hair will show. They speak a corrupted form of Arabic, but also have a language of their own as the Bishareen have. Their religion is a superstitious and gross form of Islamism, and they are the most fearless and indomitable savages that were ever encountered by British troops.

It has been necessary to dwell with some distinctness on the anomalous position occupied by General Gordon in the relations between him and the British government, and to point out that the force of events and the vicissitudes of the situation rendered it impossible that he could succeed and yet consistently maintain the policy and the course of action which the ministry had declared. These conclusions, however, do not involve a charge of inconsistency, much less a suggestion of the shadow of a shade of dishonour against Gordon himself. It is essential to the proper understanding of the true narrative of our intervention in Egypt and the Soudan that these particular points should be dwelt upon; but we may now again follow the noble story of the man who, with an earnest desire to rescue the people at Khartûm, and if possible to deliver the whole country from anarchy and the subsequent return of the former power of the slave-hunting chiefs and their fell influence over the Soudan and the Equatorial provinces, had unhesitatingly given his services when he became convinced that they were asked for in good faith. Again, therefore, we turn in imagination to the heroic figure of the man to whom money and personal ease, fame, wealth, security, meant so little, and duty, beneficence, and devotion to the will of God, the realization of the spirit of Christianity and recognition of the needs and the claims of human beings, his brethren and sisters, black, brown, or white, meant so very much. He had relinquished the far more attractive and more lucrative appointment which had been concluded with the King of the Belgians, who not only agreed to pay him a good income, but had secured a fair annuity to be paid to his immediate relatives in case of his life being sacrificed to the enterprise of establishing the settlement on the Congo.

He was now, on the 26th of January, on his way from Cairo

for the primary purpose of evacuating the Soudan, by sending the civilian population and the Egyptian troops down to Assouan as soon as possible and by the best means that could be devised. Between Dongola and Gondokoro there was a whole population of civilians with their wives and children, and between 20,000 and 30,000 Egyptian troops loyal to the government. They were so seriously threatened by the advancing rebels that it had become almost a question of hours rather than of days whether they could be got out at all. Of the centres around which these populations clustered, Khartûm was the most important, and it was to Khartûm that Gordon and Stewart were hastening. Before he left Cairo the general took an opportunity, in the presence of Sir Evelyn Baring and others, to speak to the khedive words of apology for anything which he might have said or done hastily or mistakenly in disparagement of his highness; and the frank simplicity with which he confessed that under trying circumstances he had said and done things that he regretted, raised him in the opinion of both Tewfik Pasha and the prime minister. His last words with Nubar Pasha are said to have been: "I will save the honour of Egypt;" to which Nubar replied: "Never mind Egypt; save the women and children." There was no need to tell Gordon that.

In the subsequent language of Lord Granville, Gordon went for the double purpose of evacuating the country by the extrication of the Egyptian garrisons, and of reconstituting it by giving back to the chiefs their ancestral powers, which had been withdrawn or suspended during the period of the Egyptian government. Before he left Cairo he had suggested that a sultan of Darfûr should be appointed as a check to the Mahdi. Consequently the khedive sent for Ameer Abd-el-Shakoor, the heir of the chief from whom the province had been seized, and he was reinstated on the condition that he should maintain freedom of commerce and suppress the slave-trade within his province. He agreed readily enough, and accompanied the general to the Soudan, or rather for a portion of the journey, for Gordon was to go by rail to Assouan, thence embark for Wady Halfa and Korosko, and cross the desert to Abu Hamed, a difficult and dangerous journey, after which he

proposed to follow the Nile bank to Berber and Khartûm. It happened—one is almost tempted to say, of course it happened—that the young man chosen to rule Darfûr was altogether incompetent. At anyrate he took with him on his journey a considerable harem (forty wives it was said) and a retinue of servants, besides provisions and ample stores of wines or spirits. He was, in fact, a drunkard, and therefore a serious incumbrance till Gordon reached the point where he had to prepare for the desert journey which lay before him, and could leave the youth to go on to Darfûr under the protection of his own retainers.

As some rumour of this further example of Egyptian incompetency reached England together with a report that Gordon had taken £40,000 with him on his journey, a good deal of excitement was occasioned by speculations as to the probable safety of the general. It was feared that he would be intercepted and murdered, and as accounts of the investment of Tokar and the defeat of Baker's relieving force had reached England great anxiety prevailed. As we have already seen, Gordon experienced no interruption of his journey because of events in the Eastern Soudan and the Red Sea provinces, and had reached Berber before he heard such accounts as enabled him to offer an opinion on the effect of the later operations, or their influence upon the general situation in the Soudan. He had but £2000 with him when he started from Assouan, leaving the remaining sum to draw upon after he had accomplished the desert journey. On the 30th of January he reached Assouan, so well known to Nile travellers, who pass it in order to reach the first cataract three miles higher, and there he learned something about the aspect of affairs in the Soudan: that the Mahdi had still with him the deserters from Hicks' army, several powerful chiefs all concerned in maintaining the slave-trade, and several Arab tribes from which from 6000 to 8000 horsemen could be put in the field. These tribes, however, were reluctant to move out of their homes in the province of Kordofan, and this assured Gordon that the Bahr Gazelle country and the Equatorial provinces were not likely to be in immediate serious danger. He concluded that the revolt

between Khartûm and Sennâr had been effected by the agents of the false prophet, but the hostility of the Hadendowas had been instigated by the old grievance—the nefarious conduct of Egyptian officials. The Hadendowas, who were employed to find the camels for conveying the Egyptian troops from Suakim to Berber, and had actually fulfilled their contract by taking 10,000 men on the route, a description of which we have read, were to have been paid seven dollars for each transport camel for the journey; but the pasha and the bey who had that little contract in hand, following out the evil traditions of their race, had the villainous effrontery to put six out of the seven dollars, or, at all events, by far the chief proportion of the money, into their own pockets. The Hadendowas had no immediate redress; but it was not long before Osman Digma appeared, and they were then ready to take vengeance at Tokar, at Sinkat, and in the defeat of Baker which led to the necessity for the battles at El Teb and Tamai.

The same kind of story was told at Assouan, where the employés of the Soudan railway were three months in arrear of pay. They were ready for revolt, and Gordon telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Wood to send them their money without delay. At Korosko, where he arrived on the 2d of February, he heard of the state of affairs in the district between Khartûm and Sennâr.

There was no time to be lost. Gordon had already despatched a letter to the Mahdi from Assouan demanding that the Europeans at Obeid should be sent down to Khartûm. This was after his old manner. He spoke and acted always as a man whose authority was beyond cavil; and even if he had not underestimated the hold which the rebellion had taken and the power exercised by the false prophet, he would have abated nothing of his orders. Fugitives escaping from the Soudan were arriving at Korosko, as they continued to arrive for months afterwards, when the English government had officers at Assouan and Korosko to relieve their needs and expedite their journey, and when we had established a river patrol on the Nile and a force had been sent for the protection of Upper Egypt. Gordon immediately on hearing the condition of affairs between Sennâr and Khartûm had appointed

Colonel Stewart sub-governor of the Soudan, Ibrahim Bey director of war and marine, and Colonel Coetlogon governor of Khartûm. He then telegraphed to Nubar Pasha; "I am sending down many women and children to Korosko. I wish you would send a kind-hearted man to meet them. Give him £1000; a European is best."

He could stay no longer. The dangerous and dreary journey of two hundred and fifty miles across the desert to Abu Hamed was before him. He required little preparation. He had accomplished marvellous journeys before, though none more perilous

Assouan, the former Syene ("the opening"), is familiar to numerous tourists who have made the usual voyage to the first cataract and have made the customary visits to the island of Elephantine and to Philæ. It seems, indeed, as though the Nile journey terminated there, for the river's course cannot be followed by the eye when this point is reached, 580 miles from Cairo. Assouan is a place of importance, and has always been a point of interest to the traveller, for, as Mariette Bey said, "One is tempted to think one's self in a new world; Egyptians, Turks, Barobras, half-naked Bisharees, and negroes of every kind mingle here; the inhabitants of Khartûm are especially striking by their grand mien, black faces, and their fine heads, reminding one of the best types of northern races; to complete the picture, the merchandise consists of exotic gums, elephants' teeth, and the skins of beasts; in the midst of the crowd circulate the hawkers, no longer dealing in antiquities, but in clubs of ebony, pikes, lances, and arrows, whose iron points are said to be poisoned." But a change had come over the aspect of Assouan so far as the market and the merchandise were concerned. No travellers and tourists were there to visit the granite quarries, the Saracenic ruins, and the tombs of saints and sheikhs. The palm-groves and clusters of white houses were mostly deserted except by the inhabitants, and those who were there on the serious business of preparing for the evacuation of the Soudan and awaiting the arrival of small trading caravans, or of companies of perishing refugees and sick and wounded soldiers who had made their way from various points by the desert journey or Dongola,

and sought to reach this place of safety whence they might be forwarded to Cairo.

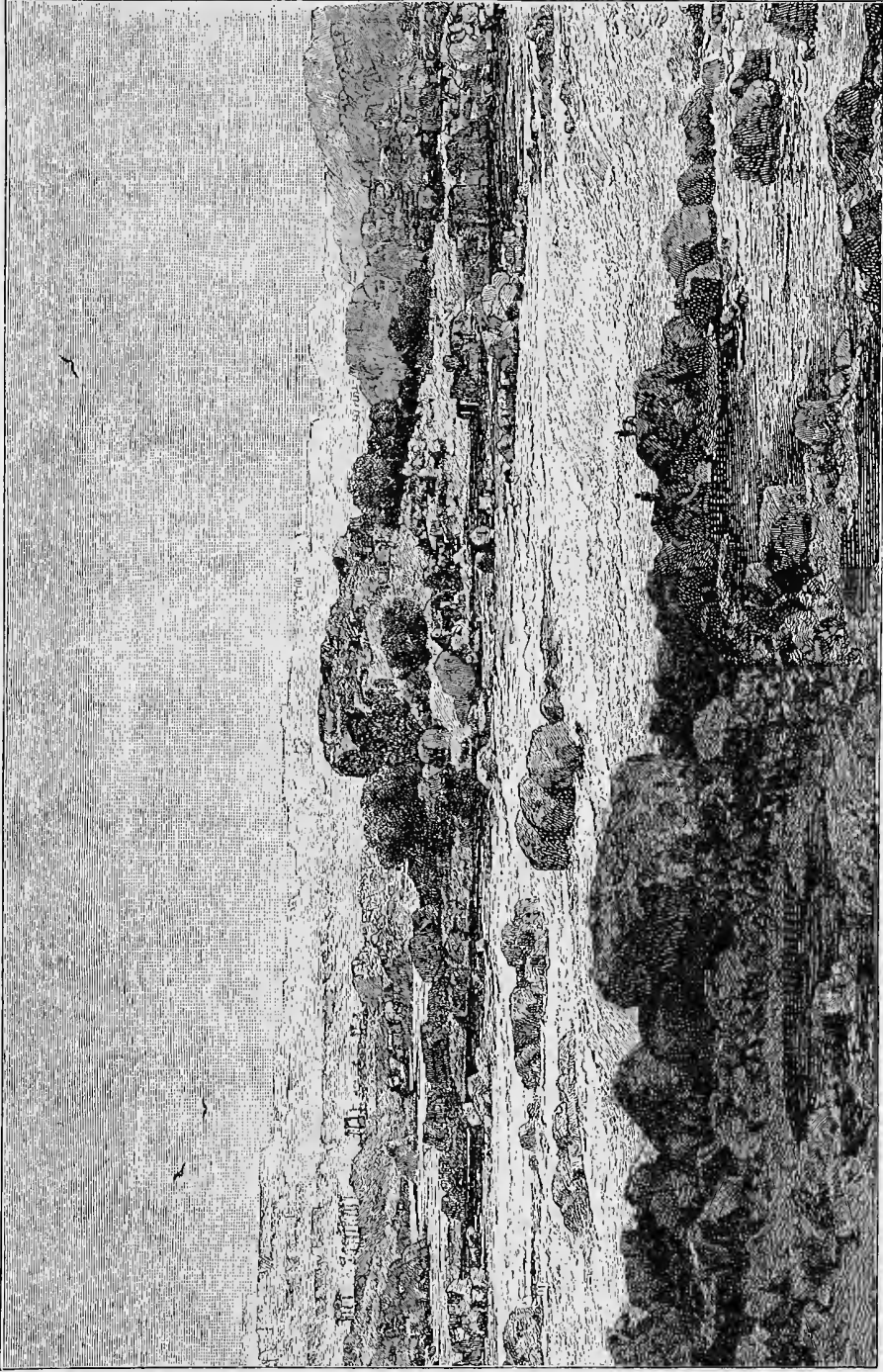
Wild and weird—or, as Miss Martineau called it, “fantastic and impish”—is the scenery from Assouan towards Philæ. The most remarkable features of the route are the inscriptions and hieroglyphics on the rocks, intended to commemorate the expeditions of some notable persons who had reached this point in safety. The view of Philæ itself has been often described, and the aspect of the place is beautifully picturesque, though its most ancient monuments are little older than the times of the foundation of Alexandria, the chief object being the ruins of the great temple of Isis, which with its necessary buildings must once have nearly covered the island. The author of the *Crescent and the Cross*, speaking of the view of Philæ from the opposite shore, says, “All round us towered up vast masses of gloomy rocks, piled one upon the other in the wildest confusion; some of them, as it were, skeletons of pyramids, others requiring only a few strokes of giant labour to form colossal statues that might have startled the Anakim. Here spreads a deep drift of silvery sand, fringed by rich verdure and purple blossoms; there a grove of palms intermingled with the flowering acacia; and there, through vistas of craggy cliffs and plummy foliage, gleams a calm blue lake, with the sacred island in the midst, green to the water’s edge, except where the walls of the old temple city are reflected. Above those shrub-tangled and pillared banks were tall pyramids; columns airy, yet massive in their proportion; palms, and towers, and terraces. Beyond the island the lake glimmers through the ruins, and the whole scene of peace and beauty is frowned over by a girdle of rugged mountains, all scattered, and dark, and desolate.” “Elephantine,” says another writer, “lies in the river, from the foot of the cataract stretching down in front of Assouan about a mile, and is nearly half a mile in breadth. Its surface is a mass of ruins, shapeless and hideous. Ruin sits triumphant here. Not even the ploughshare of ancient history, which has run over so many ruins, could prevail here to penetrate the mass. A small part of the island is cultivated, but a large portion still remains in

the condition I have described, and so will remain so long as the world stands. Fragments of statues, a gateway of the time of the mighty son of Philip, an altar whose fire was long ago extinguished in the blood of its worshippers; these and similar relics remain, but nothing to indicate the shape, extent, or date of any of the buildings that formerly covered the island."

Of the first cataract itself there is not much to say. It is not really a cataract, but a number of rapids of the Nile swirling and dashing amidst a number of scattered rocks and great rugged boulders—rocks grotesque in shape and wild in aspect, apparently forming a portion of the two chains of mountains between which the Nile flows at this point. The whole scene is barren, savage, and desolate, but it has a grandeur of its own, and the trouble of passing the cataract is repaid by the change of country beyond the four miles of troubled water. For Egypt is left behind, and the land between the first and second cataract is the land of Nubia, where the scenery is more delightful, the climate in many respects to be preferred. At one time few travellers ventured beyond Assouan and Philæ; but now it is common enough to pursue the journey 210 miles further to the second cataract, to Korosko, whence the direct road lies across the desert to Abu Hamed and the Upper Nile, Shendy, Sennâr, and Khartûm, so that the little village lying back from the river on the edge of the desert used to be the entrepôt, the Nile bank being usually lined with the tents and merchandise of traders waiting for camels to take them on the long desolate journey across the wilderness, or for boats to convey them to Assouan.

The second cataract, however, is above ninety miles further up the Nile, at Wady Halfa, some fifty miles beyond the vast and magnificent ruins of the temples of Aboo Simbel, hewn out of the gritstone rock in the time of Rameses II. Wady Halfa has some vestiges of antiquity of its own, but it is not a lively place under ordinary conditions, and even when it resounded with the bustle and noise of a military encampment it could scarcely have been inviting; though the town, named from the halfa, a coarse grass which grows abundantly there, is not unpicturesque when, beside

the mud huts of the ordinary inhabitants, built, or rather "stuck up," under the shade of a great thicket of palm-trees, there is an encampment of black traders who have pitched their tents, unloaded their camels, set out their merchandise, and for a time settled with their families on the banks of the Nile till it is time for them either to take the desert journey or to proceed into Egypt. But it is from Korosko, the scattered village at the foot of a strangely-shaped volcanic mountain from the peak of which a grand and vast view of river and desert can be obtained, that the journey across the wilderness is mostly taken. Starting from a green oasis in a valley, but leading at once to a gloomy gorge inclosed by black frowning precipices, the travellers enter upon the track across the Nubian desert which traverses the chord of an arc made by the great westerly bend of the Nile. This was Gordon's route, and though there was considerable anxiety for his safety when it was known that he had mounted his camel, struck into the desert, and was about to accomplish the journey by one of his rapid rides, neither he nor Colonel Stewart considered that there was any great peril either from the journey or from probable attacks of Arabs. The monopoly of the desert transit between Korosko and Abu Hamed was possessed by the Khalifé family, the representative of which was Hussein Pasha Khalifé Mudir of Berber and a man of great influence. Close to Korosko was a camp of Bedouins, who were supposed to guard the desert road and assist in the general defence of the country. The country was traditionally dangerous, however, and the desert between Korosko and Abu Hamed was so dreaded that Saïd Pasha once ordered the route to be closed; but it was opened again, upon application of the foreign consuls, as the most direct route to the Soudan. So far as interruptions or attacks by natives were concerned Gordon was not the man to regard such probabilities. All his anxiety was to get to his destination as quickly as possible, and he sped on, over the plain of orange-coloured sand, through barren valleys, amidst bare broken hills of black basalt, conical accumulations of slag and volcanic or granite boulders; across desolate wastes with a few stunted trees only breaking the drear monotony; through the "Bab" or gates, an



THE FIRST CATARACT OF THE NILE.

BLACHIE & SON: LONDON, GLASGOW, AND EDINBURGH

opening between rocky hills into a bare sandy waterless plain; through an arid country, miles and miles in extent, with a few conical mounds covered with granite boulders—the Bahar-bela-Moy, or sea without water; past a waterless well dug by Mohammed Ali, and surrounded with stones; and so on through a dry valley at the foot of a low range of hills where a few trees give a temporary shelter, but where the day and night temperature differs from 30 to 40 degrees. Thence the way was through winding stony ravines, and over small plains bounded by low rocky hills with a few clove-palms showing here and there, to Muráhd, a halting-place where there was a small Arab camp, a rough house or shed, and a well of water so brackish and bitter (as the name implies) that only camels can drink it, though it is the only water to be procured during the whole of the long and wearisome journey. Travellers must take their own supply. Sir Samuel Baker, in 1861, was obliged to make a forced march to save the water which evaporated because of the heat of the sun upon the surface of the water-skins.

Hour after hour, mile after mile—the rapid but wearisome march was continued till Abu Hamed was reached. The distance was accomplished in fifty-two hours by an almost uninterrupted ride, that is to say, at about five miles an hour, an extraordinary rate for such a journey. Sir Samuel Baker's forced march occupied ninety-two hours, but his camels were laden and the hot season had commenced, for he had to cross the desert in May, whereas Gordon accomplished the journey just at the end of the cooler season in the beginning of February.

“A small village utterly destitute of everything,” is the description given by Baker of Abu Hamed; and the sterile desert extends to the very margin of the Nile. It was in accordance with his old plans that Gordon travelled swiftly and accomplished as much as possible of the journey by night. He liked to be travelling seated on his camel amidst those vast solitudes—but the solitudes of the Nubian desert are awful. Sir Samuel Baker describes part of the journey—a dead level plain of orange-coloured sand, surrounded by pyramidal hills: the surface strewn with objects

resembling cannon shot and grape of all sizes, from a 32-pounder downwards—the spot looking like the old battle-field of some infernal region—rocks glowing with heat—not a vestige of vegetation—barren, withering desolation. Many of the “cannon shot” are as perfectly round as though cast in a mould, others are egg-shaped, and all are hollow. On breaking them they are found to contain light-red sand, and are, in fact, volcanic bombs formed by the ejection of molten lava to a great height from active volcanos; they become globular on falling, and having cooled before reaching the earth retain their forms as hard spherical bodies. The exterior is brown and appears to be rich in iron. The smaller specimens are the more perfect spheres, as they cooled quickly, but many of the heavier masses have evidently reached the earth when only half solidified and collapsed upon falling. The sandy plain is covered with such volcanic vestiges, and the bombs lie as imperishable relics of a hail-storm such as may have destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. From this scene of solitude the traveller passes to another aspect of desolation, and in the hot season the burning simoom blows over the terrible wilderness and drifts the hot sand into the crevices of the rocks; but in the cooler night the air becomes invigorating and refreshing by contrast, and the desert has a peculiar charm as the horizon of its nakedness is limited: the rocks assume fantastic shapes in the bright moonlight, and the profound stillness produces an effect of the supernatural in that wild and mysterious solitude. But there is no water. The well at Murâhd is in an extinct crater surrounded on all sides by precipitous cliffs about 300 feet high. The bottom is a dead flat valley of sand 250 yards wide, and there the salt and bitter water is found at a depth of only about six feet, but only the camels can touch it, and the skeletons of camels lie in all directions—withered heaps of parched skin and bone, the dry desert air having converted the hides into leathern coffins, and as there are no flies, the crows—though even they are not always numerous in this valley of dry bones—despatch the inner carcasses. Many years ago, when the Egyptian hosts first conquered Nubia, a regiment was destroyed by thirst in crossing this desert. The men were on a limited allowance of water, and, deceived by the

appearance of a mirage exactly resembling a beautiful lake, insisted on being led to its banks by the Arab guide, who told them in vain that it was an illusion. They quarrelled with him, words led to blows, and he was killed. The whole regiment turned from the track where they left him weltering in his blood, and hurried over the burning sands further and further towards the supposed lake, but only to be lost and to perish in the desert, where their parched and withered corpses were afterwards discovered by a party of Arabs sent in search of them. So intense is the heat that woodwork warps, ivory knife-handles split, paper breaks when crunched in the hand, and the extreme dryness of the air induces an extraordinary amount of electricity in all woollen materials. Poor and destitute as the village of Abu Hamed is, it is a place of rest and refuge after the desert journey, for there is the sight of the Nile after the long arid desolation, the luxury of a bath and of comparatively unlimited water.

Here General Gordon arrived on the 8th of February, and here he found messengers from different parts of the country to welcome him. It is pretty evident that unless he had received from the khedive the firmans appointing him Governor-general of the Soudan, he could not have exercised much control over the Egyptian authorities employed in the province, and on his arrival at Abu Hamed he considered not only that the state of the country was less disorganized than he had at first supposed, but that a kind of suzerainty should still be kept up by the Egyptian government. His message to Sir E. Baring on the 8th of February was:

“From the various telegrams soliciting appointments and from other signs of confidence in the government, it is evident that the country is far less disturbed than has been reported, and that very probably the mass of civil employés will refuse to leave the Soudan, even if dismissed and their expenses paid to Cairo. Both with a view to eventual evacuation and also to economy, it will be absolutely necessary to reduce all establishments to a minimum; and should the dismissed employés refuse to leave the country, I propose making them sign a paper releasing the Egyptian government from all future responsibility on their behalf.

I consider that on my arrival at Khartûm my first object should be to send to Cairo the families of all deceased employés, soldiers, &c., and to attempt the pacification of the country and the reopening of the communications. When these objects are fulfilled, I would wish your excellency to consider what is to follow.

You are aware that a regular system of posts and telegraphs exists: legal courts, financial and other departments are established, and that, in short, the country has, during a considerable time, been accustomed to a more or less controlling and directing government. To disturb, if not annihilate, this system at a moment's notice would appear to me to hand over the country to complete anarchy. Consider what the situation will be. Let it be supposed that the Soudan, or at least the east Soudan, is tranquillized, its administration 'Soudanized,' native mudirs appointed, refugees all sent to Cairo, the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces evacuated, and the Egyptian troops ready to leave. Suppose that the firman dissolving the connection between Egypt and the Soudan is read, and the result will inevitably be that each mudir will aim at securing his own independence, and that a period of violent and protracted commotion will ensue, which may very possibly react prejudicially on Egypt, owing to the intimate connection which has for so long obtained between the two countries.

Hence I would suggest that the government of Egypt should continue to maintain its position as a suzerain power, nominate the governor-general and mudirs, and act as a supreme court of appeal. Its controlling influence should, however, be a strictly moral one, and limited to giving advice.

In spite of all that has occurred, I feel satisfied that the prestige of the Cairo government, except in so far as the conduct of its troops in the field is concerned, is not seriously shaken, and that the people still continue to look up to the Cairo government as the direct representative of the sultan as khalif, and would look with horror on a complete separation. Should a nominal control, such as I advise, be maintained, it is evident that it could in no way involve the Egyptian government, and that the prestige

which the governors, mudirs, &c., would acquire from being nominated by Cairo would most probably secure them against rivals. On the other hand, in the event of the mudir becoming unpopular, an order for his removal from Cairo would carry great weight, and most probably ensure his dismissal. I would therefore earnestly beg that evacuation, but not abandonment, be the programme to be followed, and that the firman with which I am provided be changed into one recognizing moral control and suzerainty. In offering this suggestion, I must, however, premise that the moral control will be exercised by the Egyptian government as a responsible body, and that all nominations will be made by the ministry uninfluenced by any individual, however exalted may be his position. I am persuaded that, by following the above policy on the lines I have drawn, neither her majesty's government nor yet the Egyptian government would incur any risk, and that they would be able to secure, in a greater or lesser degree, the future of the Soudan."

To this declaration on the part of General Gordon Lieutenant-colonel Stewart added his remarks or endorsement just as he did on other occasions. He considered that, though it could not be denied that anarchy and bloodshed would ensue were the policy of abandonment carried out in its entirety, a solution in the direction as pointed out by General Gordon would altogether depend upon what policy her majesty's government intended to pursue towards Egypt. Should they decide to evacuate Egypt, and to cease having a controlling and directing voice in the affairs of that country, he was decidedly of opinion that it would be far better, in the interests of both countries, to abandon the Soudan. To allow in such a case Egypt to maintain even a nominal control over the Soudan would only tend to ensure further attempts at active interference, with their accompaniment of misgovernment, oppression, venality, and Cairene intrigue.

In the event of her majesty's government retaining a directing voice in Egyptian affairs General Gordon's advice might be followed with considerable advantage. Although Stewart did not quite agree with him that the prestige of Cairo had not been

greatly diminished, still he thought that sufficient of it remained to exert a beneficial influence towards curbing the forces of disorder in the Soudan. Whether, or for how long, such an influence might last it was impossible to say. Probably in time, unless the Egyptian government took a more active part in removing mudirs at the request of the people, it would gradually wane and wear out; but, at anyrate, for some time to come it would probably be strong enough to act usefully as a moral support to the Soudanese government, and to diminish the extent of the change.

Nothing can be plainer than that Gordon with his usual rapid and inclusive calculation of possibilities, had been considering what alternatives might be adopted in furtherance of the two objects which he had set before himself: the deliverance of the Europeans and the Egyptian garrisons, and the foundation of a settled central government at Khartûm. He seems at first to have had an intention to go in person to the Mahdi, to repeat his former successful method of dealing with the slave-hunting pashas and sultans by appearing suddenly before him as one who had come to command and who meant to be obeyed, or, at all events, as one who feared nothing that the rebels could conspire to do to him, and who was willing to negotiate with them as a concession, being conscious of a reserve of force which could be brought to compel them if they refused to listen to reasonable proposals. Even bearing this explanation in mind, however, it is not easy to understand the message which he left behind him at Cairo to be given to Mr. Clifford Lloyd, who was engaged there in the direction of financial affairs: "Tell Lloyd, no panics. It is possible that I may go to the Mahdi, and not be heard of for two months, for he might keep me as a hostage for Zebehr. You can tell Lloyd this when you get to Cairo, so that he can publish it at the right time, if necessary."

It must surely have occurred to Gordon that this message, if made known to Sir E. Baring and the government, would cause a serious flutter, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he gave a touch of his rather caustic humour in leaving such a memorandum. It was the first hint he had given of taking his own way

of doing things, and directly Sir E. Baring heard of it, he wrote to prevent him from doing anything except under orders. Gordon was to be only nominally free to act. The whole circumstances were extraordinary—might soon become dangerous or even desperate; he was the man who, from experience of the country, knowledge of the people, and former successes in dealing with them, was best fitted to act with requisite promptitude, and to know how far even his own plans must be altered under changing conditions, and yet the official tape was already preparing which was to bind him hand and foot to a declared policy, the maintenance of which was entirely inconsistent with sending such a man to Khartûm, or even with suffering him to go thither with any hope that the liberty of discretion, which was promised to him, would be any more than a phrase of courtesy.

Owing to Mr Clifford Lloyd's illness the message was not shown to Sir E. Baring till after Gordon had started from Korosko on his desert journey; but a telegram was sent to him to Berber from Sir E. Baring repeating the message Mr. Lloyd received, and adding, "I hope you will give me a positive assurance that you will on no account put yourself voluntarily in the power of the Madhi. The question is not a personal one. There would, in my opinion, be the strongest political objections to your risking a visit to the Mahdi."

Sir E. Baring had intended to wait before communicating on the subject with the government until he had received General Gordon's answer from Berber; but the telegraph line between Berber and Khartûm had been cut by the tribes of that district, so that it might have been impossible to communicate with him by telegraph when once he left the former place, and the representative at Cairo was therefore in a terrible state of consternation, and requested Lord Granville to inform him at once whether he might give General Gordon a positive order from the government that he was on no account to visit the Mahdi. The reply was "diplomatic." While faintly encouraging the government representative at Cairo, it dodged the responsibility of definitely hindering what might possibly have been a desirable or politic determination on

the part of Gordon. It showed plainly enough what was the truth, that neither the government nor anybody else, including Gordon himself, who was not in the midst of the rebellion, knew what was the precise condition of affairs in the Soudan, or could calculate on the rapid and extensive spread of the insurrection and the irrevocable manner in which the chiefs and their followers were committed to it. The answer was prompt enough, no time was lost in replying:—"Your message to General Gordon, referred to in your telegram of to-day, is approved, and you are authorized, if you think it necessary and desirable to do so, to convey to General Gordon our approval of it."

But there was another flutter. The "panics" had not been avoided by keeping the message to Mr. Clifford Lloyd secret, for the public anxiety was directed to the safety of the man who was then crossing the desert without knowing what was taking place at Suakim. Gordon was still seriously considering the advantage of securing the co-operation of Zebehr Pasha. He believed the ruling passion of the man to be money, and considered that if he were but well subsidized he would not injure even the person against whom he had a "blood feud," but would by his still potent influence and the hope of continued wealth and authority gain over the tribes from the Mahdi and consent to establish a regular government in the Soudan under the former tribal chiefs or mudirs. He was convinced that he would renounce slave-hunting, and that the provincial governors might be paid an annual sum to compensate them for not permitting slave-dhows on the river or caravans on the land to pass through their territories. But beyond this Gordon turned his eyes towards the Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial provinces, whither he and Stewart and Power might go, and by taking the scheme of the King of the Belgians abolish the operations of the traders in the Soudan, prevent the slave-hunting in these provinces, and so succeed in dealing a death-blow to the traffic from Khartûm to the Congo. The British government, after serious consideration, did not agree with him that the appointment of Zebehr would effect these objects. They came to the decided conclusion that the restoration of such

a man to power would mean the revival of the worst conditions of which he had before been the chief supporter; and they were supported in this belief by weighty evidence of the character of the man with whom they would have to deal, by the reasoning of common experience, and even by the former testimony of Gordon himself. Added to this was the overwhelming reluctance which they felt at taking any action which might commit this country to the indefinite responsibility of a costly, and perhaps a disastrous, intervention in a vast desert territory like the Soudan, where it would be impossible to maintain European forces of occupation; and the abandonment of which they had already urged upon Egypt.

But before this proposition of the reinstatement of Zebehr had been fully discussed, though not before it had been seriously proposed, Gordon had written on the 1st of February from Korosko, before starting for Abu Hamed, a letter to Sir E. Baring, inclosing another which was to be sent to the King of the Belgians:

“Here is a letter I have written to the King of the Belgians. His majesty told me he would take these two provinces if he could get them when I was at Brussels; also that he would take over the troops in them. You might mention this to the foreign office, and send them copy of the letter. It would settle the slave-trade.”

The full text of the letter to the King of the Belgians has not been published, but it is easy to imagine what must have been the shock to official decorum to have received such an astounding communication. If Gordon was going on in this manner any government might be excused for being alarmed at him, and for declining to commit itself to any but such diplomatic language as could be made to cover no responsibility. Sir E. Baring in inclosing the letter to Earl Granville said:

“I have the honour to inclose copy of a letter from General Gordon inclosing a letter to be forwarded to the King of the Belgians, in which he urges his majesty to occupy the Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial provinces, and to appoint him governor-general of all that country. He seems to intend to go straight on in that direction from Khartûm. I do not think that General Gordon

should be allowed, at all events for the present, to go anywhere south of Khartûm."

Then there went from London one of those stiff acknowledgments which are calculated to thrill the blood of the unwary. It ended: "I have to state that her majesty's government are of opinion that General Gordon should not at present go beyond Khartûm."

Gordon had played leading cards, but there was no response. Two of the possible solutions of the difficulties that lay before him had been rejected, and it cannot be denied that, if not premature, they were somewhat speculative. He did not long keep official propriety in trepidation, however. On the 11th of February Sir E. Baring was able to telegraph that, as regarded the message left at Cairo for Mr. Clifford Lloyd, General Gordon had stated that he had no intention of visiting the Mahdi; and on the following day that the general had sent a telegram to say that he would not go further south than Khartûm without permission.

Gordon had, of course, reached Berber when he sent these telegrams. He had learned that the Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial provinces were then in less danger than had been supposed. At Abu Hamed he had been encouraged by the number of persons coming in. Four hundred had come to him asking for appointments. There was great enthusiasm directly he made his appearance, and he began to think that the power of the Mahdi might soon be checked.

He thought that events at Suakim would have no adverse influence over the situation at Khartûm. The business of conveying to Cairo the fugitives coming into Berber or Abu Hamed from various parts of the country was taken up with vigour. "The people are coming in on all sides with enthusiasm. I hope soon the Soudan will be perfectly tranquil." This was the key-note of several telegrams at that time. "Stewart and I are all right; do not bother about us." He asked for camels to convey families from Abu Hamed to Korosko, and he wanted two steamers for embarking them at Berber or Khartûm. A portion of Sir Evelyn Wood's Egyptian army was to go to Assouan—two battalions, one field-battery and one Gatling.

It was on the 11th of February that Gordon landed at Berber, whither he had gone by boat from Abu Hamed; and the change must have been welcome, for Berber was a pleasant place by comparison—a large town with a male population of about 3000, and, of course, a centre of traffic, as the caravans from Suakim and Korosko transferred goods to the Nile boats there. The town, protected by about 4500 yards of earthworks, resembled other towns on the Nile; the streets unpaved and dirty, the flat-roofed houses built of sun-dried brick; but the great attractions were the gardens, full of lofty date groves and shady citron and lemon trees, the birds singing and the doves cooing in the palms.

Gordon had little time to stay and much work to do. He was received with the utmost satisfaction. The town was illuminated during his stay, and in reply to messages from Sir E. Baring telling him that it was not only of personal but of political importance that he should run no risks, he was able to say that he was well received and numbers of people were coming in from all parts of the country to profess their allegiance, that he was in the midst of the best families, and that some of the principal chiefs would accompany him to Khartûm. He was in no danger, and looked forward quickly to effect his chief mission, the evacuation, and not the immediate abandonment, but the pacification and settlement, of the Soudan. That the people might be assured of his intention to abolish the tyranny under which they had suffered, to renew their old privileges, and to establish a system of free government, he published, both at Berber and Khartûm, a series of proclamations setting forth the plans that he should adopt. It may be stated at once, that on being questioned closely by some of the chief persons, he candidly declared that he had abandoned any intention to carry out the provision of the treaty for the entire abolition of slavery in 1887. He always believed that even if that treaty could be temporarily carried out it would have disastrous results; he always carefully distinguished between the holding of domestic slaves, which was a custom of the country not to be soon eradicated, and the hunting or stealing of natives of the villages for the purpose of selling them into slavery. Against the depopulation of villages, the

seizing of men, women, and children, and the deportation of gangs and caravans of unfortunate creatures across the desert and in slave-shows on the Nile, he was as determined as ever, though it would be impossible to take any immediate action with regard to it; but so far as the retention of slaves was concerned, he distinctly said that the owners of slaves would not be compelled to forfeit that "property," or be otherwise interfered with by attempts to prepare for the realization of the treaty. It would have been futile to have endeavoured to do otherwise. He and the English government, who endorsed his action in this respect, had to accept the situation as they found it. Slavery had not ceased, nor was it likely to cease under the Mahdi, who was dependent on the men to whose interest it had been to restore the traffic and to undo much of the work that Baker and Gordon had accomplished. The assurance that no one would be compelled to give up his slaves was regarded as a concession and strengthened Gordon's position with the chiefs, and, as we have already seen, domestic slavery in Egypt and even in the towns of the Soudan was not to be regarded as a hardship to those who endured it. It was an entirely different institution to that of the system of field and plantation slavery in the West Indies and the Southern States of America.

In a report subsequently published by Colonel Duncan, the commander of the troops in Upper Egypt, concerning the refugees who had been received by him at Assouan it is mentioned: "The most striking feature, to my mind, was the large family and retinue I generally found with the government officials. Many had undoubtedly been slaves, but most had obtained their letters of freedom before they reached Assouan. For those who had not, I procured these letters from the civil authorities. I observed that the letters were always in the possession of the masters and never of the servants, and I doubt if many of the latter knew of their existence, and they were quite indifferent when told of it." This was written in July, and referred to the refugees coming through in April and May. At Berber, early in February, Gordon thought there were so many signs of confidence in the government

that probably the mass of civil employés would refuse to leave the Soudan even if they were dismissed and their expenses paid to Cairo. It was absolutely necessary, however, to reduce all establishments to a minimum, and he proposed, if these people refused to leave the country, to make them sign a paper releasing the Egyptian government from future responsibility for them. His first object was to send to Cairo the families of all deceased employés, soldiers, &c., and to attempt the pacification of the country and the reopening of communications. When these objects were fulfilled, it would be necessary to consider what must follow. For a considerable time the country had been accustomed to a more or less controlling and directing government, to a system of posts, telegraphs, legal courts, and financial and other departments; and to disturb, if not annihilate, this system at a moment's notice appeared to him to be handing over the country to complete anarchy. Supposing the Eastern Soudan tranquillized, its administration "Soudanized," native mudirs appointed, refugees all sent to Cairo, the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces evacuated, and the Egyptian troops ready to leave. Supposing the firman dissolving the connection between Egypt and the Soudan to have been read, and the result would be that each mudir would aim at securing his own independence, and that a period of violent and protracted commotion would ensue, which might react prejudicially on Egypt owing to the intimate connection which had so long obtained between the two countries. He suggested, therefore, that the Egyptian government should maintain its position as a suzerain power, nominate the governor-general and mudirs, and act as a supreme court of appeal, but with a controlling influence strictly moral, and limited to giving advice. He was then of opinion that the prestige of the Cairo government was not seriously shaken except in so far as the conduct of its troops in the field was concerned, and that the people regarded that government as representing the sultan and would look with horror on a complete separation. It is not difficult to see, therefore, why he clung to the notion of the appointment of a clever, crafty, influential, and able governor such as Zebehr, who,

as a once powerful native chieftain, would consolidate such a government and hold the otherwise refractory mudirs in check. He afterwards had to discover that the extent of the rebellion was greater than he had anticipated; that it was beyond the power of Egypt to wrestle with, and this made him the more urgently anxious for the appointment of the still influential chief to gather the tribes around him and restore a regular government under the moral control of that at Cairo. There came the chief point where he and the British government were entirely at variance. He thought that Zebehr, appointed to succeed him as governor of the Soudan and assisted by him to pacificate the country, would "smash the Mahdi," and rule the Soudan with as much equity as could be reasonably expected. The cabinet in England believed, judging from Zebehr's character and antecedents, that he would be more likely to join the Mahdi for the achievement of his own ends, keep the government in his own hands, and restore the worst features of the slave-trade, and take the country out of all hope of restoration.

The proclamations issued by Gordon were addressed to different classes of people, the first being a general declaration that he had come to extricate the Soudan from difficulties and complications, to establish tranquillity and prevent the shedding of Moslem blood, to secure to the inhabitants their property, children, and wives, and to put a stop to injustice and oppression, which had been the cause of the rebellion. He therefore wiped off all arrears due from the people to the end of 1883; reduced to one-half the taxes of 1884, as well as all taxes introduced by Raout Pasha. He gave them the right to keep the slaves in their service without any interference from the government or anybody else. He ended by saying, "You should live in peace; do not expose yourselves to perdition; and avoid following the devil's path. Warn the inhabitants, and reveal to them the good news, in order that they may walk in the path of righteousness, and turn away from the evil one. Whoever wishes to see me, let him come and dread nothing."

In subsequent declarations he confirmed his references to slave-holding and to the remission of taxation, and added: "The taxes

due to the end of 1883 will be wiped off, owing to your inability to pay them. I will burn the registers as an act of clemency. I have also pardoned your former misdeeds. The inhabitants should therefore be warned accordingly, and should be informed that I abhor war, which causes bloodshed. My sole desire is that the inhabitants should live in peace and enjoy their property and agriculture under the auspices of the khedive."

To the inhabitants and merchants he announced, that as commercial transactions in Soudan goods within the Soudan was not prohibited, whether exported to the western provinces, such as Kordofan, Darfûr, or other places, if any one wished to import or export any goods the government would not prevent him from so doing or interfere in any way with his trade.

He warned the employés not to petition him for increase of salary, because, having forgone half the taxes due by the natives, which reduced the revenue, circumstances would not allow increase in the expenditure.

His proclamation to all the notables and the inhabitants of the Soudan afterwards promulgated said: "Let it be known to you all that I have been appointed, in concert between the khedive's government and the government of Great Britain, governor-general of the whole Soudan, and the Soudan has now become an independent state to govern itself without the intervention of the Egyptian government in any way whatever. The mudirs and governors have been informed accordingly.

"I am now ready to see to your prosperity and good government, and endow you with the privileges which were granted to you by the late Said Pasha. It should be known to you that the sultan had the intention of sending an expedition of strong Turkish troops to subdue the rebellious provinces, but his knowledge of your condition and of my kindness to you during the four years I was governor-general of the Soudan has prevented him from sending such an expedition, and I have come in person, by the will of God, to prevent war between the Moslems and the shedding of blood, which is contrary to the will of God, his Prophet, and his saints.

“Know ye that I propose to convene a council composed of the kings and notables of the Soudan, and I have ordered that you be governed by natives of the Soudan, in order that you may not be deprived of your rights as heretofore. . . . The council in question will meet twice a week, and as often as emergency may require. You are pardoned.”

The council for the government of Berber consisted of eleven members under the presidency of Hussein Pasha Khalifa, governor-general of Dongola and Berber, and it was announced that the governor of the Soudan should be of Soudanese origin, “for the greater tranquillity of the natives, so that you can have no cause of complaint from injustice as before.” A similar proclamation was made for Khartûm, where Awad el Kerim Pasha Abu Sin, Mudir of Khartûm, was president of the council.

Another proclamation, issued to all the inhabitants a few days later, was intended as a warning.

“Since my arrival I have constantly assured you of good treatment and justice, and advised you to desist from rebellion which leads to war and bloodshed; but finding that this advice had no effect upon some people, I have been compelled to use severe measures, so much so that British troops are now on their way, and in a few days will reach Khartûm; then, whoever persists in bad conduct will be treated as he deserves. Therefore upright men should have no intercourse with rebels, or they will share the same fate. I am watching things closely, and you should not think I am ignorant of what goes on. The present rebellion will bring ruin on the country and much loss of life. The wise man is his own guardian.”

There is something of Orientalism, perhaps, in the references to the intentions of the sultan to have sent an expedition of strong Turkish troops, and also to the approach of British troops. Gordon had, perhaps, some notion that either of these contingencies might occur, for there had been some parleying at Constantinople about the intervention of the sultan. At anyrate the translation of his words into or out of Arabic may make a good deal of difference. It should be added, too, that he was expecting to hear of the

opening of the Suakim-Berber route by a British force. As early as February 1st he had telegraphed from Assouan that Hussein Pasha Khalifa hoped to be able to open that road in a few days; but we know how that became impossible. It will be seen that, active as were Gordon's preparations for evacuating the country, he simultaneously provided for its pacification and the establishment of a settled government, so that on his retirement some one might succeed him.

On the 14th of February Gordon left Berber on his way to Shendy, where the people assembled on the river bank to receive him with acclamations. They regarded him as their deliverer, and their chiefs were ready to confer with him. Instead of the danger from lurking Arabs, which had been suggested by newspapers and by society in England, the crowd of people here, at the point of the three great caravan roads between Darfûr, Sennâr, and Suakim, hailed him as the representative of justice. The proclamation which had preceded him to Khartûm removed the doubts and suspicions which many there were inclined to hold regarding the claims that would be made upon them for arrears of oppressive taxes, and for enforcing the decree which would terminate their property in slaves. In England this concession raised a cry of mingled surprise and denunciation, and in some instances a cry of grief too; but people here could not estimate what slavery meant in that country, and that it was only the retention of existing domestic slaves—an institution which could not, under the circumstances, be altered—that was contemplated by Gordon. It offended numbers of people here, but it helped to restore Gordon to his old footing of confidence and power at Khartûm, and he could not possibly have refused to recognize the existence and the continuance of slavery in that form. At all events, to Khartûm he went on the 18th of February, and there, amidst enthusiastic crowds who pressed forward to kiss his hands and salute him as the saviour of the country, he passed through the city.

The arrival of Gordon and Stewart entirely changed the aspect of affairs at Khartûm. "I came without soldiers, God on my side, to redress the evils of the Soudan. I will not fight with any

weapons but justice. "There shall be no more Bashi-Bazouks," said Gordon. His speeches were brief, but they were to the purpose, and there were no more attempts at disturbance in the town when he arrived there—no more fears either for the people or the garrison. He had proclaimed the Mahdi Sultan of Kordofan. It was one of his bold rapid strokes, and might have been successful. It was said that the false prophet was amazingly delighted when the formal appointment reached him, but this was doubtful, as he would have been more likely to look upon such a message from a Christian governor appointed by Egypt as an insult. Possibly, however, he took the view of it that any such acknowledgement of his authority was an endorsement which could be made to serve his purpose. It is quite likely that Achmed Ahmet was very much of a puppet in the hands of men like Raouf Pasha and other treacherous governors of provinces, but he was a fanatic and pretender who maintained an authority of his own, and, ignorant as he was, his ambition appears to have been almost boundless. Gordon said that it was Raouf Pasha who had first called him the Mahdi. It was a name to conjure with amidst an oppressed and discontented people, who yet were the victims of those who led them into rebellion for the purpose, not of diminishing their burdens or of increasing their liberties, but of diverting the taxation that might be wrung from them into other channels, and of becoming masters of the country without being answerable to the Egyptian government. "Gordon Pasha will be received as a friend of the Arabs and blacks. His coming means no more Turks, with their backsheesh and kourbash. But he should have come a year ago; it is now too late," said an Arab who stood reading the proclamations.

At first this was not so apparent. Gordon appeared to be able to grasp the situation, and his former vigorous and prompt reforms were not forgotten, for he at once began to resume the policy which he had carried out at Khartûm in the former time of his authority, when peace and security were restored to that riotous, corrupt, and pestilent centre of the Soudan government. Immediately on his arrival he summoned the officials. Hussein

Pasha, hated of the people, and to whose sloth and indifference the dangerous position of Sennâr and Berber was attributed, had already been dismissed and was on the way to Cairo. It was evident that there would be no delay in making changes that would be popular. Colonel Coetlogon Pasha was now governor of the city, though afterwards Gordon found it unnecessary to retain him at Khartûm, where he had been so long shut up; and therefore sent him to Cairo some time afterwards, as his retention as a military officer appeared to be superfluous and there was no other appointment open to him.

Immediately after summoning the officers Gordon held a levee at the mudirieh, to which the whole population, even to the poorest Arab, were admitted. On his way thither the people came around him again, kissing his hands and feet, and greeting him as father and sultan. General Gordon and Colonel Stewart immediately opened offices in the palace, where anyone having a grievance would find admittance and be heard patiently. The former plan of a great box for petitions was afterwards renewed.

But the first day's demonstrations were not completed till the governor-general had redeemed his word as to the cancelling of arrears of taxation. The government books, containing the records (many of them extending to a remote period) of outstanding debts of the oppressed people, were publicly burnt in front of the palace, and with them those lesser instruments of torture, the kourbashes, whips, and other implements used to inflict punishment or to terrorize. The evidence of debts and the emblems of oppression perished together.

In the afternoon General Gordon created a council of the local notables, all Arabs. Then he visited the hospital and arsenal. With Colonel Stewart, Coetlogon Pasha, and the English consul, he visited the prison, and found it to be a dreadful den of misery. Two hundred wretches loaded with chains lay there. They were of all ages, boys and old men, some having never been tried, some having been proved innocent, but forgotten for over six months, some arrested on suspicion and detained there more than three years, many merely prisoners of war, and one a woman, who had

spent fifteen years in the prison for a crime committed when she was a girl.

At night the town was brilliantly illuminated, the bazaar was hung with gay cloth and lighted with coloured lamps, the priests' houses were decorated, and there was a grand display of fireworks by the negro population. Afesh Bey Shilook, a negro who had won the Legion of Honour under Bazaine in Mexico, was made a commandant of troops remaining in Khartûm. It was then decided that all the white troops should go to Omdurman, on the other side of the White Nile, and should be sent down the river in detachments, with their families and the Europeans who desired to go; and that the Soudanese should stay in Khartûm. It was thought that the conciliatory measures adopted by Gordon would keep the road perfectly open and maintain quiet in Khartûm till everything could be settled and the place given up to the Soudanese under a regular government. The proclamations were hailed with delight as the only means of saving the garrison. Egyptians and Europeans (the latter principally Greeks) professed to have the greatest confidence in him and his measures, as they foresaw that useless loss of life would thereby be prevented, and it was believed that the recognition of the Mahdi as ruler of Kordofan would prevent him from advancing on Khartûm.

Colonel Wylde, who had been to the Abyssinian frontier, reported that the country there was quiet, and the people of the territory round the frontier near Kassala were still loyal to the khedive; but the loyal tribes had been neither protected nor strengthened, Kassala itself was besieged from the north by the followers of Osman Digma, and the camel-drivers conveying goods from Suakim, Berber, and Kassala to Massowa were asking for protection, as the Massowa tribes would otherwise be compelled to join the Mahdi,—Egyptian influence was at an end, the Egyptian soldiers being regarded with contempt. The attitude of Abyssinia led to the endeavour of Admiral Hewett to conclude some negotiations with Johannes and Ras-el-Ullah, but, as we have seen, without any definite result. There continued to be great anxiety as to the possible fate of Kassala; for, as the capital



GENERAL GORDON RELEASING PRISONERS AT KHARTUM.

FEBRUARY, 1884.

of Toka, it came next in importance to Khartûm itself, and as it was the Egyptian depôt for troops and stores on the Abyssinian frontier, it was regarded as an important military point in case of war with Abyssinia. The town was built in 1840, after the annexation of Toka to Egypt, and the defences, though useless against guns, were regarded as impregnable, the walls being of solid mud and sun-dried bricks, loopholed for musketry, and surrounded by a deep fosse. As a military centre the place was important because of its position at the end of the great plain stretching north and east, and at the foot of the Abyssinian mountains; the Kassala Mountain being an enormous perpendicular mass of granite rising to the height of several thousand feet straight up from the plain, and visible for many miles in all directions. In 1881 the number of inhabitants was computed at from 25,000 to 30,000, among whom were a few Greek and Italian merchants, but no English; and there were abundant supplies, as there were numbers of cows, sheep, and goats in the neighbourhood. Camel-breeding was extensively carried on there, and the river Gash not only supplied plenty of water but fertilized the district. This river flowed through the territory of the Basé tribe, a country which commanded the very heart of Abyssinia. The number of troops usually quartered there consisted of about 800 Nubians, but among these were some criminals exiled from Lower Egypt, and doubtless forming a treacherous element, the presence of which was a source of weakness and danger in every place where the spread of the insurrection incited men of bad character, who had been sent for military service as a punishment, to attempt a revolt against the authorities.

Gordon found that the evils against which he had to contend in his former long and terrible conflict with the slave-hunting pashas were still rife. Hussein Pasha, then the vice-governor of Khartûm, whom he had deposed, and who had left for Cairo before the arrival of the new governor-general, was responsible for the iniquities, cruelties, and the gross injustice which had prevailed. Gordon telegraphed that the pasha should be watched and his boxes of treasure seized, for he had shamelessly abused the power

with which he had been intrusted. The brother of an influential citizen had been flogged to death under his orders; a young boy was threatened with a similar fate unless he gave some evidence which was required by the pasha for his own purposes; an old sheikh had been so cruelly bastinadoed that his feet were in a horrible condition, and he was carried into the presence of Gordon, who telegraphed to Cairo that £50 was to be stopped from Hussein's pay for the benefit of the poor old creature, who had been made a cripple for life. The day on which these events happened concluded with the burning down of the prison by Gordon's orders; and until late at night men, women, and children were dancing and leaping around the building as it fell beneath the flames.

Gordon had then heard of the attempt that was to be made to relieve Tokar, and he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring advising that the British admiral should make it known to rebel chiefs that their wrongs and grievances would be redressed if they went or sent messengers to the governor-general at Khartûm and stated their case to him; but the time had gone by for such a course to be adopted, and Sir William Hewett said, reasonably enough, that he could not ask the chiefs to leave their followers and go to meet Gordon at Khartûm, at a time when English troops were about to be sent against them. The message was, however, sent to the chiefs before General Graham commenced his campaign, but, as we have seen, it was refused.

We have already followed the narrative of events at Suakim, and the operations which concluded with the defeat of Osman Digma at Tamai, and it is therefore only necessary to resume the somewhat scanty and uncertain story of the occurrences at Khartûm and the adjoining provinces, where the first appearances were so hopeful that Gordon, and those who were with him, expected to achieve the objects of the enterprise which he had undertaken. A portion of the Egyptian garrison rapidly embarked to return to Cairo, and 2200 men were sent back down the Nile, leaving about 4000 black troops in Khartûm, and 3000 at Sennâr, which Gordon had confident hopes of being able to relieve. On the 27th of February that town was quiet and the garrison safe, and on the

same day the return of invalid soldiers for Berber and Korosko commenced in earnest; and an Egyptian force of two battalions, comprising 41 officers and 1300 men, were ready to leave Cairo for Upper Egypt under the command of Colonel Duncan. "Rest assured you leave this place as safe as Kensington Park," said Gordon to Colonel Coetlogon as he bade him good-bye at Khartûm.

Gordon was justified in the opinion that the danger menacing Khartûm was from within, where the people had been so oppressed that they were driven to contemplate their deliverance by the Mahdi as a probable advantage. The great change in the attitude of the entire population, the manner in which they welcomed the arrival of the governor-general, their enthusiasm when they saw that he was prepared practically to carry out all and more than the promises he had made in his proclamations, the general feeling of tranquillity, were sufficient to assure him that he had secured their confidence. On the 19th of February Power had telegraphed to Sir E. Baring: "Everything is now safe here for troops and Europeans. He is giving the people more than they expected from the Mahdi."

But there was still a great dark back-ground of doubt and dread from which Gordon could not help knowing the clouds might roll onward. Would it be possible for him to maintain his ascendancy, or, at all events, could he extend his influence beyond the immediate area where he was able to make it practically felt? Even should it be possible for him to remain there after having evacuated the territory of civilians, he would be surrounded with difficulties which no European could hope permanently to overcome without being materially sustained from without; and if strong material aid could not be expected either from Egypt or from England, his retirement, even though he could succeed in pacifying the country and restoring a rule of justice and mercy in the department over which he had control, would be the signal for the advance of the Mahdi from Obeid, and the successive defeat of local chiefs or kings and their small tribes. There was no hope of forming a coalition of these chiefs except under the direction and government of a strong hand. They would be compelled to

join the hordes of the false prophet in order to secure themselves; the whole country would be left to utter anarchy, and Egypt itself would be menaced. When the Egyptian garrisons and Egyptian government were removed, and he himself would be preparing to relinquish the arduous task that he had undertaken, who would consent to administer the government of the country? Who would be there to protect the people who had acted loyally towards him, and aided him with money, service, and provisions, in the expectation that they were not to be deserted and left to the exactions and retaliations of a conquering rebel, who claimed an authority above that of khedive and sultan, and behind whom were the worst of the petty kings, whose power needed to be checked by a native authority which would be recognized and accepted even though it should be opposed to the claims and the pretensions of the false prophet?

These were the reflections that were constantly present to Gordon, and he could find no adequate solution for them except in the appointment of Zebehr. The necessity again confronted him almost at the moment he entered Khartûm, for on the 18th of February he telegraphed: "In a previous memorandum I alluded to the arrival of an epoch when whites, fellaheen, troops, civilian employés, women and children of deceased soldiers, in short the Egyptian element in the Soudan, will be removed; when we shall be face to face with the Soudan administration, and when I must withdraw from the Soudan. I have stated that to withdraw without being able to place a successor in my seat would be the signal for general anarchy throughout the country, which, though all Egyptian element was withdrawn, would be a misfortune, and inhuman. Even if I placed a man in my seat unsupported by any government, the same anarchy would ensue. Her majesty's government could, I think, without responsibility in money or men, give the commission to my successor on certain terms which I will detail hereafter.

If this solution is examined, we shall find that a somewhat analogous case exists in Afghanistan, where her majesty's government give moral support to the ameer, and go even beyond

that in giving the ameer a subsidy, which would not be needed in the present case. I distinctly state that if her majesty's government gave a commission to my successor, I recommend neither a subsidy nor men being given. I would select and give a commission to some man, and promise him the moral support of her majesty's government, and nothing more. It may be argued that her majesty's government would thus be giving nominal and moral support to a man who will rule over a slave state; but so is Afghanistan, as also Socotra. This nomination of my successor must, I think, be direct from her majesty's government.

As for the man, her majesty's government should select one above all others, namely Zebehr. He alone has the ability to rule the Soudan, and would be universally accepted by the Soudan. He should be made K.C.M.G., and given presents.

The terms of nomination should be as follows:—

1. Engagement not to go into Equatorial or Bahr Gazelle provinces, and which I should evacuate.

2. Engagement not to go into Darfûr.

3. Engagement, on payment of £200 annually, to telegraph height of Nile to Cairo.

4. Engagement to remain at peace with Abyssinia.

5. Engagement not to levy duties beyond 4 per cent on imports or exports. Of course he will not have Suakim or Massowah.

6. Engagement not to pursue any one who was engaged in suppressing his son's revolt.

7. Engagement to pay the pensions granted by the Egyptian government to old employés. To the above may be added other clauses as may seem fit. P.S.—I think the decision of any council of notables for the selection of candidates for the post of my successor would be useless. Zebehr's exile at Cairo for ten years, amidst all the late events, and his mixing with Europeans, must have had great effect on his character. Zebehr's nomination, under the moral countenance of her majesty's government, would bring all merchants, European and others, back to the Soudan in a short time."

Lieutenant-colonel Stewart, who telegraphed his opinions independently at Gordon's request, declared his belief that the policy recommended would greatly facilitate their retirement from the country, and said that the Turco-Arabian view of the question was one demanding serious consideration. As to whether Zebehr Pasha was the man who should be nominated, he thought that they had hardly a sufficient knowledge of the country to be able to form an opinion; but it was probable that whoever was nominated would be accepted for a time.

Sir E. Baring, who seems to have exhibited a remarkable faculty for being converted point by point under the influence of Gordon, was by this time very much in favour of the whole proposal, though he made some particular reservations, some of which he seemed afterwards to have also relinquished. He sent to Earl Granville saying, with what seemed like a sigh of relief at the opportunity for delay: "As regards the choice of his successor, there is, as Colonel Stewart says in his telegram, no necessity to decide at once, but I believe Zebehr Pasha to be the only possible man. He undoubtedly possesses energy and ability, and has great local influence. As regards the slave-trade, I discussed the matter with General Gordon when he was in Cairo, and he fully agreed with me in thinking that Zebehr Pasha's presence or absence would not affect the question in one way or the other. I am also convinced from many things that have come to my notice that General Gordon is quite right in thinking that Zebehr Pasha's residence in Egypt has considerably modified his character. He now understands what European power is, and it is much better to have to deal with a man of this sort than with a man like the Mahdi.

I should be altogether opposed to having General Gordon and Zebehr Pasha at Khartûm together. As soon as General Gordon has arranged for the withdrawal of the garrison and the rest of the Egyptian element, he could leave Khartûm, and Zebehr Pasha might shortly afterwards start from Cairo. One of my chief reasons for allowing the interview between the two men to take place was that I wished to satisfy myself to some extent of the

sentiments entertained by Zebehr Pasha towards General Gordon. I would not on any account run the risk of putting General Gordon in his power.

If Zebehr Pasha is nominated, it will be very necessary to lay down in writing and in the plainest language what degree of support he may expect from her majesty's government. I cannot recommend that he should be promised the 'moral support' of her majesty's government. In the first place, he would scarcely understand the sense of the phrase, and, moreover, I do not think he would attach importance to any support which was not material. It is for her majesty's government to judge what the effect of his appointment would be upon public opinion in England; but except for that I can see no reason why Zebehr Pasha should not be proclaimed ruler of the Soudan with the approbation of her majesty's government. It should be distinctly explained to him in writing that he must rely solely upon his own resources to maintain his position. He might receive a moderate sum of money from the Egyptian government to begin with. His communications with that government might be conducted through her majesty's representative in Cairo, as General Gordon suggests.

With regard to the detailed conditions mentioned by General Gordon, I think they might form the subject of further consideration and discussion, both with General Gordon and with others in authority here. I am inclined to doubt whether such conditions would be of any use; they would probably not long be observed.

In conclusion, I may add that I have no idea whether Zebehr Pasha would accept the position which it is proposed to offer him."

There is a painful air of indecision about this. "Perhaps you might, and it would probably be for the best if you did, although, after all, it would be of very little use unless, indeed, you were to make up your mind not to do quite what is really wanted," seems to be the tone of it. This is not difficult to explain, however. Sir E. Baring was in a very awkward position: the government here knew little or nothing about the country and the imminent situation; he knew a good deal more, because he was at Cairo, and had learned something about the whole position, and was acquainted

with many of the actors in the scene. Gordon, presumably, knew a very great deal more than he and the government together, and Stewart not much less than Gordon. It was a painful position for the representative in Cairo, on whose authority alone Gordon was ordered to proceed; for Zebehr Pasha was what in sporting parlance is called a very "dark horse." It was quite uncertain whether the ex-sultan and slaveholder would take the position if it were offered him; and should he consent to do so, more serious questions still would be: What is his motive? What bonds will hold him when he is established in power at Khartûm?

That is to say, it was exceedingly doubtful whether Zebehr would consent to go to Khartûm on the nomination of General Gordon, or under any conditions of subordination, unless he first received trustworthy assurances that the value of the property of which he alleged he had been deprived would be restored to him to the extent of about £900,000. Moreover, he vehemently and categorically denied the charges brought against him, even that of having been a conspicuous slave-hunter. "I do not know how the idea has got abroad that I am a slave-dealer," he said. "Of course there was slavery in my country, and always has been, but I never sold a human being. My people serve me gladly for the love they bear me. Let anyone go into my country and ask if Zebehr ever unjustly oppressed or killed a man, woman, or child. God is my witness, and I swear to you most solemnly that the charge against me is false (the charge of inciting to rebellion). And is England afraid of a broken man like me? Can she not order me to put down slavery, and am I not forced to obey her commands? Am I a fool, if England sent me up, to go against her behests? I am a soldier, and under authority. . . . So confident am I of my people's love that I will go up alone among them, returning joyfully to my dear home, and I shall be received everywhere with the kisses of peace."

These declarations were made to a friend of Mr. Hake, the author of *The Story of Chinese Gordon*, and to other persons; but they were only examples of supreme lying—an art in which the Arabs generally excel, but in which Zebehr appears to have been

a master. A gentleman who visited him in May, 1884, afterwards wrote: "Zebehr told me, in reply to other questions which I addressed to him, that he had seen the statements published in the English newspapers of his alleged cruelty to slaves; for he had collected the papers and had all the references to himself translated into Arabic. He supposed the newspapers had been paid by the English government to write against him. I told him he was mistaken about that. It was not the government, but the English people, who had a very strong impression that he had been guilty of great cruelties, and this was the only reason why the government had been unwilling to let him go to Khartûm when urged to do so by General Gordon. Zebehr denied the accusation made against him, and asked, if we thought him so guilty, why had he not been taken to England to be tried, when he could have proved that he was innocent. The desire to be taken to England for a fair trial was evidently very strong upon Zebehr, but he objected to being kept an indefinite time under the surveillance of the authorities in Cairo."

At the time that these strong declarations of his innocence were first published he had been somewhat touched by Gordon's having just sent a request to the Egyptian government to give Zebehr £5000 as compensation for the recent unjust confiscation of part of his property in the Soudan, and he had coupled this request with another asking them to restore his goods. After this Zebehr commenced his declaration by saying that he did not believe that Gordon had ever given orders to Gessi to shoot his (Zebehr's) son, "for Gordon is a strangely merciful man. He cannot speak our language, and so is often apt to get wrong impressions; but I do not think he would have shot my son without hearing him. However, that is a thing of the past. I have forgiven him, as we all hope to be forgiven."

Assuredly there were reasons enough for the refusal to send Zebehr to Khartûm; but as almost every other proposition was refused, as it was decided that no attempt should be made either by the Indian troops or by the British troops under General Graham to open the road from Suakim to Berber, as neither

British nor Indian troops were to be sent to Wady Halfa or to Berber, as no definite proposition was ever concluded to agree with the government of the sultan for the despatch of a Turkish force to the Soudan for the purpose of suppressing the rebellion and pacificating the country, the only alternative was to place in power at Khartûm or at Berber some ruler whose influence with the people would enable him to reorganize a settled government on the old native lines. Gordon, baffled, refused, conscious that as the days went by the situation was becoming more difficult, and that it might soon be impossible either to vacate the country or to maintain any effectual opposition to the advance of the Mahdi and the spread of the insurrection, suggested every plan that occurred to him, with the apparent result that the government here, unable to comprehend the actual condition of affairs, began to fear every fresh suggestion, and to regard it as a temptation to abandon that policy of non-intervention in the Soudan which they had in effect already contradicted by the operations in the Red Sea provinces.

It should be noted, however, that Sir Evelyn Baring was no longer either reticent or uncertain. Having weighed the probable results he had come to the conclusion that the appointment of Zebehr was the only way of avoiding increased difficulties that might end in actual disaster. In a similarly frank spirit he said, in reference to the objection to sending British troops to Assouan because of the probable effects of the climate: "I have only to say, that we have undertaken the responsibility of preserving tranquillity in Egypt, and that it is impossible to execute the task without exposing our troops to whatever risks the climatic influences involve."

Gordon had quite early pointed out, that should the whole Soudan, comprising Dongola, Berber, Khartûm, Sennâr, and Kas-sala, be quieted, and Bogos evacuated, there would be left a large and expensive force and a diminished revenue, as hardly half the tax could be realized for a year or so. Egyptian employés and white troops would have departed, and there would be no money wherewith to pay the forces for the defence of the towns when once the £100,000 for which he had credits was exhausted. There

was no self-reliance among the wealthy people there, and whoever might be named governor would have to face the situation without funds for paying the Soudan garrisons in the towns. The only slight hope against anarchy would, so far as Gordon could see, be to place 1000 Soudan troops in Khartûm, 500 in Berber, 500 in Dongola, 500 in Kassala, 500 in Sennâr, or 3000 in all, costing about £70,000 a year. He would also place a governor or meglis in each town, hand over to him the whole administration of taxes and of government, keeping apart the £70,000 a year for the payment of the 3000 men, and would place a supreme officer over them. By these means anarchy would be prevented, at anyrate for a time, and if it did occur it would be the fault of the native government. Should an outbreak occur, as the troops would be natives, there would be no chance of their being massacred; the only risk would be for the European commander. This was evidently regarded by Gordon as a faint kind of alternative to the proposition for appointing Zebehr, which the English ministry had negatived, because they did not wish to go beyond the original instructions which he had received. Sir E. Baring, who had telegraphed to ask Gordon whether he could suggest anyone beside Zebehr Pasha to succeed him at Khartûm, sent a message to Earl Granville, the conclusion of which was:—

“With regard to the wish of her majesty’s government not to go beyond General Gordon’s plan, as stated in his memorandum of the 22nd ultimo, I would remark that he appears to have intended merely to give a preliminary sketch of the general line of policy to be pursued. Moreover, in that memorandum he makes a specific allusion to the difficulty of providing rulers for Khartûm, Dongola, and other places where there are no old families to recall to power.

It is clear that her majesty’s government cannot afford moral or material support to General Gordon’s successor as ruler of the Soudan, but the question of whether or not he should be nominally appointed by the authority of her majesty’s government appears to me to be one of very slight practical importance.

Whatever may be said to the contrary, her majesty’s government must in reality be responsible for any arrangements which are

now devised for the Soudan, and I do not think it is possible to shake off that responsibility.

If, however, her majesty's government are unwilling to assume any responsibility in the matter, then I think they should give full liberty of action to General Gordon and the khedive's government to do what seems best to them.

I have no doubt as to the most advisable course of action. Zebehr Pasha should be permitted to succeed General Gordon. He should receive a certain sum of money to begin with, and an annual subsidy of about £50,000 for the first five years, to depend upon his good behaviour. This amount would enable him to maintain a moderate-sized army, and the whole arrangement would be an economical one for the Egyptian government.

The main difficulty lies in the selection of the man. It is useless to send any one who has no local influence. There are certain obvious objections to Zebehr Pasha, but I think too great weight is attached to them, and I believe that General Gordon is quite right when he says that Zebehr Pasha is the only possible man. I can suggest none other, and Nubar Pasha is strongly in favour of him.

It is for her majesty's government to judge of the importance to be attached to public opinion in England, but I venture to think that any attempt to settle Egyptian questions by the light of English popular feeling is sure to be productive of harm, and in this, as in other cases, it would be preferable to follow the advice of the responsible authorities on the spot."

Yes. In reply to the question whether he could suggest any one else, as the government would not have Zebehr, Gordon had replied: "That settles the question for me, I cannot suggest any other." At that time (February 26th) Gordon thought it would not be difficult to "smash the Mahdi," and was, perhaps, scarcely aware of the dimensions of the revolt in the Red Sea provinces. "Of course," he said, "my duty is evacuation, and the best I can for establishing a quiet government. The first I hope to accomplish. The second is a more difficult task, and concerns Egypt more than me. If Egypt is to be quiet Mahdi must be smashed up. Madhi is most unpopular, and with care and time could be

smashed. Remember that once Khartûm belongs to Mahdi, the task will be far more difficult; yet you will, for safety of Egypt, execute it. If you decide on smashing Mahdi then send up another £100,000, and send up 200 Indian troops to Wady Halfa, and send officer up to Dongola under pretence to look out quarters for troops. Leave Suakim and Massowah alone. I repeat that evacuation is possible, but you will feel effect in Egypt, and will be forced to enter into a far more serious affair in order to guard Egypt. At present, it would be comparatively easy to destroy Mahdi."

We have already noted the reasonable considerations which caused the government to differ from Gordon, Stewart, and Baring, as to the employment of Zebehr, and his restoration to authority, and these objections were emphatically stated by Earl Granville; but events thickened fast, and Gordon repeatedly urged that every day made it more imperative that some steps should be taken to provide for the settlement of the government when the time came for him to retire; and, before retiring, he could place a man like Zebehr in authority. The imminent danger was that the advance of the rebellion might make it more and more difficult even for Zebehr to take the control, and that unless some steps were taken to provide for a strong government it might, and probably would, be impossible to fulfil the first part of the commission with which Gordon had been intrusted. Kassala, Sennâr, Berber, would soon be in jeopardy unless some kind of aid were sent; and as neither a British nor an Indian force was to be suffered to make such a demonstration as might in itself aid in putting an end to the increasing desertion of the soldiers and the half-reluctant revolt of wavering tribes, and as, moreover, there seemed to be no expectation of the route being opened from Berber to Suakim, the necessity for the appointment, either by England or Egypt, of the only man who had the ability and the power to smite the rebellion, to encourage the tribal kings, and to recal the people of the Soudan to obedience to a regular government, was the only course left open.

"I see impossibility of immediate withdrawal of all Egyptian

employés, and the remedy I propose is to send up Zebehr as my successor, who would receive for a time a subsidy from the Egyptian government in order to enable him to maintain an armed force. As to Egyptian employés, I mean that I appoint men of Soudan to places which they do not care to accept for fear of compromising themselves with Mahdi, and that is my difficulty, which arises from haziness of future. This would be all over if Zebehr was here.

The combination at Khartûm of Zebehr and myself is an absolute necessity for success, and I beg you and Lord Granville to believe my certain conviction that there is not the slightest fear of our quarrelling, for Zebehr would know that the subsidy depended on my safety. To do any good, we must be together, and that without delay. . . .

Believe me I am right, and do not delay. Things are not serious, although they may become so if delay occurs in sending Zebehr. My weakness is that of being foreign and Christian and peaceful; and it is only by sending Zebehr that prejudice can be removed."

Colonel Stewart was in complete accordance with this view—

"It seems evident to me that it is impossible for us to leave this country without leaving some sort of established government which will last at any rate for a time, and Zebehr is the only man who can assure that. Also that we must withdraw the Sennâr and other besieged garrisons, and here also Zebehr can greatly assist us. . . . I assure you none are more anxious to leave this country than myself and Gordon, and none more heartily approve the government's policy of evacuation. Unless, however, Zebehr is sent here, I see little probability of this policy being carried out. Every day we remain finds us more firm in the country, and causes us to incur responsibilities towards the people which it is impossible for us to overlook."

On the 5th of March Lord Granville sent a despatch to Sir E. Baring, which appeared to have a satirical intention.

"Her majesty's government would be glad to learn how you reconcile your proposal to acquiesce in such an appointment (the

appointment of Zebehr Pasha) with the prevention or discouragement of slave-hunting and the slave-trade, with the policy of complete evacuation, and with the security of Egypt. They would also wish to be informed as to the progress which has been made in extricating the garrisons, and the length of time likely to elapse before the whole or the greater part may be withdrawn. As her majesty's government require details as to each garrison, your report should be a full one, and may be sent by mail.”

This is a specimen of what may be called high official snubbing; but though the refusal of the government to countenance the employment of Zebehr in the Soudan may have been well founded, the snub and the satire were weak. Neither Gordon nor Baring could pretend to reconcile the proposal with their opinions of the character of the man, nor with what was known of his former conduct and what Gordon himself had said of it. Zebehr had been sentenced to death, and was still detained a prisoner under surveillance in Cairo; but he had been employed in an important crisis in the Russo-Turkish war, and his faults and crimes were such as did not single him out as the greatest of all villains in a country where Raouf Pasha and others had been sentenced and afterwards restored to high office. It is true that in former instances, notably in that of the slave-dealer Abu Saoud, Gordon's plan of endeavouring to turn enemies into friends by conciliations had not been invariably successful; but here was a case in which he could only say, I retract nothing that I said of the character of Zebehr; I think it quite likely he is still something of a villain; very probably he and other members of his family may have had something to do with stirring up the rebellion for the very purpose of making it necessary that he should be sent to quell it. Should he do so he will have plenty to do, but he is capable. He alone of any man in Egypt and the Soudan provinces could at once grasp the situation, draw the tribes and their chiefs from the Mahdi, and, if it were made well worth his while, cause the slave-trade to die out by putting an end to the raids upon the villages, forbidding the passage of caravans, and so ending slave-hunting. My urgent requests that Zebehr may be sent are not at all

consistent, Gordon might have said, but they arise from my conviction that circumstances which now menace the country and will prevent me from completing the work I came here to accomplish, make it necessary to be inconsistent rather than to obstinately adhere to what may appear to be the reasonable deductions from my former declarations.

Might not Gordon and Baring have retorted on Lord Granville's sarcasm by asking him how the government could reconcile their recent action at Suakim and the Red Sea territory with the reiterated assurances that they could never consent to aid the khedive in defending or reconquering the Soudan? The unforeseen had to that extent superseded the foreseen policy; and there was no absolute consistency anywhere, except with the Mahdi, who refused to abate a jot of his pretensions, and with Zebehr, who waited to know what would be the price for his services if he were asked and consented to go to the Soudan.

But Gordon replied soberly and seriously to the satirical despatch by a long telegram, dated from Khartûm, on the 8th of March. The sending of Zebehr, he said, meant the extrication of the Cairo employés from Khartûm and the garrisons from Sennâr and Kassala. "I can see no possible way to do so except through him, who, being a native of the country, can rally the well-affected round him, as they know he will make his home here. I do not think that the giving a subsidy to Zebehr for some two years would be in contradiction to the policy of entire evacuation. It would be nothing more than giving him a lump sum in two instalments under the conditions I have already written.

As for slave-holding, even had we held the Soudan, we could never have interfered with it. I have already said that the treaty of 1877 was an impossible one; therefore, on that head, Zebehr's appointment would make no difference whatever. As for slave-hunting, the evacuation of the Bahr Gazelle and Equatorial provinces would entirely prevent it. Should Zebehr attempt, after his two years' subsidy was paid him, to take those districts, we could put pressure on him at Suakim, which will remain in our

hands. I feel sure that Zebehr will be so occupied with the Soudan proper, and with consolidating his position, that he will not have time to devote to those provinces.

As for the security of Egypt, Zebehr's stay in Cairo has taught him our power, and he would never dream of doing anything against Egypt. He would rather seek its closest alliance, for he is a great trader. As to progress made in extrication of garrisons, all I have done is to send down from Khartûm all the sick men, women, and children of those killed in Kordofan. Sennâr, I heard to-day, is quite safe and quiet. Kassala will hold out without difficulty after Graham's victory, but the road there is blocked, as also is the road to Sennâr. It is quite impossible to get the roads open to Kassala and Sennâr, or to send down the white troops, unless Zebehr comes up. He will change the whole state of affairs. As for the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces they are all right; but I cannot evacuate them till the Nile rises, in about two months. Dongola and Berber are quiet; but I fear for the road between Berber and Khartûm, where the friends of the Mahdi are very active. A body of rebels on the Blue Nile are blockading a force of 1000 men, who have, however, plenty of food; till the Nile rises I cannot relieve them. Darfûr, so far as I can understand, is all right, and the restored sultan should be now working up the tribes to acknowledge him.

It is impossible to find any other man but Zebehr for governing Khartûm. No one has his power. Hussein Pasha Khaleefa has only power at Dongola and Berber. If you do not send Zebehr you have no chance of getting the garrisons away; this is a heavy argument in favour of sending him. There is no possibility of dividing the country between Zebehr and other chiefs; none of the latter could stand for a day against the Mahdi's agents, and Hussein Pasha Khaleefa would also fall. The chiefs will not collect here, for the loyal are defending their lands against the disloyal. There is not the least chance of Zebehr making common cause with the Mahdi. Zebehr here would be far more powerful than the Mahdi, and he would make short work of the Mahdi. The Mahdi's power is that of a pope, Zebehr's will be that of a

sultan. They could never combine. Zebehr is fifty times the Mahdi's match. He is also of good family, well known, and fitted to be sultan; the Mahdi, in all these respects, is the exact opposite, besides being a fanatic. I daresay Zebehr, who hates the tribes, did stir up the fires of revolt, in hopes that he would be sent to quell it. It is the irony of fate that he will get his wish if he is sent up."

This telegram gives a distinct impression of the condition of affairs at that date; and the fears then expressed were soon to be more than realized. This, however, did not prove that the opinion of the government and their subsequent refusal to send Zebehr could not be defended, even though Stewart and Baring both agreed with Gordon.

"I think," said Sir E. Baring, "that the policy of sending Zebehr Pasha to Khartûm and giving him a subsidy is in harmony with the policy of evacuation. It is in principle the same policy as that adopted by the government of India towards Afghanistan and the tribes on the north-west frontier. I have always contemplated making some arrangements for the future government of the Soudan, as will be seen from my despatch of the 22d December, 1883, in which I said that it would be 'necessary to send an English officer of high authority to Khartûm with full powers to withdraw all garrisons in the Soudan and make the best arrangements possible for the future government of that country.'

As regards slavery, it may certainly receive a stimulus from the abandonment of the Soudan by Egypt, but the despatch of Zebehr Pasha to Khartûm will not affect the question in one way or the other. No middle course is possible as far as the Soudan is concerned. We must either virtually annex the country, which is out of the question, or else we must accept the inevitable consequences of the policy of abandonment.

Your lordship will see what General Gordon says about the question of the security of Egypt. I believe that Zebehr Pasha may be made a bulwark against the approach of the Mahdi. Of course there is a risk that he will constitute a danger to Egypt, but this risk is, I think, a small one, and it is in any case preferable to

incur it rather than to face the certain disadvantages of withdrawing without making any provision for the future government of the country, which would thus be sure to fall under the power of the Madhi."

This opinion was endorsed by other good authorities who were well acquainted with the condition of the country and with the probable effect of Zebehr's appointment; but public opinion in England was certainly against it, and the opposition in parliament, having learned what was proposed, and concluding that the ministry was undecided whether to countenance the appointment of Zebehr or not, began to make use of the rumour for the purpose of taunting the government with adopting a policy of reticence, not only because they had no other policy, but because they contemplated the employment in high office of a man whose character made any co-operation with him disgraceful if not actually criminal. It was only a sense of the high character and entirely unselfish conduct of Gordon which prevented attacks being made upon him, but there was no real reaction with regard to him in public opinion, though it was thought that he might be on the brink of a serious error of judgment; and the British and Foreign Anti-slavery Society was not silent. Mr. Edmund Sturge, the chairman, wrote to Lord Granville in the name of the committee, saying:

"The antecedents of Zebehr Pasha are well known to your lordship. In the records of the devastations and murders inflicted by the slave-trade on North-eastern Africa this man has stood the foremost and the principal actor, and his career is specially marked by perfidy and crime. The committee are unanimous in the feeling that countenance in any shape of such an individual by the British government would be a degradation for England and a scandal to Europe.

The committee express no opinion on the policy of a permanent maintenance of British authority at Khartûm, but they earnestly hope that in the event of her majesty's government making an arrangement for its independent rule, the conditions will be such as shall secure the country alike from a reign of anarchy and barbarism, and from that of the slave-trader.

As yet, however, the committee are unable to believe that her majesty's government will thus stultify that anti-slavery policy which has so long been the high distinction of England, or that they will thus discharge a trust which they have undertaken on behalf of the British people and of Europe."

Early in March the position of affairs in Khartûm was, that two-thirds of the people there were terrorized by one-third, excited by the emissaries of the Mahdi, and yet Gordon's avowed business was to get Egyptian employés out of the town, a proceeding to which the two-thirds of the population strongly objected. The sick, widows, and orphans were daily sent away, but to send away the 1400 fellaheen soldiers would have been to leave the people no other course open than to send their submission to the Mahdi, so that, as Gordon said, "all the machinery of government would be caught." In effect the complete evacuation of the Soudan was impossible till the government asserted its authority. The employés, who formed the machinery of government, could not be removed, and, though it was possible at Khartûm to hold out, and force back the revolt till the sick, and widows, and helpless people had been sent away, the position would not improve by time, and when all the money had been spent only a partial vacation of the Soudan would have been effected, and anarchy would have its swing.

On the 29th of February three officers, who had escaped a month before from Kordofan, where they had served in the time of Abd-el-Kader, reached Khartûm. They reported that the Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmed, had 50,000 Bedouins and soldiers, and he could set in motion an army even of 150,000 men. His intention was, to send on his forces and surround Khartûm and cut off all communications, but on hearing of Gordon's arrival he countermanded the advance, though he still held his troops in readiness. He had no idea of going himself to Khartûm, but wished to send forward the Bedouins under chiefs chosen by him, and had placed his soldiers under the orders of Bedouin sheikhs whom he had selected. He had exiled the military officers, and given them over to the Bedouins for slaves, an act which was attributed to his fear of them.

On the arrival of Hicks Pasha near Kordofan (Obeid) these three officers were in irons, but after Hicks's defeat they were released and put under surveillance.

According to such intelligence as could be obtained the position of the Madhi was not an easy one. He had no settled government; his disregard of some of the observances commanded by the Moslem law, and particularly his having exceeded the number of wives permitted to a prophet, had shaken the confidence of some of his followers, and he had begun to act with the severity of a usurper, making exactions which were causing some feelings of resentment.

Whether these reports were true or not, Gordon had no opportunity of availing himself of any supposed loss of prestige on the part of the false prophet. On the 1st of March he had plainly stated that it was impossible to get Cairo employés out of Khartûm without help from the government. "They refuse Zebehr, and are quite right (may be) to do so, but it was the only chance. It is scarcely worth while saying more on the subject. I will do my best to carry out my instructions, but I feel conviction I shall be caught in Khartûm." Caught in Khartûm! The city where he had formerly suffered so much; the graveyard for Europeans, except those who are exceptionally constituted; a pestilent place in the rainy season, when even among the natives the mortality is very considerable. Yet it is a large and important city, with a spacious market-place, ample bazaars, and above 3000 houses, amongst which are many great substantial dwellings, commodious if not architecturally attractive, and in the healthy season not unpleasantly situated. The Austrian Roman Catholic mission was formerly one of the most important institutions in the place. It was supported by widely extended contributions, and the buildings occupied a considerable space, surrounded by a solid wall, which inclosed beautiful gardens containing palm, orange, and fig trees, pomegranates and bananas. The buildings included a massive cathedral and a hospital, beside the dwellings of the missionaries.

Would the government after all consent to send Zebehr to

Gordon at Khartûm? Would the order be given for the British troops who had defeated Osman Digma to open the route from Suakim to Berber? These were the questions that were being asked by Gordon at Khartûm, by officials at Cairo, and by excited inquirers in England both in and out of parliament. The answer in each case was "no." Even if the members of the government had been willing to forego their own convictions and to yield to the urgent and repeated declarations of Gordon himself, they would have found themselves in opposition to the prevalent voice of the country, and would have been denounced by their political rivals. "We cannot give back to barbarism that which has been won for civilization," said Lord Salisbury in March, at the time that the cabinet was seriously and finally considering whether it would be possible to comply with Gordon's demand, supported by the explanation that he made of the restrictions that might be placed on the government of the Soudan provinces by Zebehr. Lord Salisbury was in accord with the opinion of the ministry at that time. There were some evidences that Mr. Gladstone was in advance of many of his colleagues in the desire to leave Gordon free to act on his own conclusions, even to the extent of agreeing to the appointment of Zebehr; but the public voice and the voices of the opponents of the slave-trade, who evidently did not completely grasp the situation, were against it. Nor was their opposition unreasonable. The doubts whether Gordon might after all have been mistaken in the degree of turpitude of which he had formerly accused the rebellious and slave-hunting pasha, were cleared up by a communication to the *Times* by Mr. A. Egmont Hake, Gordon's own biographer, in answer to a letter from a Cairo correspondent to the leading journal, which suggested that Gordon might have denounced Zebehr on partial evidence, and dwelt on the fact that Gordon had not produced the letter proving the complicity of Zebehr in the revolt for which his son was executed. Mr. Hake wrote: "The letter referred to could not be produced, for the simple reason that it was not in General Gordon's hands. I have now that very letter before me, together with a number of other Arabic documents bearing on the revolt in the

Bahr al Ghazal, which clearly prove Zebehr's complicity. The letter was read during the proceedings of the Maylis (court of inquiry or court-martial), and is referred to in the official report, also before me, in the following terms:—

‘A letter was also read from Zebehr Pasha to his son Souleyman, inciting him to rebel and to levy war against the government, and urging him to expel, by force of arms, Idris Ben Abtar, governor of Bahr al Ghazal; desiring him also to seek the means of combining with Awad Bey, for the sake of his assistance in seizing the country, seeing that he is one of its inhabitants, and is well acquainted with all its affairs, the language of the people, &c. The letter goes on to say that, whereas the agents who were left in charge (by Zebehr) of his zaribas had left their employment and had taken service under the government, he therefore desired his son Souleyman to receive (or take possession of) Shaka from Said ail Haseyn.’ A letter was also read during the sitting from Ramli son of Souleyman, to Souleyman son of Zebehr, informing the latter that he had received 1000 okka of gunpowder from Zebehr, asking for instructions, and stating that it was meanwhile buried underground.

The documents which are in my possession consist of a memoir of Zebehr, written in Arabic by General Gordon's command; of Zebehr's letters to his wife, his son, and to his accomplice Awad, all seized by General Gordon during his campaign against the slave-dealers; and of the report already referred to. These documents place beyond a doubt the fact that Zebehr, while a prisoner at Cairo, was busy in plotting for the revolt which took place in 1879, and which caused so much anxiety to General Gordon and his lieutenants.”

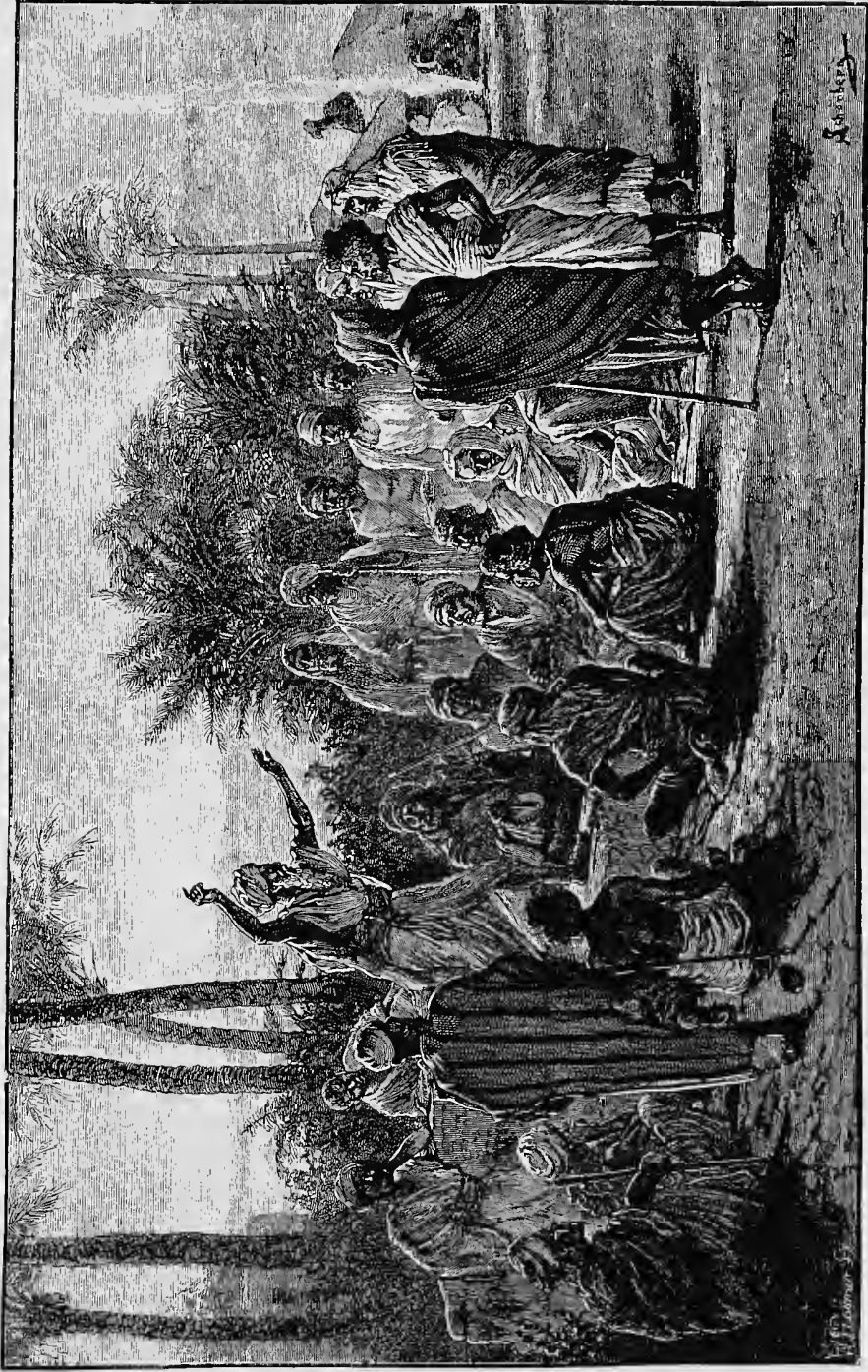
The government had not then given their final explanations to Gordon of the reasons which prevented them from sanctioning the appointment of Zebehr; and therefore the question was still not altogether closed. The other question, of sending aid in some form, was more immediately agitated.

The expectation at Khartûm was, that the road between Suakim and Berber would be opened up in accordance with the declaration

of Gordon, that cavalry should be pushed towards Berber. The duty would have been a difficult one, no doubt. Any force sent to perform it would have had to contend with hardships from climate, and probably with repeated and sudden attacks from the Arabs; but the tribes under Osman Digma had been driven away; the difficulties were not insuperable, and in the result the refusal promptly to follow up the success achieved by General Graham, and to send a sufficient expedition to open the road to Berber, probably led to the subsequent necessity for the far more difficult, costly, and futile expedition for the rescue of Gordon.

It is not easy to compute the method by which the government arrived at the conclusion that they were precluded from employing British troops to clear the route to Berber, though they regarded it as a clear and obvious duty, not only to hold Suakim, but to send forth a sufficient force to drive away the hostile tribes who would have invested it. Mr. Gladstone distinctly recognized that it was the duty of the government to employ the troops which protected Suakim to make war upon the tribes which endeavoured to hold the adjacent country, and that to defeat them and drive them to a distance where they would not be dangerous to the territory was a part of the reason for our occupying the place; but the government appeared to think all duties should be confined to this portion of the Soudan. One can scarcely wonder that Gordon could not perceive the logic employed in arriving at such a conclusion, and that he supposed the troops employed to relieve the Soudan provinces on the borders of the Red Sea might, without any violent inconsistency, continue their operations by opening the regular communications between that part of the country and Berber, so that the evacuation of the garrisons in the south and the relief of Khartûm, where he was shut up waiting for some kind of aid, might be accomplished with the speed which was deemed so desirable. He wanted a small force sent on to Berber, and a few troops sent up the Nile to Wady Halfa, and supported by Sir Evelyn Wood's army, but he was to have neither.

On the 7th of March an emissary of the Mahdi was at Shendy, between Berber and Khartûm, stirring up the people there



A DERVISH PREACHING THE HOLY WAR.

BLACKIE & SON: LONDON, GLASGOW, AND EDINBURGH

to revolt; and Gordon then stated his views of the situation:— “There is nothing,” he says, “further to be hoped for in the way of quieting the people than has already been accomplished, and there is a certainty that as time advances the emissaries of the Mahdi will succeed in raising the tribes between this and Berber. This is not owing to disaffection, but to fear caused by the pronounced policy of the abandonment of the Soudan, which policy has been published by sending down the widows and orphans and the Cairo employés from Khartûm. We cannot blame them for rising when no definite sign is shown of establishing a permanent government here. Except by means of emissaries the Mahdi has no power outside of El Obeid, where he distrusts the people and also the Bedouins around. He is a nonentity as to any advance on Khartûm, but all-powerful through his emissaries when backed with the pronounced policy of abandonment without establishing a permanent government.

General Graham’s victory is a glorious one, and if followed up by an advance of about two squadrons to Berber would settle the question as to this place, for the people between there and Khartûm would not think of rising. Zebehr Pasha should be sent to succeed me. With these squadrons and Wood’s Invincibles, should advance a regiment, or it should go to Dongola, while 100 British troops might make a Nile trip to Wady Halfa and stay there for two months. This would settle the question, for when the Nile rose, with the Berber black troops and those of Khartûm, which I would bring up, I could deal with the rebels on the Blue Nile and open the road to Sennâr. Then I would take out the Cairo employés, and Zebehr Pasha would put his own men there. I would evacuate the Equatorial Bahr Gazelle provinces, and hand over the troops to Zebehr Pasha, who would before the end of the year finish off the Madhi.

As for Zebehr Pasha’s blood-feud with me, it is absurd, if a subsidy be granted him for three years dependent on my safety. As for Zebehr’s slave-dealing offences, they are bad, but not worse than those of Ismail and other Turks, for the thief is no worse than the receiver.

Be sure of one thing. If her majesty's government do not act promptly General Graham's victory will go for naught, and with the useless expenditure of blood the effect of it will evaporate. I do not believe we shall send any more telegraphs, for it is no longer a question of days, but of hours.

I am dead against the sending of any British expedition to reconquer the Soudan. It is unnecessary. I would not have a single life lost. It is my firm conviction that none would be lost by the plan I propose, and our honour would be saved. I like the people in rebellion as much as those who are not, and I thank God that, so far as I am concerned, no man has gone before his Maker prematurely through me."

He could not abandon the opinion that the only, or, at all events, the best thing that could be done was to send Zebehr in accordance with his previous plan; but on the 6th of March, when the government were still considering the possibility of consenting to this proposal, he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring: "Be assured that whatever is decided by her majesty's government *in re* Zebehr, I honestly accept it as I should look on it as ruled by a higher power, and it will be sure to come right. As I have been inconsistent about Zebehr it is my fault, and I should bear the blame if Zebehr is sent, and should put up with inconvenience if he is not."

It need scarcely be said, that while the question of Zebehr was supposed not to be absolutely settled, and Lord Granville was asking questions of Sir E. Baring by telegram respecting what were the precise powers which Gordon would recommend to be given to his successor, the position of Gordon himself was one of increasing uncertainty and anxiety. The road to Berber was threatened to be cut, and it would be necessary, if Stewart had to retreat to Egypt conveying the Cairo employés and white troops, he would have to go from Berber across to Merawi, where the river was navigable to Hannek, north of Dongola, where there was a steamer on the strip of water, and thence there would be no danger for the travellers to Egypt, if Sir E. Wood sent 2000 troops to Dongola to convey them. This was one of the frustrated

plans, and it was necessary to do something, for the European consuls were asking Gordon if Khartûm was menaced, and whether he could help them to go to Berber. The very fact of these Europeans leaving would be significant evidence to the people of the town and the provinces that no assistance was likely to arrive. Gordon asked Sir E. Baring what he would recommend him to say in order to neutralize the ill effects of their departure, and added, "You know exactly the position of the garrisons, so far as I can explain it, and that there is no probability of the people rallying round me, or of paying any attention to my proclamation." Such was the change that had occurred in the aspect of affairs in less than three weeks. It was no longer worth while to hold on to Khartûm, unless a diversion of British troops to Berber were to be made, or the proposal to appoint Zebehr were accepted. It would be impossible for Gordon to help the other garrisons, and he would only be sacrificing the troops and employés at Khartûm; he therefore urged that he should be instructed at once whether he should evacuate Khartûm, and with all the troops and employés remove the seat of government to Berber, necessarily sacrificing all outlying places except Berber and Dongola. A prompt reply was necessary, as even the retreat to Berber might not be in his power in a few days, and would be difficult even if carried out at once, so difficult that he would have to leave large stores, and nine steamers, which could not go down, and as he might utterly fail in getting the Cairo employés to Berber, because of questions that might arise there and at Dongola, he could only be responsible for the *attempt* to accomplish it, while, if once the Mahdi got into Khartûm, operations against him would be very arduous, and could not serve Sennâr and Kassala. If the immediate evacuation of Khartûm were determined upon irrespective of outlying towns, Gordon proposed to send down all the Cairo employés and white troops to Berber with Colonel Stewart, who would there await the orders of the government. Gordon would at the same time resign his own commission. He would then take all steamers and stores up to the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle provinces, and consider those provinces to be under the King of the Belgians.

The troops and employés with Stewart would then be able to retire from Berber to Dongola, and thence to Wady Halfa. The sending up of Zebehr he regarded as inseparable from a British diversion at Berber, as the delay had diminished the value of Zebehr's appointment, the tribes taking up the cause of the Mahdi and involving themselves with him. The recent exodus of the sick, and the widows and orphans, had not reassured the wavering tribes between Khartûm and Berber; no promise for the future could be assured to the people, and it was evident that no one would throw in his fortunes with a departing government.

This was the state of affairs on the 10th of March; and Gordon, still hoping that some aid might come, told Hussein Khalif Pasha, should the telegraph line be cut, to send scouts out and himself to meet, at Obak, the forces that might be advancing from Suakim. Gordon also detailed three steamers which could pass the cataract to remain at Berber, or if any force arrived from Suakim Hussein was to send up all the black troops at Berber to Khartûm, and the white troops there would be sent down to Berber.

Sir E. Baring telegraphed to Lord Granville on the 13th of March, in answer to government inquiries, that the successor to General Gordon would certainly have jurisdiction over the province of Sennâr, and the valley of the Nile from Khartûm to Wady Halfa. As regarded the Eastern Soudan, that is, the country between the Nile and the Red Sea, there would be no objection to its being handed over to him, but it was impossible to say with any certainty at present whether he would find it possible to assert any real authority over the tribes of the Bishareen and Hadendowa. Of course, no portion of the Red Sea coast would come under his rule, and Kordofan would fall either to the Mahdi or to the ruler of Khartûm, whichever proved himself to be the stronger.

The ruler at Khartûm would have no jurisdiction over Darfûr, the Bahr Gazelle, or the Equatorial province. This was one of the conditions which General Gordon proposed to impose on Zebehr Pasha, as was shown by his message of the 18th February.

Slave-hunting could only take place in a non-Moslem country; the exclusion of the Bahr Gazelle and the Equatorial provinces

from the jurisdiction of the new ruler would therefore deprive him of all the slave-hunting grounds. As regards the slave-trade, the sale of slaves from one family to another would, of course, continue in the Soudan, where under no circumstances could the convention of 1877 have been enforced. As a consequence of the abandonment of the Soudan, there might be some danger of an increase in the export of such slaves as already existed there.

To meet this danger, increased watchfulness would be necessary on the Red Sea coast and on the southern frontier of Egypt.

In answer to this the message from the foreign office referring to General Gordon's suggestions with regard to the appointment of Zebehr Pasha as governor of Khartûm and the despatch of British troops to Berber said:—"Her majesty's government are unable to accept these proposals. If General Gordon is of opinion that the prospect of his early departure diminishes the chance of accomplishing his task, and that by staying at Khartûm himself for any length of time which he may judge necessary he would be able to establish a settled government at that place, he is at liberty to remain there.

In the event of his being unable to carry out this suggestion, he should evacuate Khartûm, and save that garrison by conducting it himself to Berber without delay.

Her majesty's government trust that General Gordon will not resign his commission

He should act according to his judgment as to the best course to pursue with regard to the steam-vessels and stores."

This was another of the regulation official blood-curdlers, and it may be presumed that Gordon felt it, even with his experiences of the foreign office; but he had other work before him. He was now shut up—"trapped in Khartûm"—he and the garrisons;—and though he had not commenced or provoked hostilities, had not, in fact, fired a shot or made a menace, fighting was on hand, and he was not altogether unprepared for it. It would have been difficult to have taken Gordon unaware, for his readiness was equal to his fertility of resource and his professional skill as a commander and a military engineer.

It is of some importance to remember that Gordon did not commence hostilities against the rebels. He knew that fighting would come, but he loyally regarded his first business to be that of taking means to get the people out of the country, and afterwards to restore a regular government. But he had to make such preparations as he could to defend the city against the Mahdi's followers, and to aid other places in the province as far as possible. His engineering skill was brought into practice, and he had to provide, not only for the regular defence of the city, but for frequent and constant naval reconnoitre on the Nile. He had had considerable experience during his former residence in the Soudan and at Khartûm, and knew how to convert an ordinary small steamer into a fortified vessel. He now had twelve or fourteen steamers and a large number of boats, or rather barges, and he added to the defence of the steamers by casing them with baulks or planks of timber. The barges, which were towed by the steamers, were full of troops, and from high wooden turrets or platforms constructed on the vessels the marksmen could rake the Nile banks with the fire of their rifles, and harass the enemy at a considerable distance from the river. It was a considerable flotilla which swept the Nile northward and southward, capturing grain and stores from the rebels, dispersing their camps, and exploding their forts with the fire of two or three guns which were carried in the expeditions. These operations came later, however, when active hostilities were necessary. When the first excursions were made they were for the purpose of reconnoitring, and not a shot was fired.

On the 29th of February Colonel Stewart and Mr. Power went on the first of these excursions up the White Nile; the party being conveyed in two steamers, each with a thick breastwork of biscuit sacks, and each vessel carrying one gun with 110 Soudani soldiers carrying large white flags. The object of the excursion was to visit the villages and explain the proclamations. At each village Stewart stopped and interviewed the sheikhs, to inform them of Gordon's policy of restoring peace to the country. The villages on both banks were quiet for about thirty miles, and

the people were friendly; but at a place farther still, where the expedition arrived in the evening, and sent ten white flags ashore on the Kordofan side, the villagers fled. One man afterwards came, and to him the proclamations were read; and Hassan Bey swore on the Koran that if the people went to the steamers they would not be injured. Six went on board, and all declared for peace, and promised to return next morning bringing with them the sheikhs, to whom they carried letters containing promises of peace. On preparing to send a boat on shore in the morning to fetch the sheikhs, however, large numbers of people were seen to be on the banks with banners, spears, and rifles, waving lances, beating drums, and (those who were on horseback) galloping and prancing their steeds. They were said to belong to the Baggaras, and would not respond to the friendly signs that were made to them; so the steamers pursued the journey twenty miles further, to the village of Sheikh Tuk Ibrahim, where there were about 1500 armed men drawn up with a large body of cavalry, evidently prepared to oppose the landing of the expedition. They did not fire on the steamers, but would not respond to the pacific signals with the white flags; and Colonel Stewart therefore gave the order to return, as the limit of time named by General Gordon had expired. On returning Colonel Stewart held a meeting on the eastern bank, where a large number of sheikhs were present. Here he learned that Tuk Ibrahim had recently returned from El Obeid with a firman from the "Mahdi" making him chief of the other bank, and authorizing him to levy a host of followers to prevent any landing, but not to cross the river.

Another reconnoissance on the White Nile was made two days afterwards, when Colonel Stewart again issued the proclamations of peace, and again no hostile demonstration was made on either side; but it was said that a shot was fired at a steamer on the way from Khartûm to Shendy, about an hour's journey from Khartûm. A week afterwards telegraphic communication became uncertain; the tribes on the right bank of the Nile between Khartûm and Shendy were friendly, and that for the time prevented the advance of the Sheikh el Obeid to the Nile, so that Gordon hoped to

preserve the telegraph and communication to Berber, especially as he had built a strong fortified camp on the opposite side of the Blue Nile, and stationed a force there to check the sheikh from going further north on the line of communications.

The assault on Khartûm may then be said to have commenced. The followers of the Mahdi were advancing upon it in numbers, and Gordon prepared for defending it as well as possible; among the defences being tangles of wire spread upon the ground at certain points, where they would catch the feet of intending assailants coming up for a night attack.

The actual struggle began at Halfiyeh, a small town some miles north of Khartûm, the capital of the district of Halfiyeh, extending along a portion of the Blue Nile and the main Nile. This district, formerly subject to Sennâr, had become independent when Ismail Pasha annexed Nubia. Halfiyeh was the most important town, with 15,000 inhabitants, and the king (Melek) had his court there. It was a busy place, because of its famous salt-mines and the continual passage of caravans; and the kings of Halfiyeh and Shendy could together put into the field 30,000 men splendidly mounted. That had all been put an end to by the cessation of commerce, and the destruction brought upon the country by the Egyptian rule.

Halfiyeh was held by about 800 men of the Shaggihs (Shaiqies), who had remained loyal, and to whom Gordon had given arms. These men were shut up in Halfiyeh by about 4000 rebels, who had surrounded the place, blocked the line of communication by steamer, and fired on one vessel which attempted to pass, wounding three soldiers. This steamer was sent to reconnoitre the rebels, as there were some rumours (afterwards found incorrect) that the men at Halfiyeh of the irregular troops were not to be depended on. "The steamer returned the fire," said General Gordon in his report, "and is said to have killed 35 rebels. Divide this by 7 and you will probably get the correct number."

General Gordon determined to attack the rebels at Halfiyeh on the following Saturday morning, as Friday was thought to be

an unlucky day. The attack was to be made from three sides, one from that of Khartûm, one from that of the beleaguered garrison, and one from armed steamers. The rebels had intrenched themselves along the river bank, being thus enabled to fire with impunity on passing steamers, and it was necessary to dislodge them. This assemblage of rebels had not apparently interfered with the forwarding of supplies to the town market. One hundred camels, carrying food, arrived at Khartûm. This was above the usual daily number, and Mr. Power said in his telegram, that Gordon had told him the fact showed that the people would not rise unless they were egged on by some malcontents. They would be quiet if they believed the government had any backbone.

“Provided that no influence be brought to bear from without,” said Gordon, “the loss of an action will not involve immediate danger to Khartûm. The only justification for assuming the offensive against these poor unfortunate peasants is derived from the law of self-defence, and the duty of the extrication of the men beleaguered in Halfiyeh. But for this, it is questionable whether we ought to shoot down those whose reason for rebellion is fidelity to the only person whom they can see as their coming governor in the immediate future, with the wish to preserve their possessions, the security of which cannot be guaranteed by the present provisional government.”

On the evening of the 13th about 3000 rebels, horse and foot, remained drawn up under arms, with banners waving, on the right bank of the Nile opposite the palace at Khartûm, on the roof of which Gordon used frequently to keep watch hour after hour, whence he and his companions, Power, Stewart, and Herbin, could see this force, and when night fell could trace their position by their watch-fires. At three o'clock next morning there was a heavy sound of rifle-firing, and the flashes of the guns of the insurgents could be seen from the palace roof. The firing continued till daybreak, when about 6000 rebels returned from the direction of the river, and drew up in four ranks, each nearly two miles long. Later in the day they commenced making huts and putting up tents amidst a great beating of drums.

The firing was discovered to have been an attack on a party of 300 of Gordon's black soldiers who had been sent down the river for firewood, and by some unaccountable negligence of the officers had been left there. These were cut off by the advance of the Arabs, and they attempted to get to Khartûm at night by means of boats. When passing Halfiyeh, they were seen by the rebels, who opened fire on them, killing several. Eight of the boats were captured, and three escaped with 150 men. In consequence of some further disgraceful negligence the steamers that should have gone to their rescue did not get under weigh for six hours after the event. They then, however, made a most successful trip, bringing back the boats and some refugees; amongst these were two of the Shaggihs who were blockaded. Concerning these blockaded Shaggihs there were, during the day, all kinds of contradictory reports. Some said they had gone over to the rebels, and some that they were loyal. The two returned men, however, assured Gordon of their fidelity, so it was determined to attempt to get them out, though the advance of the force of rebels on the river bank, added to the number surrounding Halfiyeh, had at first caused Gordon to hesitate, as it seemed that there would be great difficulty in any further effort than that of defending Khartûm. He had armed many of the townspeople. Hicks Pasha's defeat had not only entailed a loss of life, but had deprived General Gordon of all those who had ever shown any ability in the public departments. Therefore he had to do everything himself, and if he could succeed in extricating the garrison of Halfiyeh, that was about all he could do at the moment. With the material in his hands he could effect little or nothing against the vast mass of the enemy fronting Khartûm. "Should we even succeed in getting out the Shaggihs from Halfiyeh, it will be about the utmost we can do beyond annoying the enemy by skirmishing," he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring. "We can do nothing against the superiority in numbers. Happily you have three steamers at Berber to help any forward movement. Should you attack, do so before break of day, and fire low. Khartûm is all right. I should not be able to help you at a greater distance

from Khartûm than Halfiyeh, and could only do so if assured of your co-operation."

It seems as though he could not believe that no help would reach him when his difficult and increasingly hopeless position was known.

Early on the Saturday morning an expedition of 1200 men was ready to start for the relief of the beleaguered force at Halfiyeh. Gordon had armed the townsmen of Khartûm, that he might take as many troops as possible for the work in hand. The men were hidden in the two large iron barges—the barges used for the transport of grain. The troops were thus out of sight of the enemy's marksmen, who were in the trenches which they had made on the bank, and from which they commanded the river owing to the lowness of the water. It will be seen how impossible it would have been for the garrison at Halfiyeh to escape without aid from a force sufficient to raise the siege. "We were bound in honour to make the attempt to extricate them however perilous a defeat might be," said Gordon; "and, *en passant*, it is curious to remark, that the general strategy in the Soudan has been mainly forced in the direction of relieving beleaguered garrisons." The barges were towed by three steamers, which had been "armoured" with boiler plates, and carried mountain-guns with wooden mantlets, and some of the troops were concealed in the holds. The expedition performed its work quickly and decisively. In a few hours the steamers and barges reappeared, having rescued 500 soldiers of the imprisoned garrison at Halfiyeh. They had raised the siege and saved the men, with the loss of only two of their own number. They had also captured 70 camels, 18 horses, and a quantity of arms. There was greater rejoicing in Khartûm than had been known there for many years, and the townspeople made a lively demonstration in honour of General Gordon, who determined to take the troops while they were in the humour and to order an attack to be made next morning on the Arab army, which was drawn up within sight of the palace windows. Something would have to be done. The whole country around Shendy was in the hands of the rebels, and Berber was threatened.

The enemy, still gathering on the banks of the Nile, continued to fire on the palace, and began seriously to harass Khartûm. For three weeks the people of the town, the troops, and the Bashi-Bazouks had been crying out to make a sortie against the rebels, and the demand grew more urgent after the victory at Halfiyeh; the general opinion being that the enemy were demoralized, and might be defeated. They were drawn up opposite the palace on the other side of the Blue Nile; their lines, being two miles long, about eight distant, and parallel to the Blue Nile, stretched from Halfiyeh to some wooded sand-hills.

On the morning of the 16th Gordon ordered a sortie to be made, and at 8 A.M. two steamers started for Halfiyeh, and the Bashi-Bazouks under their own leaders along with some regular troops advanced across the plain towards the rebels. The troops numbered about 2000, and the Bashi-Bazouks and Egyptian regulars were in a long thin line facing the enemy and also parallel to the Blue Nile, while the regulars were in square opposite the centre of the rebel position. On the left flank was a small square of regular Soudan troops with one field-gun, on the right front flank was a handful of mounted troops. The result was disastrous, and afforded another example of the utter worthlessness of Egyptian troops and the treachery of their leaders. The whole engagement could be seen from the roof of the palace, where Gordon and Power were stationed, and where Power remained to witness the scene. As the Khartûm force drew near the rebels the latter began to file away to the right of the line of the Bashi-Bazouks, and disappeared behind the sand-hills. This pretended or supposed retreat commenced at 9.40, and at 10.30 all had disappeared, the enemy's rear being covered by about 60 Arabs mounted on horses and camels. "Our line," said Power, "still advanced, and the artillery fired two shells at the retiring rebels. Our horsemen having entered the woods at the foot of the sand-hills, we saw, to our astonishment, the five principal officers of our force, who had been riding a little ahead, dash back, breaking through their own ranks.

At that moment the rebel cavalry shot out at full gallop from

behind the sand-hills on our right. Their appearance was the signal for a disgraceful *sauve qui peut* on the part of our men, who broke up and rushed back without firing a shot. The sixty horsemen, who were only armed with lances and swords, dashed about, cutting down the flying men. I saw one Arab lancer kill seven Egyptians in as many minutes. He then jumped off his horse to secure a rifle and ammunition, when a mounted Bashi-Bazouk officer cut him down. The rebel infantry now appeared, and rushed about in all directions, hacking at the men disabled by the cavalry charge. This slaughter continued for nearly two miles, our men not stopping to fire a shot. Then the Arabs halted, and an officer rallied some of our troops, and they commenced a dropping but harmless fire at the enemy, who seemed content not to advance, but treated us with the greatest contempt, some riding quietly on camels in front of our muzzles. This continued till mid-day, some of our men dropping from stray bullets fired by the Arabs. The rebels then drew off to their old position, carrying a lot of rifles and cartridges, and one mountain-piece. The irregulars, instead of returning into camp, coolly adjourned to a neighbouring friendly village opposite the palace. When they had completely looted this and killed some of the inhabitants, they strolled into camp.

I, who had seen every incident of the battle from the palace roof, crossed the river to our fort opposite. Here was a fearful scene of confusion. Men of the Egyptian regulars and Bashi-Bazouks were crying out that their two generals had betrayed them. These two worthies were among the five horsemen whom I saw break through their own lines, and were now hidden in a house, afraid to go out lest they should be murdered by their own soldiers. There is no lack of evidence that when they galloped back Said Pasha rode towards a gun and slashed through the brain the sergeant in charge, who was in the act of laying the gun. At the same time Hassan Pasha cut down two artillerymen. I then found that up to that hour, seven hours after the battle, no doctors had seen the wounded. I found them lying scattered through the tents bathed in blood, and each man with three or

four wounds—all from the sword or spear. There were only about twenty wounded, as the Arabs gave no quarter, and only left the wounded when they believed them to be dead. I doubt whether any will survive. Colonel Stewart got them on board a steamer and transferred them to the hospital. On going back to the camp I met the army surgeon in charge, who coolly informed me that there were no wounded, and was very reluctant to go to the hospital when I told him that there were.

As I write parties of Bashi-Bazouks are carrying the bodies of friends who fell near the camp. Looking from the windows here in the palace, I can see the moonlit plain dotted with white marks in all directions; each mark represents the body of some poor wretch who never had the ideas, the hopes, or the courage of a soldier, and whose only instinct was retreat. All the bodies brought into camp bear the first-inflicted wound on the back. Our loss is about 200 killed; the enemy's loss has not exceeded four. From this will be clearly seen the worthlessness of the soldiers now left in Khartûm, with which the government seems to think General Gordon can work wonders. Officers and men alike are useless as soldiers. To-day they had every advantage on their side, yet sixty horsemen without firearms signally defeated 2000 armed with the best European weapons—Remingtons, bayonets, and revolvers. So terrified were the soldiers during the retreat, that until the Arabs ceased slaying not a shot was fired, nor saw I a bayonet fixed during the day."

The whole force retreated slowly towards the fort with their rifles shouldered, the horsemen of the enemy continuing to ride along the flanks cutting off the stragglers. The men made no effort to stand—two mountain-guns were lost, one of them having been abandoned with sixty-three rounds and fifteen cases of reserved ammunition. The Bashi-Bazouks, as we have seen, streamed off to pillage an unfortunate village near Khartûm, and Gordon paid £600 compensation. The steamers which had gone to Halfiyeh to support the attack returned in safety, having done some amount of damage to the rebels.

Long afterwards, that is to say in the early part of 1885, the

story was told by another professed eye-witness to the correspondent of the *Daily News* at Korti. The narrator was a man with a bronzed "hatchet face," with a peculiarly weary and care-worn expression, and he wore the Egyptian uniform, for he asserted that he was one of the soldiers of Hicks Pasha who had been left at Khartûm—presumably with Colonel Coetlogon—where he had been through the siege and had eventually escaped. He told the story as follows:—

"We had a grand illumination the night Gordon arrived. If all Christians were like him all men would become Nazarah; but you do not follow the teachings of your own Prophet as we Mussulmans do. Gordon told us he had come to save us. The officials and Greeks illuminated their houses, and every native Soudanese, however poor, lit his lamp; but soon bad tidings came day by day of the approach of the cursed Arabs. Soon we saw them, first in small bodies at a distance, and then in large ones. They had been hovering around us a long time before the pasha arrived. Now Gordon set every man to work; he threw up a long parapet with a deep trench from the Bahr-el-Abiad to the Bahr-el-Azrek, and he built round towers on it and made one iron gate. He did not turn out Arabs from dwelling in Khartûm; there were none there, though we had many traitors. They were known to the pasha; but he said, 'Let them alone: at the end they shall be punished.' Among these was the principal baker. Gordon used to say to all who wanted to leave, 'Stay, my friends; the English are coming.' That handsome girl of sixteen, the doctor's daughter, remained; so did the German tailor, Herr Klein, and his wife and pretty daughter.

Soon after Gordon's arrival Sheik Wad-abou-Gurgy made three forts opposite Khartûm on the Bahr-el-Azrek, for the time was now at hand when we were to be beleaguered. In these he placed three cannon, for his designs were evil—he was rebellious. These forts were near the gardens of Boussi, and now he piled up outside great pyramids of dhoora, three times higher than the forts themselves. When these things were related to Gordon in the early morn (for these piles were made at night) he despatched

three steamers; these fired first ball, then shell, to knock down walls, and they succeeded. Mahomet Ali Pasha, commanding ships, ran ashore and landed troops, while shrapnel was covered to command their advance. The black soldiers then stormed the fort, while the Bashi-Bazouks took the outer circle. Many Arabs were killed, and all the dhooa captured and ammunition. After the anniversary of the birth of Mahommed, Wad Sheik El Obeid came opposite Khartûm to the other side of Bahr-el-Azrek, and encamped on this isle. Gordon Pasha sent for the troops under Hassein Abraham and Mahomet Abru Said, who had been made pashas by Gordon Pasha. Directly we landed we formed a four-deep square. Even so we marched boldly from shore. One gun is at an angle of the square. They charged us furiously; but, ha! how they scampered. Shattered was that great band of rebels. But now what I have to relate fills my heart with grief. The traitor Abraham takes off his tarbash, puts it in his breast, from which he takes a dervish's cap, putting it on his head. Next to this what does he do? He gallops up to the bugler, and tells him to sound the 'kus-rah' ('retreat;' this in military Turkish signifies defeat). The brave boy refused, and said, 'Pasha, we are not defeated; and I will not sound as you order.' Then he cleaves the brave boy's head with his scimitar, and smites others who would not turn. Now when our enemies see these things come to pass they gain heart, return, and attack us again. We become disorganized—why not? We fly back to the outworks and huts we had left, close to the cemetery. But we did not let the traitorous pasha escape. We circle round his horse and compel him to retire with us; much does he struggle, beg, and protest; he had endeavoured to escape; but escape for him was not. We brought him back bound hand and foot."

"Now all these things," continued my informant, "and how the traitorous pasha had been the cause of our disgrace, Gordon Pasha had spied from the top of his house. He was much grieved; and when the wicked pashas, who were both guilty, were brought bound, as I said, hand and foot before him, he spake never a word except 'Away with them!' He was reading Holy Writ at the time.

They were tried by court-martial, and sentenced to death. Seven days afterwards they were executed in the inner yard, near the large square of the prison. They were hewn in pieces by a halberd. I saw the execution, so it is of no use your saying, 'They were shot.' I tell you, according to Turkish military law, a military traitor is always sentenced to be cut to pieces. The two were bound up against the wall by chains and rings. Two soldiers armed with sharp hatchets approached them from out of the sides of a square we had formed. The prisoners' crime was read aloud, and their sentence. A hundred soldiers were present, some senior officers, but not Gordon Pasha. The senior bey cried out, 'Executioners, perform sentence on the traitors!' Immediately these advanced close, and lopped off first their arms above the elbows, then the legs above the knees; then cut their bodies in twain; then decapitated them. They died not till they were cut asunder; then their heads fell on their breasts, and they expired with a hideous yell. Surely their fate was deserved. I cannot say whether Gordon Pasha knew of this manner of execution. I tell you this is the Turkish mode of punishing military traitors, and it is a just punishment."

The conclusion of this narrative was somewhat startling, and assuredly Gordon would never have consented to such an execution. On the 19th of March he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring that the two pashas were placed in chains and would be tried on the following day. There was no doubt that they had been guilty of a long course of the most atrocious treachery, and Gordon took the blame to himself for trusting them. Many things came up in evidence. Gordon had ordered the houses on the north side of the city to be loopholed, and had sent crowbars for the work. The crowbars were found buried on the south side of the river. Said Pasha had asked for a steamer with which to bring back his family. He was absent two days, and then said his family was in Khartûm, whereas it transpired that he had only brought back one slave. Gordon feared that these men had not only organized the rising of the tribes investing Khartûm, but had actually dictated their movements and the cutting of the telegraph.

It will be noted that in the present portion of the narrative, namely, the story of Khartûm, many quotations have been made from General Gordon's telegrams and despatches. This has been considered desirable, as the whole of the circumstances were subject of heated controversy at the time, and even now opinions are greatly divided as to the course pursued by the government, the relative attitude of Gordon and those with whom he was corresponding by repeated messages, and the strangely diverse and even apparently contradictory conclusions which resulted from the rapidly-changing aspects of affairs.

With regard to this serious and important incident of the treachery of the two pashas, it is very desirable that we should mark Gordon's own account of the affair. Regarded in connection with his unchanged desire that Zebehr Pasha should be sent to Khartûm his communication was very remarkable, if not strangely significant. After referring to the matters of the crowbars, the steamers, and the grave suspicions that these men had incited and directed the rebellion of the neighbouring tribes, Gordon says:—"I wonder that they never killed me, for I was often quite alone with them on the side of the river near rebels. After the disaster of the 16th of March I sent for them over to the palace; they looked very hang-dog, but I then never believed in their treachery, and thought that they had only been cowards. I had coffee brought, which they refused, and I afterwards heard that they felt sure I was going to poison them. Their having such a thought implies a guilty conscience. The wonder is why they came back after the defeat. I suppose they thought they had not done enough to profit the rebels. Said Pasha, though related to Zebehr, is his sworn foe, for he robbed Zebehr of a lot of money. He was Zebehr's wakeel when Zebehr went to Cairo in 1876, and he was one of those who swore fidelity to Zebehr at the tree at Shaka. He came over to me in 1877 when Zebehr's son revolted. He was much compromised by a letter he wrote. I arrested him, and brought him here and forgave him, tearing up the letter in his presence. He was suspected of treachery in Hicks's advance, but somehow I felt he owed me so much that I could trust him.

Hassan Pasha is brother to Yussaf Pasha, who with Gessi put down the Bahr Gazelle revolt, and afterwards was killed by the Mahdi near Fashoda. Had it not been for these men's treachery, humanly speaking, we should have succeeded on the 16th, for rebels were retreating when these two men went into a wood and, I suppose, called back the rebels. They purposely left, I think, the stockade incomplete,—would not put down the wire entanglement, &c. I assumed this negligence to be due to incapacity and idleness at the time, but I fear it was due to treachery. They are pashas of my fabrication, and are both black soldiers; and townspeople are fierce against them, and I should only have to let them go into the streets to have them shot, but I have preferred to try them. . . . Considering all things one cannot help being very thankful that through my belief in these men we did not lose Khartûm. I think we are now safe, and that as the Nile rises we shall account for the rebels. Plenty of supplies come into the town from the south from the White Nile."

On the 21st of March Gordon telegraphed, 7 A.M.: "Boat coming up river. Very few rebels in sight, though it is their usual day for fighting. The full range of the mountain-gun with rebels is 2200 yards. Escaped prisoners say rebels number 4000. I scarcely think so much. Lightermen were getting a Krupp 16-pounder on a barge to worry them. Had we only 1000 more men we could drive them back, but I am afraid of risking anything more for moment. I am glad to say 140 black soldiers, who were cut off when cutting wood by rapid advance of rebels, are still alive and prisoners. The Sheikh-el-Obeid has written to his son a furious letter on the loss in river attack on *Tewfikieh* steamer, telling his son he is not to attack or to fight, but to starve Khartûm out. In this river attack the rebels were driven to the front on three occasions by their chiefs, and their dead were in heaps. They pushed their bodies into the river. Fortunately we have lots of ammunition, for we have Hicks's reserve ammunition. The steamers in the relief of the steamer *Tewfikieh* expended over 15,000 rounds of Remington ammunition. The only gun-shot of rebels which struck *Tewfikieh* steamer was

one which carried away her rudder. Plenty of supplies came in to-day."

On the 22d: "The court-martial found the pashas guilty to-day. They were shot this afternoon. I am well supplied. Thirty-eight camels came in to-day."

The reverse and the loss of arms and ammunition, occasioned by the treachery of the pashas, was of serious significance, but it did not affect the townsfolk, who remained staunch to Gordon, including those whom he had armed. One man came forward and offered to lend him a thousand guineas without interest, a very welcome aid, for the treasury was nearly exhausted,—another armed and paid 200 blacks for the service of the governor-general. Meantime camels were coming in with provisions, though it was said that the rebels were badly off for food at Halfiyeh, and that some of them were deserting; while the vast number of rebel peasantry who were under arms for so long a time, and who had consequently left their crops under the burning sun without irrigation, were likely to suffer dreadfully in the future. Gordon declared still that the many were forced into rebellion for fear of the few, and owing to the inability of the armed force at Khartûm to protect them. He offered a reward for the capture of the Sheikh-el-Obeid, and seized all the private horses of the town as a precautionary measure, for the tribes on the White Nile were wavering.

On the 22d of March, almost immediately after the conviction of the treacherous pashas, there arrived at Khartûm two emissaries from the Mahdi bringing an answer to Gordon's letter. It was evident that if the Mahdi had at first appeared to be pleased with the appointment and the present sent him by Gordon, he had altered his opinion, and was now so assured of his own position that he could announce his intention of coming to take Khartûm. The friendly sheikhs whom Colonel Stewart had met on his journey on the White Nile had said that the Mahdi had sent orders to Faki Ibrahim, who had the command of 4000 men on that river, not to fight or provoke hostilities, and that similar orders had been sent to Sheikh Baseer, who was in arms on the Blue Nile, forbidding him to attack Sennâr or to advance on Khartûm,

and it was reported that a reign of terror existed at Obeid, where the false prophet was in fear both of the townspeople and the tribesmen; but little dependence could be placed upon reports of this kind, and it soon became evident that the Mahdi was only biding his time before sending his swarms of Arabs to take both Berber and Khartûm. The letter which Gordon had sent to the Mahdi, with the present of a belt, turban, and robes, was translated as follows:—

“I salute you. Let us have the road open between us. Give up your prisoners. I make you sultan of West Darfûr. I remit half the taxes of the Soudan. I allow the slave-trade to be carried on. Why should you fight? If you wish to fight, I am ready. Wait ten months. I will then either declare war against you or leave the Soudan to you with fixed boundaries.”

At all events the answer that came on March 2d was not conciliatory. Gordon himself reporting it said:—“The man who took my letter to the Mahdi came back to-day. He says Mahdi received the letter; he assembled his councillors, and discussed the matter for ten days, then wrote an answer and tore it up. He then talked over matter for ten days more, and wrote another letter which he tore up; after another three days he wrote an answer, and sent it by two of his men, who are now waiting outside town. The Mahdi's messengers have come in with the letter, which proposes that I should become Mussulman. He says he looks after the European prisoners; he asserts his claim to be Mahdi, so he is not likely to stop short at Khartûm, but will push his pretensions beyond that. I answered that I had received his letters, styled him Sheikh Mohamed Achmet—thus cancelling his sultanship—and said there was an end of negotiations. Mahdi sent me a dervish's dress, which I sent back. He returned the dress I sent him. The demeanour of Mahdi's emissaries was exceedingly cheeky. When they pertinaciously kept putting the bundle containing the dervish's dress before me I did not know what it contained, and getting cross I threw it across the room; it was only after they left that my clerk, who gave it back to them, told me it was a filthy patched dervish's coat. They refused to

disarm as they entered my presence, and kept their hands upon their swords. I could not help thinking that certainly no Mussulman would have let them go again, and so, at any rate, my being Christian was relied on by them for safety."

It was to be war, and the situation was becoming still more perilous. The treacherous pashas, who were executed on the evening of the same day that the messengers of the Mahdi were sent back, had stolen the two months' pay given for the troops on account of the six months' arrears. They had taken out with them seventy rounds of cannon ammunition instead of the usual eight rounds, in order that the rebels might lay hold of it, and the house of Hassan was stored with rifles and ammunition. "We are daily expecting British troops," telegraphed the *Times* correspondent. "We cannot bring ourselves to believe that we are to be abandoned by the government. Our existence depends on England." Gordon was not going to give up without struggling to the last, however. There was little or no hope of his getting the people out of Khartûm now, and he would not think of escaping and leaving them to do as they best could. The telegram ended by saying that he was then mounting a Krupp gun on an iron lighter so that he might be able to reach the rebel camp on the river. The steamers were actively going hither and thither on both rivers attacking the rebels, who, it was said, intended to sink barges to bar the passage, and to stretch twisted lengths of telegraph wires across the stream. The latter they afterwards accomplished, but the force of the water swept away the obstructions.

By the end of March Gordon knew that the government had emphatically and at considerable length recapitulated the reasons which led them to refuse their consent to the appointment of Zebehr Pasha. He had no certain ground to go upon, and it began to seem to him that if he must be left entirely to his own devices and without aid he should be permitted to act on his own responsibility. He did not neglect to defend the city and the people, to whom he regarded himself as being pledged in return for their having kept faith with him. He and they must stand

or fall together. He would not be guilty of what he considered would be a base act of desertion. He had always been opposed to the notion of getting out of the country without providing for its regular government after his departure. Evacuation was one thing, "*ratting out*" was another. Still less would he consent to seek his own safety by deserting those who had shown their confidence in him. If fighting were to be necessary he had not begun it, but he would prepare to fight to the last ditch and the last biscuit, while nothing else was possible but a dishonourable capitulation.

Gordon was now left to his own resources. If he still fancied that the route from Suakim to Berber would be opened, or that a force either of Turkish, of Anglo-Indian, or of British troops would be sent to his aid at Wady Halfa, at Berber, or at Khartûm, he must have hoped against hope; for the government here was "going to sea" like a floating hencoop, as he remarked afterwards in an entry in his journal; and if the opposition had succeeded in ousting that government and had come into power it is exceedingly doubtful whether they would not have gone to sea also, for they knew no more than anybody else did of the real position of affairs in the remote wastes of the Soudan, and there would still have been the bugbear of an alternative policy and the divided "public voice" to keep them in a condition of suspended animation. Gordon, as was usual with him, regarded the situation as eventually ordered by Providence, and therefore for the best so long as he did all he knew in the performance of what he believed to be his duty. That duty now was to endeavour to hold Khartûm and to fight back the rebels. The Mahdi had had his answer, and would soon endeavour to invest the city more closely. When the Egyptians and townspeople would be put to death or be made prisoners, and the Europeans compelled under penalties to profess Islam, Gordon was not the man to be detained shuffling about the streets disguised as a dervish, nor were he and his companion likely to deny their faith. They were not likely even to be made prisoners; and Gordon afterwards declared that he never would be taken alive.

There was plenty to be done. Gordon's first care was to see how long the provisions would last, and he thought that he could stand a five months' siege. Next he had to provide for the pay of the soldiers and others, and for this he established a paper-currency, represented by a bank-note in Arabic signed and sealed by himself. It was known that these notes would be honoured, and there were arrears of pay due to those soldiers who had not deserted and who would remain faithful. Messengers were sent out in every direction to offer freedom to all slaves who would abandon their masters and go into Khartûm; but not many availed themselves of the offer, for the condition of the country outside gave them opportunities for gaining their freedom without entering a city to defend which they would be called upon to fight. Daily rations were given to the poor in Khartûm, and all the machinery of government went on with regularity; the social life was not devoid of comfort, nor even of cheerfulness, in spite of the climate and impending danger, and the excitement of preparing, not only for defence, but for attack. These preparations were carefully ordered by Gordon himself, and were ingenious and effectual. They enabled him to hold the vast horde of the followers of the Mahdi at bay for months, and to inflict repeated defeats upon them, which kept them in perpetual uncertainty and prevented them from gaining any decided advantage against the handful of the defenders of the city.

The ammunition was removed to the mission station on the river that it might be safe in case of an attack on the fortifications by artillery. Round the walls were three lines of land-torpedoes or percussion mines, which proved to be an effectual barrier, especially as these defences were supplemented by iron "crow's-feet," *chevaux-de-frise*, broken glass, and those wire entanglements of which we have already heard.

The Nile was rising, too, a very important event for the commander who had to trust chiefly to his armed boats for offensive operations against the enemy on the river banks and beyond them. It required almost sleepless vigilance to meet the difficulties that menaced him, but he was equal to the occasion.

The barge with the Krupp gun was taken up the Blue Nile by a steamer within a week of the defection of the treacherous pashas, and the rebels on the bank awoke to the fact that they were being shelled beyond endurance, forty of them being killed. Next day there was a mutiny among the rascally Bashi-Bazouks in Khartûm, and 250 of them had to be disarmed; but the assaults on the enemy outside went on: sorties were made by which they were driven back with great loss, and their horses were captured. As the Nile rose the naval attacks became more frequent and more rapid. The steamers were armoured with bullet-proof plates made of soft wood and iron. The barges were cased in the same way, and were converted into monitors by the construction on each of a castle twenty feet high, from which a double line of fire commanded the Nile banks. At night, however, the rebels swarmed back, and mostly kept up a constant fire against the palace till daylight warned them to retreat from the dreaded steamers. The palace walls were all dented and pitted with balls and bullets; and more than once the enemy attempted an assault, only to be met by torpedoes, which scared them back from the city walls with considerable loss. So passed the months of March and April, during which time, telegrams reached the government, and Sir E. Baring was able to report on the state of affairs; but then came news of the fall of Berber. Hussein Khalifa had bravely and loyally held his own as long as possible. He and the merchants and principal people of the town had repeatedly sent to Cairo imploring aid, and saying that the enemy was closing round Berber and Shendy in numbers too great to be much longer repulsed; but no aid was forthcoming, and at length Hussein, having received an intimation that he must do the best for his own safety, retreated north, and Khartûm from that time was for a period completely isolated. Messages could not be certain of reaching the beleaguered city, nor could any definite intelligence be regularly transmitted. The messengers could not enter Khartûm: and now that Berber and the telegraphic station were in the hands of the rebels there were no means of certain communication, even though large sums of money were offered to messengers, who, in disguise, attempted to

escape the intercepting tribes who were drawing more and more closely round the capital.

Before the close of regular communications, however, some remarkable messages had passed; though the confusion and misapprehension were even then increased by the interception of messages on the state of affairs at the telegraph office at Berber, where the clerks were participating in the general panic, and were anxious to escape and go to Korosko and thence to Cairo.

A telegram, dated April 8th, from Gordon to Sir E. Baring, said: "The man who brought letters from Berber states Zebehr is at Korosko; if so, you did not tell me this important fact. Scarcely a day passes without our inflicting losses on rebels, which losses are quite unnecessary if we are to succumb. . . . I have telegraphed to Baker to make an appeal to British and American millionaires to give me £300,000 to engage 3000 Turkish troops from sultan, and send them here. This would settle the Soudan and Mahdi for ever; for my part, I think you would agree with me.

I do not see the fun of being caught here, to walk about the streets for years as a dervish, with sandalled feet; not that (D.V.) I will ever be taken alive. It would be the climax of meanness, after I had borrowed money from the people here, had called on them to sell their grain at a low price, &c., to go and abandon them without using every effort to relieve them, whether those efforts are diplomatically correct or not; and I feel sure, whatever you may feel diplomatically, I have your support—and that of every man professing himself a gentleman—in private."

Sir E. Baring had sent several telegrams to Gordon after the 10th of March, but only one short one appeared to have reached him. This, however, did not alter the fact that no aid was to be given to the beleaguered garrison, and Gordon had realized this with patience and determination, but with smouldering anger. He *had* telegraphed to Sir Samuel Baker as was reported, and that he should have done so showed that he was like a caged bird, not beating against the bars, but seeking in every direction for the means of liberation. But it must be liberation with an effectual defence of those who were under his charge.

The following telegrams will tell their own story; but we must bear in mind that he had been (erroneously) told that Zebehr was, or had been, at Korosko.

On April 16th he telegraphed to Sir E. Baring:—

“As far as I can understand, the situation is this: you state your intention of not sending any relief up here or to Berber, and you refuse me Zebehr. I consider myself free to act according to circumstances. I shall hold on here as long as I can, and if I can suppress the rebellion I shall do so. If I cannot, I shall retire to the Equator, and leave you indelible disgrace of abandoning the garrisons of Sennâr, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola, with the certainty that you will eventually be forced to smash up the Mahdi under great difficulties if you would retain peace in Egypt.”

With this telegram two others were sent from Lieutenant-colonel Stewart and Mr. Power. The former said:—

“General Gordon has acquainted me with your intention of not relieving Khartûm, and proposes I should go to Berber and trust to success of your negotiations for opening road from Suakim to Berber. General Gordon has given you his decision as to what he himself intends doing; and weighing all circumstances, and doubting the success of your opening the road to Berber unless by advancing troops, I am inclined to think my retreat will be perhaps safer by the Equator. I shall, therefore, follow the fortunes of General Gordon.”

That from Mr. Power said:—

“General Gordon, in view of the present critical situation here, has made the following intimation to me:—

‘As soon as it is possible I propose you should go to Berber. If you do not so elect, then justify me to British minister.’

General Gordon, of course, does not like responsibility of taking English consul to Equator, but at present I do not see how it is possible for any but an Arab to get to Berber. I would elect to take the less risky route, and go *viâ* Equator. We are quite blocked on the north, east, and west.”

Well might Sir E. Baring report that General Gordon thought he was going to be abandoned, and was very indignant. He was

considering what it would now be possible to do, before it was too late, to provide for the safety of those under his charge, and to get out of the trap in which he had been left—"caught in Khartûm."

On the following day, April 17th, a remarkable telegram reached the foreign office from Sir E. Baring. Gordon had given practical effect to his declaration that he should now consider he was free to do the best he could failing all hope of help from the government. Sir E. Baring sent to Earl Granville saying:—

"Zebehr has received a telegram from Gordon appointing him sub-Governor-general of the Soudan, and directing him to proceed to Berber. He will be watched, and his departure will be prevented."

Sir E. Baring inclosed to Earl Granville a copy of Gordon's telegram to Zebehr Pasha, and added: "Precautions have been taken to watch Zebehr and prevent his escape." This was the message from Gordon to Zebehr, dated April 16th:—

"We have appointed your excellency sub-Governor-general of the Soudan. Please note this. On your arrival at Berber inform me, and do what you can to get peace, and I will see if it be possible to send two steamers on your arrival; and we shall send them, and your excellency will arrange everything for your arrival at Khartûm by the two steamers above mentioned; and the two other steamers, which are at Berber, your excellency must arm them with iron against the bullets of soldiers; and your excellency must bring the needful —, and take all necessary precautions against danger on the road."

What could Zebehr have done even if he had felt inclined to join Gordon? He was virtually a prisoner under surveillance. What he *said* in reply by telegram on the following day was:—

"We have been ennobled by the receipt of your excellency's telegram appointing us Deputy-Governor-general of the Soudan.

We inform your excellency that we are extremely grateful and obliged for the kind notice of your excellency towards us in every way, and I regret very much to have to tell your excellency with the greatest regret that affairs as at present do not permit of my

passing through now,¹ and I pray God to perpetuate your health and success."

Copy of this was forwarded to the foreign office in Soudan, and on the 20th Sir E. Baring said:—

"Zebehr has telegraphed to General Gordon that he cannot go to Khartûm. I am told that he would be willing to go if government made good his previous losses, which he fixes at a very high figure. I have not seen him myself."

Communications were stopped soon after this, and there ensued a period of nearly five months during which the fate of Khartûm, and of Gordon, Stewart, and Power were the subject of strange and often contradictory rumours, and the cause of no little anxiety to those who admired the heroism of the man, who, with his companions and the people who trusted him, was left in the midst of a horde of savage foes. These foes, like wolves, were kept at bay notwithstanding their endeavours to break through the defences of the town, where the garrison and the population, diminished by frequent losses in killed and wounded and by sickness, and threatened with approaching famine, yet held their own and fought bravely on.

It is impossible to follow the authentic details of this narrative as discovered in telegrams, correspondence, official documents, and the reports of eye-witnesses, without a constant feeling of disappointment if not of indignation, not because of the policy adopted by the government, but because of the repeated contradictions, difficulties, and fatal errors, caused by their adhesion on one hand to a scheme which was contradicted on the other. Only ignorance of the actual state of affairs, ignorance of the inevitable consequences of the rebellion, and the absolute necessity for rapid decision, and for the almost irresponsible authority of any person empowered to take measures for checking the advance of the Mahdi, or for protecting the garrisons and the European and Egyptian population, can account for the placid officialism which insisted on the subjection of Gordon to specific orders and then,

¹ The Blue Book interpretation of the phrase, "affairs as at present do not permit of my passing through now" is, "*i.e.* that the route is impracticable;" but there seems to be a little ambiguity here.

instead of rapidly using efforts to open up the way of escape, persistently shut him up in Khartûm, and left Berber, Shendy, and Kassala hopelessly beleaguered, to be finally (as far as Berber and Shendy were concerned) overwhelmed by the savage hordes who slaughtered numbers of the inhabitants and closed the way of escape for those who had been waiting for a British, Indian, Turkish, or Anglo-Egyptian force to clear the route from Suakim, or to advance by the Nile from Assouan and Wady Halfa.

Gordon himself had doubtless been greatly mistaken; but having consented to be parties to his expedition (the initial error), the mistake of the British government was to have so long refused their aid to carry out the evacuation of the provinces to which he had been sent, and to leave him to continue what became a protracted struggle against fatal odds. To have taken active proceedings at first would have been less opposed to their professedly hard-and-fast policy, than the extensive but abortive expedition which they afterwards caused to be organized when the Mahdi's savage followers swarmed around the destitute city, and deferred their murderous work only till they were sure of the approach of the British forces which had threaded the river and spanned the desert at a cost of life and money that made the original profession of non-intervention only a grim and bitter jest.

To go back for a few weeks in our narrative—on the 12th of February, 1884, Gordon had telegraphed, announcing that he had formed a committee of defence with Hassan Kalifa Pasha, who accepted his assumption of supreme power in the Soudan; and he then said, that he hoped to conciliate the whole province of Berber under his presidency, that the question of getting out the garrison and families was so interlaced with the preservation of well-to-do people of the country as to be for the time inseparable, and any precipitate action separating these interests would throw all well-disposed people into the ranks of the enemy and would fail in its effects. Therefore he trusted that patience would be shown, and that there would be no anxiety about the issue. This request for patience, however, was soon changed by the necessities

of the case into an urgent demand for prompt and effectual aid. The government had been so very willing to exercise patience that it was not to be startled, especially as Gordon had also said, "As to sending forces to Suakim to assist withdrawal, I would care more for rumour of such intervention than for forces. What would have greatest effect would be rumour of English intervention."

The time had come when the swift operation of the forces at Suakim to open the road to Berber was, perhaps, the one act necessary for early success, but the effort was never made, and there was scarcely a rumour of it either. When the people of Berber were at the last gasp, having held out in the hopes of some aid, nothing was done. Step by step the want of knowledge, the want of any sort of appreciation of the actual position of the man to whose commission they had been parties, and of the peril of the people to rescue whom they had sent him, prevented the accomplishment of anything that might have been done if the ministry had been able to realize the situation. One after another opportunities were allowed to pass, appeals were unheard, entreaties were stifled with official formulas, till the world saw the strange spectacle of a British army gathering on the Nile, and crossing the desert to achieve acts of gallantry which made the world ring, but yet accomplishing only a splendid failure; the place which they had gone to deliver lay half in ruins in the hands of a multitude of barbarous fanatics, the followers of an impostor; the people whom they had gone to protect, massacred in the streets or taken into slavery; the hero himself slain, the manner of his death uncertain, the story of his mortal ending and of that of the men who remained faithful to him a mere hearsay, vague and contradictory.

On the 1st of May Earl Granville telegraphed a despatch to Mr. Egerton, who had at that time taken the place of our representative at Cairo, calling his attention to a previous message sent on the 23d of April, instructing him to send several messengers to Gordon through Dongola as well as Berber, or in such other way as might be deemed most prompt and certain. The message to be sent was that Gordon "should keep her majesty's

government informed, to the best of his ability, not only as to the immediate danger to which Khartûm may be exposed, but also as to any prospective danger which may arise later; that in order to be prepared to meet such danger, he should advise us as to the force that would be necessary, under the circumstances, to secure his safe removal, giving his views as to its amount and composition, and as to the route by which it should approach Khartûm, and the time at which the operation should take place. General Gordon should, at the same time, understand that her majesty's government do not propose to supply him with a Turkish or other force for the purpose of undertaking military expeditions against the Mahdi, such expeditions being beyond the scope of the commission which he holds, and at variance with the pacific policy which was the purpose of his mission to the Soudan. If, with the knowledge of this fact, General Gordon decides on remaining at Khartûm, he should state the cause of his decision, and the intention with which he so continues." The telegram went on to say:—

"Her majesty's government fully acknowledge their debt of gratitude to General Gordon for the heroic courage with which he has proceeded upon a mission which presented difficulties insurmountable by ordinary means, together with the possibility of serious danger. They recognize the benefits which have resulted from it, the confidence which, at all events for a time, he restored in Khartûm, the despatch of the women and children in safety from that place, and his success, perhaps, in arresting any military movements upon Egypt, certainly in dispelling the alarms connected with the expectation of such an event." The message continued:—

"On the 4th March a telegram was received from Sir E. Baring stating that General Gordon and Colonel Stewart advised the despatch of a small force of British or Indian cavalry to Berber, as soon as the road was opened between that place and Suakim, but Sir E. Baring himself did not agree in this proposal. It appeared that the object of the expedition was to overawe the tribes between Berber and Khartûm, and reassure the population

of the towns. The military information in the possession of her majesty's government showed that it was unsafe to send a small body of cavalry from Suakim, and impossible to send a large force. They could not, therefore, authorize the advance of any troops in the direction of Berber until they were informed of the military conditions on which it was to be made, and were satisfied that the expedition was necessary for General Gordon's safety, and would be confined to that purpose. This decision was reconsidered, at the request of Sir E. Baring, on learning that General Gordon was still expecting the arrival of troops at Berber, but having regard to the danger of the climate and the extraordinary military risk, her majesty's government did not feel justified in altering it.

"General Gordon has recently suggested the employment of Turkish troops lent by the sultan, variously estimating the number required at from 2000 to 4000 men.

"The employment of Turkish troops in the Soudan would be contrary to the views advocated by him on former occasions. I need not remind you that in his proclamations issued at Berber and Khartûm, of which copies were inclosed in Sir E. Baring's despatch of the 17th March, he declared that he had averted the despatch of troops by the sultan, and had come in person to prevent further bloodshed.

"Moreover, such a course would involve a reversal of the original policy of her majesty's government, which was to detach the Soudan from Egypt, and restore to its inhabitants their former independence.

"The request is not founded on any necessities of defence in Khartûm, as according to Sir E. Baring's telegrams of the 9th April, General Gordon considered himself safe for a certain time; the town was provisioned for some months, and the market was well supplied. It is clear from his messages to Sir E. Baring and also to Sir S. Baker, reported in the telegrams of the 18th and 19th ultimo from Sir E. Baring, that his object in asking for these troops is to effect the withdrawal of the Soudan garrisons by military expeditions, and to bring about the collapse of the Mahdi.

"Her majesty's government, while labouring under the dis-

advantage of insufficient information, have taken General Gordon's operations in the vicinity of Khartûm to be required for the defence of the place, and they can well understand that such action may be necessary even for defensive purposes.

“ But with respect to his request for Turkish troops with a view to offensive operations, General Gordon cannot too clearly understand that these operations cannot receive the sanction of her majesty's government, and that they are beyond the scope of his mission.”

This, then, was the attitude of the government, “labouring under the disadvantage of insufficient information.” It had become evident that they contemplated the probable necessity of having to send some kind of aid, and were waiting for further intelligence.

On the 10th of May the messengers who had been sent in succession to Gordon by the governor of Dongola returned. They reported the investment of Khartûm; the attacks made upon the rebels by the steamers on the White Nile; that the rebels had constructed wooden shelters to protect themselves from the projectiles fired from the boats; and that when the government forces pursued them into these shelters they fled into the country beyond gunshot. This state of things made it impossible to get into Khartûm, though each copy of the message had been given to a special messenger with orders to do everything in his power to get into Khartûm and bring back an answer.

On the 17th of May the government sent instructions that their previous message should be repeated to General Gordon, with the addition that:—“as the original plan for the evacuation of the Soudan had been dropped, and as aggressive operations could not be undertaken with the countenance of her majesty's government, he was enjoined to consider and either to report upon, or, if feasible, to adopt, at the first proper moment, measures for his own removal and for that of the Egyptians at Khartûm who had suffered for him or who had served him faithfully, including their wives and children, by whatever route he may consider best, having especial regard to his own safety and that of the other British subjects.”

For this purpose he was authorized to make free use of money rewards or promises at his discretion. For example, he was at liberty to assign to Egyptian soldiers at Khartûm sums for themselves and for persons brought with them per head, contingent on their safe arrival at Korosko, or whatever point he might consider a place of safety; or he might employ and pay the tribes in the neighbourhood to escort them. The government presumed that the Soudanese at Khartûm were not in danger. In the event of Gordon having despatched any persons or agents to other points, he was authorized to spend any money required for the purpose of recalling them or securing their safety.

It had already been concluded that no immediate assistance could be sent to Berber. Nubar Pasha thought that the pressing demands of the governor might be answered by sending two of the Egyptian battalions at Assouan, and 500 Ababdies collected for the purpose. The general, however, strongly objected to sending Egyptian troops alone, but thought it possible to send an Anglo-Egyptian force either across the Korosko desert, or if that were impossible because of the necessity for procuring a large number of camels, or in consequence of the difficulty of obtaining water, that they might go by Wady Halfa and Dongola. The least possible time that would be required, supposing they could start at once, would be eight weeks by the desert route, and sixteen weeks by that of Dongola. All that could be immediately done was to give the people at Berber an assurance that English aid would be sent to them as soon as practicable, and to prove that action had been taken by pushing on an Egyptian detachment to Korosko.

Mr. Egerton was of opinion, however, that it would be almost madness to run the risk of sending an English or Egyptian force by either route; and the government replied that they could not sanction an attempt to send English troops at that season, or to send an Egyptian force alone. Hassan Khalifa was therefore to be informed that no immediate assistance could be given him, as an expedition by the river could not arrive at Berber in less than sixteen weeks.

On the 10th of June intelligence was received of the fall of

Berber and the massacre of the garrison; the number of persons killed was stated to be 3500.

Gordon had received the telegram which was repeated on May 5th, but it was the 30th of July before he could send a despatch in reply. He then said that the Nile was high, and he hoped to open the route to Sennâr in a few days. Stewart had been slightly wounded in the arm, but was all right again, and there had been no serious losses.

He emphatically declared that the hostilities which he maintained were far from being sought for; but there was no option, since retreat was impossible unless they abandoned civil employées and their families, which was against the general feeling of the troops. He had no advice to give. If they could open Sennâr and the Blue Nile they would be strong enough to retake Berber, if Dongola still held out. The Mahdi would not send succour there. None of the money that was given to Gordon reached Khartûm. It had been captured at Berber, and he wanted £200,000 sent to Kassala. The expense of the garrisons would have to be met. Khartûm cost £500 a day. If the route got opened to Kassala he would send Stewart there with his journal, if he would consent to go. The whole war, he said, was hateful to him, and if there had been any possible way of avoiding the wretched fighting he would have adopted it. The people refused to let him go out on expeditions, owing to the difficulties that would arise in case anything happened. If he could have made any one chief at Khartûm he would have done it, but it was impossible, "for all the good men were killed with Hicks."

It should be borne in mind that at the period when the difficulties of communication with Gordon commenced, Major-general Graham had only just completed his successful repulse of Osman Digma's horde of rebels at El-Teb, and was about moving against them at Tamanieb. The government were so far consistent to their non-intervention policy, that on learning of this intention to advance against the position of the rebels, they telegraphed to Sir E. Baring, saying that they were averse to further military operations being undertaken, unless General

Graham considered that the security of the Berber road would be thereby ensured.

There seemed to be no accurate information, nor could communications be made in time to keep Gordon at Khartûm, Graham at Suakim, and Baring at Cairo *en rapport*. On the 22d of March (1884) General Graham telegraphed to Lord Hartington, that thirty-five pilgrims from Central Africa, who had been already two years on their journey, arrived at Suakim *via* Berber, which place they had left fourteen days before, when the road between Berber and Khartûm was quiet and people were gathering in their harvests. They had not been molested on the road to Suakim, where they saw camels and sheep, and only a few unarmed men. Graham added that caravans with merchandise had not yet attempted to travel that road, and that on that day a cavalry reconnoissance would be made fourteen miles further, on the Suakim-Berber route.

Two days afterwards (March 24) Sir E. Baring had received a telegram from Mr. Cuzzi at Berber, saying that both banks of the Nile were in the hands of the rebels, and that no boats were coming down the river, so that it had been necessary to forward the letters and telegrams to General Gordon by land, some having been sent the day before, concealed in the dress of Arabs, who would attempt to reach Khartûm by a circuitous route. On the 24th Sir E. Baring had not heard from Gordon, and telegraphed to Earl Granville:—"It appears to me that under the present circumstances he will not be able to carry out your lordship's instructions, although those instructions involve the abandonment of the Sennâr garrison on the Blue Nile, and the garrisons of Bahr-Gazelle and Gondokoro on the White Nile.

The question now is how to get General Gordon and Colonel Stewart away from Khartûm. In considering this question it should be remembered that they will not willingly come back without bringing with them the garrison of Khartûm and the government officials."

Communication between Khartûm and Berber had then been interrupted.

We have already seen what was Gordon's position at that time and afterwards. A native witness who was there, afterwards said:—"Soldiers lined the trenches all day and night. There were four guns there, two pointing towards Bahr-Abead, one facing from the iron gate near the cemetery, one facing the village of Burdi. Of the crowds of blacks you speak of living in the poor quarters of Khartûm, Gordon made soldiers. All men were compelled to carry arms; regular soldiers got rations of dhoora, the others got government biscuit. We were always expecting, from dawn to sunset, from sunset to dawn, the arrival of the English. Whenever we heard news of them our hearts rejoiced. The Arabs have a fear of the English, dating back from the time of Arabi's defeat. They believe they carry with them a piece of wood which they can extend to any height, that up this they climb, and spy their enemies at any distance. All were at first loyal in Khartûm, except a few of the head men—such as the chief baker and butcher; but Gordon, who well knew these men to be traitors, said, 'Suffer them to remain on at their work; we will show them what justice is when the English come.' As time wore on and provisions were become short by reason of the strictness of the siege—for the Arabs were closing around—Gordon sent away all the old men and women who were unable to work out of Khartûm; they were afraid to go at first, but Gordon gave them an introduction to Mahomet Achmet, writing as follows:—"Be kind to these, treat them well, I charge you. Behold, I have kept and fed all these for four months; try how you will like doing so for one month.' Mahomet Achmet accepted them, and they are with him to this day.

"As it was at the time of the Tou el Kebeah (great flood); as it will be at El Achrah (last day); as it has often been when in cities of the earth enemies have been knocking at the gate without, they bought and sold; they married and were given in marriage. The festivities and feastings took place nightly. The Soudanese are a light-hearted people even when a cloud hangs over them. You would have thought nothing was going amiss. It is true they believed the English were coming."

Gordon, waiting for the despatches which did not reach him, had received no news from Sir E. Baring or Nubar Pasha between the 30th of March and the 30th of July when he telegraphed:—
“ The troops and people are full of heart; I cannot say the same for all the Europeans. The Arabs are in poor heart. I should say that about 2000 determined men alone keep them in the field. I expect it will end in a terrible famine throughout the land. Spy yesterday stated the *Queen of England* had arrived at Korosko. Perhaps it is a steamer. The only reinforcements the Soudan has received since the 27th of November, 1883—date when Hicks’s defeat was known at Cairo, is seven persons, including myself! and we have sent down over 600 soldiers and 2000 people. The people here and Arabs laugh over it. I shall not leave Khartûm till I can put some one in. If the Europeans like to go to the Equator, I will give them steamers, but I will not leave these people after all they have gone through.

As for routes, I have told you that the one from Wady Halfa along right bank of Nile to Berber is the best, and, had not Berber fallen, would have been a picnic. The other route is from Senhit to Kassala, and to Abu Haraz, on Blue Nile, which would be safe up to Kassala, but I fear it is too late. We must fight it out with our own means: if blessed by God we shall succeed; if not, His will, so be it. The main thing is to send money to Kassala. Where is Wood? Kind regards to him and Generals Stephenson and Graham. Why write in cipher? It is useless, for Arabs have no interpreter.

Seyd Mahomet Osman, of Kassala, ought to be the route for your despatches, and you ought to give him a present of £500, for he saved Kassala. We have made a decoration, with three degrees, silver-gilt, silver, and pewter, with inscription, ‘Siege of Khartûm,’ with a grenade in centre. School children and women have also received one; consequently I am very popular with the black ladies of Khartûm. We have issued paper notes to amount of £26,000, and borrowed £50,000 from merchants, which you will have to meet. I have sent in addition £8000 paper notes to Sennâr. What Kassala is doing for money I do not know;

of course we only get taxes paid in lead, so you are running up a good bill up here."

On the 31st July he added a postscript which showed that though the despatches had not reached him he had received the telegram sent him with respect to his abandonment of Khartûm:—"You ask me 'state cause and intention in staying at Khartûm, knowing government means to abandon Soudan,' and in answer I say, I stay at Khartûm because Arabs have shut us up, and will not let us out. I also add that even if the road was opened the people would not let me go unless I gave them some government or took them with me, which I could not do. No one would leave more willingly than I would if it was possible.

"We continue, thank God, to drive Arabs back up Blue Nile, and hope to open road to Sennâr in eight days or less, and to recapture small steamer lost by Saleh Bey. We then hope to send an expedition to surprise and recapture Berber. It is a *sine quâ non* that you send me Zebehr; otherwise my stay here is indefinite. And you should send £50,000 to Dongola, to be forwarded to Berber if we take it. River begins to fall in, say, four months. Before that time you must either let the sultan take back the Soudan, or send Zebehr with a subsidy yearly. *D.V.* we will send down to Berber, to take it, the Egyptian troops here, so that they will be on their way home; and I shall send Stewart. We hope (*D.V.*) to recapture the two steamers which were lost at Berber on its fall.

The equator and Bahr-Gazelle provinces can be (*D.V.*) relieved later on, and their troops brought here. As to Darfûr, it must be afterwards thought of, for we do not know if it still holds out. As for Kordofan, I hope and believe the Mahdi has his hands full. I would vacate Sennâr if it was possible, but I do not think it is, and also the moral effect of its evacuation would be fatal to our future success, while we have not food to feed the refugee people who would come here. You will see if we open road to Sennâr from here, we cut the Arab movement in two by Blue Nile. I repeat I have no wish to retain this country. My sole desire is to restore the prestige of the government in

order to get out garrisons, and to put some ephemeral government into position, in order to get away."

At the end of July Gordon had lost 700 men, but he had driven the rebels out of Buri, had captured quantities of rifles and ammunition, and had cleared the Arabs out of thirteen zeribas which they had constructed on the river banks.

On the 24th of August, in letters which he sent to the officer commanding the royal naval force at Massowah, he said: "We have had a series of petty fights with Arabs from the 12th of March to the 30th July, when we were able, thank God, to drive them back and open the road to Sennâr, and we are now relieved from the immediate pressure of Arabs. We are going to attack them to-morrow, and meditate a raid on Berber in order to let pass to Dongola a convoy which accompanies Colonel Stewart and English and French consuls. We shall (*D.V.*) destroy Berber and return to our pirate nest here. . . . We are going to hold out here for ever, and are pretty evenly matched with the Mahdi. He has cavalry and we have steamers. We are very cross with you all, for since the 29th March we have had not one word from outer world. I have paid as much as £140 for a spy, and you gave that poor devil (so he says) 20 dollars to go from Massowah to Khartûm. However, I have given him £20. One of our steamers has 970 bullet marks on her, another 850 ditto. We have provisions for five months, and hope to get in more."

This letter was continued by another on the 26th August wherein he said: "We have (thank God!) succeeded in taking Arab camp and killing Arab commander-in-chief (*R.I.P.*). I do not know our losses yet. This victory clears our vicinity on three parts of circle. . . . There is one bond of union between us and our troops; they know if the town is taken they will be sold as slaves, and we must deny our Lord if we would save our lives. I think we hate the latter more than they hate the former. *D.V.* we will defeat them without any help from outside. Spies from Kordofan report advance of Mahdi with twenty-six guns towards Khartûm. I have always thought this is probable, and that the question will be solved here; but I trust he will not

succeed as we have made the place very strong; if he fails he is done for."

We may now conclude the account furnished by these interrupted messages from Gordon, some of which came to hand. On the 17th September Sir E. Baring sent to Earl Granville a translation of a cipher message received from Gordon on the 23d of August, in which he said:—

"Concerning the Soudan:—

1. English troops must be sent to the Soudan. Zebehr Pasha must also be appointed, with assistant, and with a salary of £8000 per annum.

2. On the arrival of the English troops in the Soudan the Egyptian troops will return to Egypt.

3. If the sultan would send 200,000 (2000) of his troops the Soudan could be handed over to him.

4. If no part of this scheme is carried out, and if the rebels attack the people in the Soudan and kill them, you will be responsible for their lives and all their salaries.

5. The expenses and pay of the soldiers in the Soudan amount to £1500 a day.

6. The troops in Dongola, Khartûm, the Equator, Bahr-el-Gazelle, Kassala, and Sennâr are more than 30,000 in number.

7. You have now become responsible to these troops for the sum of £300,000.

8. I hope shortly to take Berber. I have already sent Stewart Pasha, the English consul, and the French consul, with regular troops and Bashi-Bazouks, for that purpose.

9. I had already written to you that I should send Egyptian troops to take Berber and to occupy it, and that these troops would be under your protection; but, fearing that reinforcements might not be sent, and fearing that you might pay no attention to those that I should send, and naturally fearing that a panic might occur among my troops, I thought it more advisable that, after taking the town, they should remain in it fifteen days and burn it, and then return to Khartûm again. Stewart Pasha will proceed to Dongola. Then I will send to the Equator to withdraw the people

who are there. After that it will be impossible for Mohammed Ahmet to come here, and please God, he will meet his death by the hands of the Soudanese.

If the sultan's troops come, they should come by Dongola and Kassala. You should give them £300,000.

I inform you that Mohammed Ali Pasha is the only person in the Soudan on whom I can rely and who can replace me."

To this Sir E. Baring added that he had repeated the 8th and 9th paragraphs to General Kitchener, who had charge of the Intelligence Department, and used every effort to get messages to and from Khartûm. Sir E. Baring told him to use his utmost endeavours to enter into communication with Gordon and Stewart, and inform them of position and movements of British troops in the Nile Valley, for by that time the English government had been compelled to abandon their avowed determination—rather than abandon Gordon—and already the expedition, which was intended to deliver the generals at Khartûm, but not to fight for the purpose of holding Sennâr and retaking Berber, had begun to move towards the beleaguered city.

The khedive also received from Gordon two telegrams in Arabic. They were undated, and did not reach him till the 18th of September. They had probably been sent much earlier, for the 23d of August was, as we have seen, the date of the latest despatches, and the first entry in Gordon's journals, which were recovered long afterwards, and probably commenced only after communications were almost hopelessly cut off, is dated September 10th. The message to the khedive, who had by extra as well as ordinary firman appointed Gordon as governor of the Soudan, said: "On my arrival at Khartûm I found it impossible to withdraw the soldiers and employés to Egypt on account of the insurrection of the Arabs and the communications being interrupted. Therefore I asked that I might be helped with reinforcements. Hitherto they have not come, and thus occurred the events at Berber. I had already warned Egypt to pay attention to that town. I will consider how it can be recovered from the rebels, or how troops can be stationed there for two months during high Nile. After

which, if troops do not come, no doubt the same will again occur in Berber as before, and the troops will be destroyed. Is it right that I should have been sent to Khartûm with only seven followers after the destruction of Hicks's army, and no attention paid to me till communications were cut? I received a letter fifteen days ago from the governor of Kassala, informing me that his province was in its usual condition, and road open and safe between it and Massowah, and telegraph in working order. If it is still intended to leave the Soudan, how is it that the Kassala province remains?

I hope you will send a telegram showing clearly the present intentions with regard to the Soudan, and let it be in Arabic so that the people of Khartûm may read it. The telegrams which come in English cipher do not state what are these intentions, and only ask us for information and waste time. Thus, through having so often promised the people of Khartûm that assistance would come, we are now as liars in their eyes. If it is the intention to charge me to hold the Soudan with only the Soudani troops which are in it, I will do my best, although without money, but it is impossible to resist with them thousands of the Mahdi's men. It would be the best course to negotiate with the Porte for the despatch of Turkish troops. They should be given £200,000 per annum for expenses. Here I am in Khartûm as a hostage and guardian. I hope as long as I remain here, when Turkish troops come, that the people of the Soudan will be unable to resist them, and will not fire a single shot, and that peace and quietness will return. It is impossible to leave Khartûm without a regular government established by some power. I will look after the troops on the Equator, Bahr-el-Gazelle, and in Darfûr, although it may cost me my life.

Perhaps the British government will be displeased with the advice which I have given. The people of the Soudan are also displeased with me on account of my fighting against them, and on account of their not attaining their object in following the Mahdi.

I shall send Stewart Pasha and Mr. Power, the English consul, with the soldiers, who will proceed to Berber in order to

open communications with Dongola, and in order to carry on the necessary discussions in connection with the Soudan."

This intention of sending Stewart and Power to Berber in order to open communications with Dongola and to carry on the necessary discussions in connection with the Soudan, was confirmed in a message which he sent to Nubar Pasha on the 23d of August, saying that he had appointed the three steamers to inspect the situation of Sennâr and to discover its needs. On their return he intended to detail a military force from Khartûm composed of 2000 men and send it by steamers to Berber to retake it from the hands of the rebels, with provisions for two months only. With that force he proposed to send Stewart and all the consuls. The troops and the camels were to remain at Berber after its recapture, while Stewart went on to Dongola by a small boat, specially appointed for the voyage, that he might hold a parley on the Soudan question. It was believed afterward that Gordon, having determined that he would not desert the people at Khartûm, and knowing that the result was doubtful, took this opportunity of giving the chance of liberty to the companions who would not otherwise have sought their own safety by leaving him. The scheme of retaking Berber was, at all events, not an impossible enterprise; and there was good reason to suppose that the party would reach Dongola, where the mudir was holding out loyally, and on the 23d of July was reported to have defeated 5000 rebels near Debbeh.

Alas! the expedition came to a tragic end. On the 10th of September the detachment marched, and when the position of the rebels had been taken and destroyed the main body returned to Khartûm, while Stewart, Power, and about forty others steamed down the river for Dongola.

It was a disheartening story, of which Major Kitchener sent home the report in the first days of October. It was not till the end of the month that the terrible news was confirmed, but then it was known that the whole party had perished by the hands of the enemy, Stewart and Power having been massacred with the others. By that time—the end of October—Lord Wolseley,

who was then at Wady Halfa, sent two messengers to inquire as to the fate of the party, and learned that the steamer struck on a rock, and that all on board except two natives were killed by order of the treacherous Sheikh Suleiman Wad Gamr, who had come from a small house near the bank and called to Colonel Stewart to land without fear. This sorrowful story belongs, however, to a later page. We must for the moment return to the summer of 1884.

Early in the year—almost at the commencement of the session—Mr. Gladstone, replying to a vote of censure which Sir Stafford Northcote had proposed to be passed upon the government, distinctly refuted the charge of unnecessary delay in the appointment of General Gordon, and showed that Sir Charles Wilson had, months previously, recommended that appointment, but that it could not be made because of the disagreements between Gordon and the Egyptian government. There was no very cordial sentiment between Gordon and the khedive, with whom he had never been on truly confidential terms, and whose service he had quitted with an expression of a feeling not far removed from reproach and disdain. It was not till this difficulty was overcome on both sides that Gordon consented to accept the commission, and then the relations between him and Tewfik and the Egyptian ministry were satisfactory enough. So far from the English ministry having delayed matters, Gordon had no sooner consented to act than his departure for Egypt was reckoned, not by days, but by hours. There had been apparent hesitation in taking further and more effectual steps for the relief of Tokar and Sinkat, and the result had been that we were too late to save either; but this arose from want of the knowledge, which could only be obtained from Gordon himself, who was then on his desert journey and beyond the means of communication. It was feared that the consequence of despatching a British force to relieve these garrisons might have the effect of inciting the tribes around Khartûm to attack that place and to massacre the people there, who were so much more numerous than at the two stations

in the Red Sea territory that it became a serious question whether they ought to be sacrificed or involved in imminent danger by any attempt to relieve the smaller garrisons. Directly Gordon reached a point where telegrams and messages could reach him the doubt was solved, and General Graham's expedition against the followers of Osman Digma was completed and promptly commenced operations.

It must, of course, be remembered that the government had absolutely forsworn any military operations with British troops for the purpose of retaining or regaining the territory of the Soudan, and at any rate the main body of the opposition, and even the Conservative leaders, were not provided with any definite alternative policy. Their words of censure were vague, and their attitude was feeble, timid, and uncertain. All they seemed to desire to do was to drive the Liberal government from power. They could refer with bitter intensity to the sufferings of the garrisons at Tokar and Sinkat, and they could bestow fanciful epithets upon the prime-minister and his colleagues, but they did not venture plainly to proclaim their readiness to take the responsibility for a bold and unmistakable policy of intervention which would have involved the actual establishment of a British protectorate in Egypt. They denounced the government for not doing something which they failed to define, and it was evident that they were unable to grasp the situation for not grappling with which they persistently twitted the ministry.

The second vote of censure was proposed by Sir Michael Hicks Beach on the 12th of May, at a time when intelligence from Gordon had for some time ceased to be received and public excitement ran high, but again the opposition could frame no positive declarations of their own. To condemn the government for not having done what they were not prepared to declare they would have done themselves, was not an effectual mode of representing public opinion; and the Marquis of Hartington, to whom the reply was committed, could hold his own without great difficulty, even though he had against him the independent opinion of men on the Liberal side, Mr. Forster and Sir Wilfrid Lawson.

The terms of the proposed vote of censure were, "That this house regrets to find the course pursued by her majesty's government has not tended to promote the success of General Gordon's mission, and that even such steps as be necessary to secure his personal safety are delayed;" and Sir M. H. Beach reminded the house of the assurance, originally given by the prime-minister, that General Gordon was to have "a free hand" in the Soudan in order to carry out the government programme of "rescue and retire," and he contrasted this promise with the repeated interference of the government with the general's plans. He contended that while they were urging the use of only pacific measures in one part of the Soudan they were pressing forward warlike movements in another, and by these means effectually neutralized Gordon's pacific intentions. When, after General Graham's victories, the government refused to send the desired troops to Berber, they left full discretion to Gordon to remain at Khartûm or to retire by any available route; and this offer was the most disgraceful suggestion ever made by a British government to a British soldier or a Christian gentleman; and he was not surprised at the strong language used by Gordon in his reference to the indelible disgrace which would fall on the British government if the garrisons of Sennâr, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola were left to their fate. The government, he declared, "had not dared to resent this unparalleled language of a subordinate, because the country fully endorsed it."

But the attitude of the opposition was still weak, and while it was easy to denounce the action or the want of action of the government it was by no means easy to proclaim what the Conservative policy would be. In his reply Mr. Gladstone maintained that the suggestion which had been made, involved neither more nor less than the immediate despatch of British troops to Khartûm—without any regard to climate, the supply of water, or the state of the river;—and the suppression of the Mahdî, which meant the reconquest of the Soudan. The government had declined to send troops to Wady Halfa and to Berber, but they had acted on military advice, and bearing in mind not

merely the great military risk but the small military advantage which would have resulted. Mr. Gladstone had previously said, in answer to questions (on the 24th of April), that though there was apparently at that time no military or other danger at Khartûm, he admitted that the country felt a profound interest and a strong sense of obligation dependent upon it with regard to the safety of General Gordon, and he now (May 13) read the telegrams received from Gordon, including the one from Dongola, to show that there was still no military danger. He, however, admitted to the full the obligations of the government to General Gordon, and conceived that, by the despatch of April 23d, they had entered into a covenant with him that on reasonable proof of danger he would be assisted. The country would never grudge any reasonable effort for the protection of its agents; but it was the duty of the government to consider the treasure, the blood, and the honour of the country, and the circumstances of the time, the season, the climate, and the military difficulties. Conscious of what their obligations were they would continue to use their best endeavours to fulfil them, unmoved by the threats and the captious criticisms of the opposition.

It was to Lord Hartington, in his reply to succeeding speeches, that a more complete answer to the proposed vote of censure was left, however. He stated that he should make no reference to those expressions contained in the telegrams of General Gordon which had been somewhat eagerly grasped at by the opposition. What they had to look at in these telegrams was the information and the advice contained in them.

“As to the expression of General Gordon’s opinion, or the language in which it is couched, I do not think that we ought to trouble ourselves much more about them than if they came from any other sources. It is quite clear to any one who has read the whole series of General Gordon’s telegrams that he is a man of extremely impulsive character; that as soon as an idea comes to him he immediately proceeds to telegraph it; and that his frame of mind varied very rapidly from day to day, even from hour to hour. It is also perfectly well known that General Gordon,

Christian hero though he be, has a quick temper as well as other people, and I am not surprised that, with the extremely imperfect knowledge of the views and intention of the government that was in his possession, he expressed his indignation in somewhat strong language. But the fact that General Gordon spoke of indelible disgrace—an expression which has been fastened on by the opposition—has not necessarily the effect of attaching it to us. I say that it would be indelible disgrace if we should neglect any means at the disposal of this country to save General Gordon; but if General Gordon tells us that indelible disgrace attaches to the government with reference to these other garrisons, then I say that I do not admit that General Gordon is, on this point at least, a better authority than anyone else. The government were under no moral obligation to use the war resources of this empire for the relief of those garrisons. General Gordon's mission did not involve the employment of military force, and the fact that he has been despatched to Khartûm, and that he has done, and is doing, all that he considers to be best and most advisable to relieve these garrisons, does not alter the moral obligation that rests upon her majesty's government, and cannot in itself affect the accusation of indelible disgrace.

“It appears to me that the scope and character of General Gordon's mission have been very much lost sight of, and have been misrepresented and exaggerated throughout the whole of this debate. . . . At the time General Gordon was despatched the situation was one of very great difficulty and anxiety, as it is now. The position of the garrisons in the Soudan and of the Egyptian officials there, appeared to be one of the greatest danger, and almost hopeless. They were separated from each other by enormous distances, frequently by immense deserts, and were only united to each other by rivers, the navigation of which was extremely precarious and difficult. They were separated by still further distances from Egypt, the base on which they had relied; and the moral support and influence of the Egyptian government, by means of which alone they had up to that time held their position in the Soudan, had been destroyed. For that condition

of things the government never have admitted or accepted any responsibility. It was not her majesty's government who sent the Egyptian officials or garrisons into that position of danger. They did not encourage, but, on the contrary, they dissuaded the fatal expedition of General Hicks which brought about the collapse of the Egyptian authority in the Soudan. In the opinion of the government, the first condition of the problem before them, a condition openly and frankly avowed to the house, was that British troops should not be employed for the purpose of extracting those garrisons and officials from the position in which they were placed, owing to no action of the British people or government, but to the mistakes made in former times by their own government. The attempt might have failed in its object, and could only have succeeded through the reconquest of the Soudan and the subjugation of those who had revolted against what was universally acknowledged to be an intolerable and oppressive government. Her majesty's government was not prepared to reconquer the country either for the Egyptian government or for this nation; neither were they prepared to make sacrifices of English treasure and life for the purpose of re-endowing the Egyptian government with the provinces of the Soudan. It was, in their opinion, no part of their duty to risk English treasure or life in enabling the Egyptian garrisons to march out with flying colours from their positions in the Soudan. At the same time there existed in this country a very strong and natural desire that some effort should, if possible, be made to mitigate the sufferings of the retreat of those garrisons. One chance of this there appeared to be. There was one man of known ability and energy who had great experience in the government and affairs of the Soudan, who was believed to have acquired great influence in that country, who was universally pointed to by the public opinion of this country, and who appeared himself to be of opinion that it would be possible, by sending himself, without the support of any military force, to accomplish something for the withdrawal of the garrisons. In the conversations which General Gordon had with members of the government, before he undertook his mission, he explained

to some extent the views which he entertained on this point. General Gordon said that in his opinion the danger of massacre of the garrisons was greatly exaggerated, that the power of the Mahdi was greatly exaggerated, and that it was probable that no opposition would be offered to the peaceful withdrawal of the Egyptian officials and such portions of the garrisons as might desire to leave. General Gordon further expressed his opinion that probably the greater number, even of the Egyptian population, would not desire to leave, that the greater number of the troops would probably join the Mahdi or the insurrectionary party, and that the withdrawal of such persons as it might be desirable to withdraw could be effected without any great difficulty or great risk of massacre. At the same time Sir E. Baring had asked, on behalf of the Egyptian government, that a British officer should be sent to superintend the evacuation of Khartûm and the retreat of the other garrisons. It seemed to us at that time that this was a chance which we ought not to throw away, and that we should be wanting in our duty if we refused the offer of General Gordon's services, rejected the demands of Sir E. Baring and the Egyptian government, and allowed lives to be sacrificed through the known incapacity of the principal Egyptian officials of the Soudan. This was the primary object of the mission which General Gordon accepted. It is perfectly true that he thought it might be in his power to do something more—to secure the establishment of a government in the Soudan to replace the Egyptian government. The evacuation, even if it should lead to the establishment in Khartûm and other places of the Mahdi or the heads of the insurrection, was the primary object which General Gordon went out to accomplish, and which he willingly accepted.

I am not going to imitate the conduct pursued by some honourable gentlemen opposite, in condemning without further information, or in casting blame or doubt on General Gordon when his proceedings appeared to be somewhat inconsistent with the objects for which he left this country. We know what was the treatment he received from honourable gentlemen opposite. No sooner was there a whisper of a proclamation which appeared

to countenance some extension of the slave-trade than the most indignant protests were made from the other side of the house, and we were asked if we were going to support an envoy who proposed to re-establish the slave-trade. No sooner had the rumour of General Gordon's application to have Zebehr sent to him reached this country than similar opposition was made and there were similar notices of resistance. But although none of us are entitled to throw any doubt whatever on the measures which General Gordon thought fit to adopt, I am bound to say that there are some portions of his policy which, as at present advised, are not clear to us; and it is not clear to us that he has not departed in some respects from his original purpose. It is possible that General Gordon overrated at first to some extent the probabilities as to the success of his mission; he might have over-estimated his own strength in dealing with the objects to be achieved, not merely the removal of the garrisons, but the reconstitution of the government of the Soudan, and what he thought a necessary preliminary to the reconstitution of settled government in the Soudan, the crushing of the power of the Mahdi. It may be that he found that the execution of his original intentions, as I have described them, was perfectly impossible. But on the evidence before us we have had proof, to some extent, that the situation of the garrisons was not inaccurately estimated by General Gordon."

Lord Hartington went on to say that in the case of Tokar the garrison, though it surrendered, was not massacred, and that it did not appear that that garrison would not have been allowed to depart even without the intervention of a British force. He also came to the conclusion that there had been no massacre at Shendy, and that the emigration of the officials and the army from Berber had been accomplished without loss of life. Up to the time at which he was speaking he contended there was nothing to show that Gordon was wrong in believing that probably there would be no difficulty put in the way by the inhabitants of the country, of the Egyptian garrisons and people leaving the places which they then occupied. Subsequent information contained in later telegrams and despatches showed, as we have seen, either that Gordon's

estimate had been inconclusive, or that the condition of affairs in the Soudan had changed.

Dealing with the first declaration of the proposed resolution, that the course pursued by the government had not tended to support the success of General Gordon's mission, Lord Hartington pointed out that the mover omitted to state whether there was any possible course which, in the opinion of his colleagues, would have been more successful; but the speeches made in support of the motion went a great deal further—so far as to say that the course taken by the government tended not to promote but to defeat the success of General Gordon's mission. In examining these allegations Lord Hartington first referred to the representation that the military operations at Suakim exasperated the Mahdi and his followers. He contended that not only was there no syllable of proof of this having been the case, but that the telegrams were in an entirely opposite direction to such a conclusion, as when, on the 29th of February, Gordon, speaking of a rising of tribes near Kassala, telegraphed, "Hadendowa have raised tribes near Kassala, attacked Kassala, but were repulsed; road still closed. As Baker's defeat has caused this you ought to do something to draw these Hadendowa down to Suakim." On the 3d of March another telegram had said, "I have no doubt that Graham's victory will withdraw the enemy from the vicinity;" and on the 8th, "Kassala will hold out without difficulty after Graham's victory."

The proposal to send Zebehr was a question that did not need to be discussed at length, because it was not seriously maintained by the opposition that he should have been sent. The most that had been said was, that this being refused the government ought to have proposed something else, but after all the experience that had been acquired, the opposition had not suggested what ought to have been done. Mr. Forster, however, had said, "Gordon ought to have been asked to remain in Khartûm himself, and to establish a settled government there and in the Soudan." To this Lord Hartington replied by asking what knowledge his right honourable friend possessed that it was in the power of General Gordon to do so; and what help it was possible, in February and March, to give

to Gordon; what assistance it would have been possible to render him in the task of establishing a settled government in Khartûm and in the provinces?

In reference to the contention that after Graham's success troops should have been despatched to Suakim to open the road and occupy Berber, Lord Hartington repeated what he had said previously, that the sending of troops to Berber had never been suggested by Gordon himself as an isolated operation, or except in connection with the proposal which he made that Zebehr should be sent out to succeed him. In accordance with the recommendations of General Gordon, Sir E. Baring, and the military authorities, advantage was taken of the victories gained to push on a reconnaissance in force in the direction of the road to Berber, and if possible to establish communications with that town; and the result was, that although the season had not reached the greatest heat, the troops suffered fearfully, so that on one day's march almost half the small force employed had to fall out from the effect of the heat. That operation, accompanied as it was by great suffering to the troops, while it was not seriously resisted, though it found that a certain small force was still collected under Osman Digma, proved conclusively that any military expedition on a considerable scale in the direction of Berber was absolutely impossible. It might have been possible at great risk and the certainty of great suffering to send a small force of cavalry; but that force, if sent at all, must have been sent unsupported by artillery or infantry. In the attempt that had been made the most difficult part of the route had not been experienced. The difficulties of the first 150 miles, though they might have been overcome, were immense, but they were as nothing compared with the difficulties of the route over the last 100 miles.

"I remember," said Lord Hartington, "the questions that used to be addressed to me two or three years ago when General Roberts undertook his march from Cabul to Candahar with a considerable and perfectly-equipped force. I then received most urgent expostulations and admonitions from gentlemen opposite as to the inexpediency and recklessness of cutting off such a force

from its base and sending it to march in an enemy's country without provision for perfect communications. I am, therefore, surprised at the extreme facility with which honourable members opposite adopt the proposal that it would have been wise to send a small force of cavalry across 200 miles of desert—100 of which are without water—without any provision for communicating with its base, and with the absolute certainty that whatever might befall it, no reinforcements could reach it for months. And what was the object to be accomplished in return for this extraordinary risk. No one could suppose that a small force of 200 or 300 cavalry would have been sufficient to undertake any considerable operation for the practical assistance of General Gordon. What he relied upon was the moral effect that would be produced by sending any British soldiers at all; and I do not deny that it is possible that if this risk had been run, and if this force had successfully arrived at Berber, a moral effect might have been produced; but that is entirely a matter of supposition, and is utterly incapable of proof."

Lord Hartington was by no means impressed with the probable moral effect of the operation of British soldiers in the Soudan. He thought that it had been over-estimated, and that the experience at Suakim had not been in favour of it, since it did not save the garrison of Tokar, nor prevent the followers of Osman Digma from showing fight in a manner which proved that the fanatic savages were at all events not impressed with fear. He did not think that an expedition should be made to "smash the Mahdi," as General Gordon expressed it; and to form such an expedition for the purpose of giving a satisfactory government to the inhabitants of the Soudan was a task which was beyond the responsibility that the British government ought to undertake. Such an expedition should not be made, even to enable the garrisons of the Soudan to march out with the honours of war. The government ought to be satisfied, as far as it was possible to satisfy themselves, that such an expedition was necessary to secure the safety of General Gordon, and of those for whose safety he had made himself responsible. It was necessary that they should be satisfied

that the original view as to the possibility of evacuation had become impossible of execution. General Gordon would not be called upon by the government to do anything derogatory to his honour or his character. Those who had trusted themselves in his service, those who had fought for him, those who had increased the perils in which they stood before—by having entered his service, he was no doubt responsible for and could not desert; but there was no reason to believe that if escape were possible for him it was not also possible for them. The fact that he had risked his life in a mission of mercy—a pacific mission—did not make him responsible for the performance of impossibilities. It did not make him responsible, or the government more responsible than they were before his mission was undertaken, for the safe withdrawal of the garrisons from the Soudan—garrisons which were not placed there in the service of England, or by the orders of England. There was nothing to show that the danger in which those garrisons had always stood after the victory over General Hicks, had been increased by any orders given by General Gordon or any measures taken by him. For the relief of those garrisons General Gordon was not bound in honour; but he was bound in honour not to desert those who had co-operated with him, and taken service under him. The government were bound to satisfy themselves of the practicability as well as of the necessity for any steps they might decide upon or announce for the rescue or relief of General Gordon; they were bound to satisfy themselves by inquiry, the collection of information, and by consultation with the best authorities, before committing this country to an undertaking which must be difficult, and might be one of enormous difficulty. They must consider the scale of the preparations which would have to be made, the route which it would be possible to take, and the time of year when it would be possible for operations to commence.

The government were thinking, and had long been thinking, what measures they could take for the relief of General Gordon; but it was asked whether this or any other government would be justified in risking the health and safety of an expedition by sending it out before the month of September or October? By

the river route the distance from Cairo to Khartûm was 1600 miles, interrupted by cataracts, and many parts of the river were very little known, and had never been traversed by large bodies of men, or used for the carriage of large quantities of forces. Was an expedition on a large scale in the very height of summer feasible or justifiable? He did not say that measures of the kind indicated were impossible, but he did say they were of such a magnitude that they were not to be attempted, and certainly not to be announced, until their practicability had been clearly demonstrated, and until the measures which it would be necessary to take were clearly foreseen. If such necessity should be proved, and if such practicability should be demonstrated, then he believed that this country would be prepared to grudge no sacrifice to save the life and honour of General Gordon. At the same time it would be prepared, if possible, to give relief to those garrisons for the safety of which, as he had said, the government admitted and accepted no responsibility; but whose sufferings, unmerited, undeserved, and cruel, not by reason of any claims they possessed upon us, in the name of mercy and humanity were fully and completely appreciated.

It may well be understood from these declarations that the government had already determined to organize an expedition for the rescue of Gordon and his companions, and this was actually the case. It was proposed to send out an expeditionary force in the following October, when a journey by the Nile might be practicable, and orders were soon sent to the British military authorities at Cairo to commence arrangements by the purchase of some thousands of camels; while in England active preparations were soon made for the accumulation and despatch of various kinds of stores and equipments for a considerable force.

These preparations and the remarkable story of the expeditions of the Nile and the desert columns will commence a fresh page. We cannot, however, close the present chapter without referring to the additional responsibility cast upon the government by the necessity for dealing with the still vexed question of Egyptian finance.

The year 1883 had opened with a floating debt of £860,000, and cash in hand £396,000, but for that year the expenditure was £5,972,000, or £1,635,000 in excess; the cost of the army of occupation being estimated at £425,000, the expense for the Soudan expedition at £500,000, the awards and expenses of the indemnity commission for sums below £200 each £312,000, and the deficiencies on Domains and Daira revenue £260,000; so that loans effected to meet the further deficit amounted to £2,300,000, against a cash balance of £200,000.

In 1884 the new administration of Lower Egypt created at the beginning of the year made much progress, and many useful reforms were instituted under the direction of English officials, though Mr. Clifford Lloyd could not work harmoniously with Nubar Pasha, who procured his dismissal from office. Mr. Lloyd then returned to England and published an account of the condition of Egyptian prisons and the gross injustices of which they were made the scenes by persons in power, who incarcerated victims for the purpose of extorting money or for the gratification of private vengeance. It may be understood, however, that these disclosures chiefly referred to the period, already mentioned in these pages, during the investigation by English officers, who, however, had no permanent authority sufficient to prevent the recurrence of some of the evils complained of when once the inquiry demanded at the time of the trial of the prisoners concerned in Arabi's rebellion had been made, and those prisoners had been sentenced or acquitted.

In the beginning of March (1884) the indemnity commission appointed to investigate claims for property destroyed in the burning of Alexandria closed its sittings, the awards amounting in all to above four millions and a quarter. The cost of the endeavour to hold the Soudan and to suppress the insurrection was estimated at about a million and a half, and the current administrative charges had considerably exceeded the available revenue, while a large increase had been necessary for works of irrigation. To sum up the situation, the Egyptian government had to provide about £8,000,000, the accumulated deficits and

liabilities of 1881, 1882, and 1883, including the cost of necessary works of irrigation; and the estimates of 1884 showed a further deficit of above £500,000. The assigned revenues, over which the government had no control, showed a probable surplus in 1884 of £400,000.

To raise the sum of £8,000,000 would require an amendment of the law of liquidation with the consent of the great powers and of the sultan. A careful and elaborate report was therefore ordered to be drawn up by Sir Evelyn Baring, Sir R. E. Welby, Sir C. Rivers Wilson, and Sir J. Carmichael, and this financial statement was sent to the great powers on the 22d of April, with a circular despatch, inviting them to a conference in London for the purpose of arranging the financial system of Egypt, and providing for present and future demands. The intimation sent to France elicited a prompt and friendly reply from the French government, which had been officially silent on Egyptian affairs since the abolition of the dual control. It now frankly said that the abolition of that control would not be further contested, and invited the British government to explain its plans for the pacification and future government of Egypt. There is no need to follow the somewhat tedious proceedings of the conference which met, but could come to no complete conclusion, and separated without having definitely effected any improvement or adopted any scheme. The actual result was that the British government had to grapple with the situation, since it became a part of the duty that had devolved on them because of the occupation of the Nile by British troops, before the close of the discussions. France was unable or unwilling to agree to the financial proposals made by England, and there seemed to be little or no probability of the representatives of the powers coming to an understanding, and therefore the conference separated; the British government regained its liberty of action, and the ministry resolved to send Lord Northbrook to Egypt as High Commissioner to inquire into the financial condition of the country, and form a scheme drawn up as an official report to the government. At the same time (on the 5th of August) a vote of credit for £300,000 was obtained by the

ministry from parliament for the purpose of making "preparations" as distinct from "operations" for the possible despatch of an expedition to Khartûm; and while Lord Northbrook went to investigate the financial condition of the country, Lord Wolseley accompanied him to examine and report on the military situation. When they reached Alexandria the reception accorded to Lord Northbrook and Lord Wolseley was enthusiastic, but it was also marked by a certain degree of ceremonial, the war-ships being drawn up in two lines on either side of the harbour to salute.

On the journey from Alexandria to Cairo General Lord Wolseley and Generals Stephenson and Dormer travelled together in a first-class carriage; Lord Northbrook and his secretary having a special saloon, in which were also Sir Evelyn Baring, Nubar Pasha, and General Egerton.

General Earle, as senior officer, introduced the various officers and native officials to Lord Northbrook, who shook hands cordially with all. On the platform were drawn up a guard of honour, consisting of fifty of the Black Watch, with their band, and an escort of the 19th Hussars, who accompanied Lord Northbrook and Sir Evelyn Baring to their residence. Lord Wolseley drove direct to the Kasr en Nuzha Palace.

There was an immense crowd at the station, and all the ministers and members of the headquarters staff were present in full uniform. General Lord Wolseley almost immediately afterwards announced that he should remain at Cairo for some time to look about him; and he took care to make himself acquainted with the details requisite for an expedition to Khartûm, so that by the time that an advance by the Nile had been determined on, and before he set off for Wady Halfa on the 5th of October, every part of the river up to the second cataract was a scene of busy preparation.

CHAPTER VII.

A Stir at Assouan. Reinforcements. Explorations. Active Preparations in England. Proposed Expedition to Rescue Gordon. By Rail or River? The Nile Route. Boats and Cataracts. Wady Halfa. Debbeh. Wolseley reaches Korti. The Camp. Plan of Campaign. Sir Herbert Stewart. Sir Charles Wilson and the Desert Column. General Earle and the Nile Column. The Story of Massacre of Stewart and Power. Across the Desert to Metammeh. Gakdul Wells. Battle of Abu-Klea. Battle of Gubat. On the Look-out for Khartûm.

It had become evident before the end of May, 1884, that some expedition for the relief of General Gordon had been decided on, and everybody was inquiring to what extent the preparations which were being made might be interpreted to mean the despatch of British forces towards Khartûm. After the experiences with Egyptian troops it was thought exceedingly unlikely that they alone would be sent, and it was believed that their sole employment, even for the protection of the frontier, would be a mistake should the Mahdi attempt to move by Dongola and towards Cairo. Colonel Fred. Burnaby wrote to the *Standard* on the 23d of May on this subject, saying:—"Many Cairo-inspired paragraphs have recently appeared calling attention to the efficiency of the Egyptian army. I am well aware that General Wood's English officers, who are very gallant and able men, are longing to take part in a military movement in the Soudan. By all means let them be employed, but for Heaven's sake do not imperil a Gordon Relief Expedition by making use of their Egyptian soldiers—men who look well on parade, have handsome uniforms, and cost the unfortunate fellahs two hundred thousand pounds per annum—men who can do everything but the one thing essential, viz. fight. They were not sent to the Soudan to relieve Tokar and Sinkat for reasons which Sir E. Wood may perhaps explain. The gendarmerie, it is to be presumed, was considered in January last a better force than the Egyptian army. We all know what became of Baker's troops. Let us not endanger a British expedition to Khartûm by employing Egyptians in order to gratify the vanity of English officials at Cairo.'

On the 14th of May Sir Samuel Baker, in a long letter to the *Times*, had reminded the public that he had said the retreat from Khartûm could not be effected, that it was the key or strategical point upon which the safety of Lower Egypt must depend, and its evacuation was a political blunder and a practical impossibility. He advocated an immediate change of front, the modification of the declaration of abandonment and a proclamation of a geographical definition of the territory of Egypt: the country to be divided into two provinces—Upper and Lower Egypt. “The frontier of Lower Egypt to extend south as far as Assouan; that of Upper Egypt to latitude 13 degrees, and to embrace the Sennâr district between the White and Blue Niles. The White Nile would form the well-defined western boundary. The eastern boundary would be the Atbara River from Gellabat upon the Abyssinian frontier to the Red Sea. Thus, although the Soudan should be abandoned, and the geographical term should be eradicated from the territory of Egypt, the frontiers of Upper Egypt should be so absolutely defined as to remain without doubt or question. Khartûm should be the capital of Upper Egypt, and Kassala, Gellabat, Sennâr, Berber, and Dongola would represent the chief centres and principal towns of the newly constituted provinces. A viceroy, nominated by the khedive, should represent the government, assisted by a council.”

He believed that if this proclamation were made immediately, and that 3000 Indian troops were landed at once at Suakîm with reserves at Bombay, the black troops reorganized in Lower Egypt and marched to Berber, and preparations were made for an expedition of 10,000 men directly the rise of the Nile permitted navigation from Cairo to Dongola and south to Berber and Khartûm, many of the tribes would return to their allegiance and the relief of Khartûm and the suppression of the Mahdi's rebellion might be effected. This opinion is worth attention even now, but events at that time had moved more quickly than even Sir S. Baker knew; and Berber was about to fall.

It was declared on all hands that if nothing was to be done beyond increasing the Egyptian troops at Wady Halfa, sending

a contingent up the river, and ordering a "patrol" of the Nile, very little effect would be produced; but though Colonel Trotter, who took the command there, turned out the Bashi-Bazouks from the fortress, took possession of all arms and ammunition, and strengthened and provisioned the strongest building at the station, these movements were rather against the disaffected soldiers there and at Dongola, than for the purpose of resisting any threatened force of the Mahdi's followers. It had been said, too, in a former telegram to the foreign office from Gordon himself that the rebels did not invade their neighbours' soil, but spread the rebellion by stirring up each tribe to revolt in its own territory. On the other hand there were certain reports of an intention on the part of the Mahdi to march along the White Nile, and the Mudir of Dongola was already pretty busy in holding his own. For some time he was suspected of playing a double game, and doubts were all along entertained of his professed loyalty, but he was compelled to act in such a way so as to deceive the Mahdi, until he was strong enough to declare himself, and having been supplied with arms and ammunition, fought the Shaggiyeh rebels and defeated them in several engagements. He divided his forces, some going along the bank and the others with him by boats and a steamer on the river. It may very well be understood that as his men were armed with Remington rifles and had artillery, the rebellious Arabs on the banks had not much chance, and that at Debbah, Amboukol, and Merauwee, they were defeated and a considerable number killed, though the mudir only had about 1200 men altogether, and was anxiously waiting for reinforcements from Wady Halfa. The mudir also appears to have claimed to be a holy personage, and some of his followers were ready to give him credit for miraculous powers, as they represented that he stood between the two hostile forces with a stick only in his hand encouraging his men, and telling them not to be afraid. This looked as though he had heard something about General Gordon's disregard of danger and desired to emulate it; but the report went further, and represented him as catching the bullets of the rebels and hurling them back with remarkable effect. The mudir had received an embassy and

letter from the Mahdi, saying that he would appoint him as his mudir, but that all the people must become Moslems, abstain from tobacco, and wear the uniform of the Mahdi, which consisted of a dress resembling an assemblage of parti-coloured rags sewn together. The mudir's own account was that having no news whether any aid was coming to him from the government at Cairo or from the British officers, he telegraphed for assistance, at the same time pretending to accept the terms offered by the Mahdi's envoys, to satisfy whom he had the doors of the Coptic church closed, and sending for the Christians told them of the Mahdi's orders. In the evening he sent for two or three Europeans, among them (as was alleged) a newspaper correspondent, and privately telling them of the dangerous position in which he was placed, advised them for their own safety to go through the form of becoming Mahometans, at the same time telling them, "Of course you can keep your own religion in your hearts." They accepted his advice, and the next morning, being taken before the Deputy-Governor and the Cadi, and declaring that they were prepared to become Mussulmans, repeated three times the phrase, "God is God and Mahomet is the prophet of God," with three or four similar phrases, when they were dismissed and were not afterwards molested. The mudir added to this story that all the Copts had followed this example. Whether this was true or not, or whether the mudir ever told it or not, he certainly showed some loyalty to us in the subsequent campaign, and when the expedition was being completed in the autumn, collected a number of boats, 500 camels, and 1200 or 1500 men to assist the government steamers up the cataracts.

But in May nobody knew what would be done. There was a good deal of exploration. Captain Marriott, afterwards in command of the Egyptian camel corps, went up the river, Major Kitchener to Korosko, Colonel Stuart Wortley to Assiout, and thence through the desert to El Khorgeh, to Makio, and to Sheb, opposite Korosko, where it was said he was to form a permanent outpost of Bedouins, with an advanced post at Selimah. It was soon known that these were only preliminaries, and that active operations were likely to follow.

The army of occupation in Egypt consisted of one cavalry regiment (19th Hussars), eight and a half battalions of the line, five batteries of the royal artillery, two companies of the royal engineers, one company of the ordnance store corps, and detachments of the commissariat and transport and army hospital corps. There were then only about 7000 men under General Stephenson ready for active service, some of the regiments being rather weak owing to invalids, loss of time-expired men, &c. Drafts were, however, ordered for the purpose of reinforcing these corps up to regulation strength.

Colonel Duncan, who commanded the troops in Upper Egypt and stationed at Assouan, had his force increased, so that they consisted of a regiment of cavalry, two camel batteries, ten guns of position, five battalions of infantry, a camel corps, and some mounted infantry, the whole belonging to the army of Sir Evelyn Wood, who was to visit Assouan, while on the completion of the defensive works there, Colonel Duncan was to move forward to take personal command of the advanced posts at Korosko and Wady Halfa. About 1500 friendly Arabs, under Major Kitchener and Major Russell acted as outposts to this force at Korosko, with desert parties towards Abu Hamed and the Red Sea.

On the 23d of May it was said here that preparations were being made at Woolwich for sending a pontoon equipment to Egypt for the service of the expedition to Khartûm, and the royal engineers were required to furnish a troop of officers and men well skilled in the construction of bridges, to take charge of the pontoon train in the journey up the Nile. Several improvements in the construction and conveyance of pontoons had been effected at the royal arsenal, and all parts of the carriage upon which they were packed, as well as the floats themselves, were contrived so as to be of use in crossing the rivers and streams which might intercept the march of an army. At the commissariat storehouse extra labour had been engaged, and the soldier-workmen were actively employed in packing provisions of all kinds in boxes and barrels of not more than 200 lbs. weight each, according to the invariable

rule of the department for mule carriage. Large stores of hay, mostly pressed, were at the dockyard.

Another significant provision was the adaptation of two of Messrs. Cook & Sons' steamers on the Nile to the purpose of armed cruisers under the command of Captain Bedford, each steamer with a crew of fifteen to twenty men, and furnished with a Gardner gun raised on a platform at a considerable height above the water line. During his progress up the river Captain Bedford stopped at several places between Cairo and Assouan and was received with a great show of cordiality by the natives. Three other steamers were afterwards equipped and also placed under his command, to cruise between the cataracts; and this demonstration of vigilance probably had a good effect in more than one direction, for there were rumours of disaffection and of the existence of secret societies in Cairo itself; and this was said to explain a demonstration made on the morning of the 5th of June by the whole of the British force in the city; the troops rapidly occupying the principal thoroughfares, bazaars, and bridges, all the sentries being doubled, and parties being told off to examine the vaults of the citadel, in consequence (it was said) of a report that an attempt was to be made to blow up the place.

Among other dangers which threatened was that of the mutiny of a Turkish battalion which had been stationed at Cairo and was ordered to go to Assouan. Fortunately it was under the command of English officers, and in endeavouring to intimidate their colonel—Colonel Grant—they found that they had not counted the cost of threatening, as they might successfully have threatened an Egyptian commander. They were turbulent and unruly ruffians while in barracks, and when ordered to leave refused to allow the black troops to take over the quarters which they were about to vacate, until they received an advance of three months' pay at £4 a month, their engagement being only for 30s. This was refused by the government, but finally the officers promised one month's pay on their arrival at Assiout. Out of 200 paraded at Cairo only 80 arrived at Assiout. On the way they had fired ball-cartridges out of the train, and two of them jumped out and

were killed. On arriving at Assiout a number of the men under ringleaders refused to embark for Assouan, and threatened to seize the ammunition unless they received three months' pay in advance. The officers, however, with the aid of the native police transferred the ammunition boxes from the train to the station. Thirty of the men made off and reached the left bank of the river, to which Colonel Grant crossed accompanied by five native policemen, and found the deserters in the house of a village sheikh which he entered. The Turks made a rush for their arms, but he used his revolver and wounded two of them. The others, meanwhile, had seized their rifles and run out to the open space, where they formed in skirmishing order and began to fire at their colonel, who, however, returned their fire with such coolness that they were cowed, and ultimately laid down their arms and were conveyed to prison. The remaining men of the battalion mutinied the same evening, refusing to go to Assouan; but twenty-five men of the Cornwall regiment, who had arrived at Assiout, made short work of disarming the whole battalion, and ten of the ringleaders were sent off to Cairo under an Egyptian guard.

This incident was not calculated to impress our officers with the advantage of employing Turkish troops, who apparently had as much objection to probable service in the Soudan as the Egyptians themselves.

There was no time to waste over mutinous troops, for active preparations were made for the defence of the Egyptian frontier and the extension of the outposts and stations preliminary to that advance towards Khartûm which was now considered certain, though neither the complete organization of the expedition that was to be sent, nor the route which it was to take, seemed to have been decided.

There were, in fact, four alternative routes by which to reach Khartûm, viz. by way of Kassala, by Suakim and Berber, the Nile from Wady Halfa, or the Korosko desert. The choice of the first, apparently depended upon the result of the negotiations which Admiral Hewett endeavoured to accomplish with King John of Abyssinia, and at one time it seemed probable that the savage

potentate would give his assistance in clearing the route or holding it against the insurgent Arabs till the evacuation of Khartûm was completed and the refugees were able to enter Abyssinia or to get to Massowa; but King John remained much the same sort of personage as Gordon had found him, and could not be trusted to carry out his promises, besides which he would promise little or nothing except on the guarantee that Massowa should be handed over to him to become the port of Abyssinia. Even this might have been accomplished if there had been more time, but it would have had a very doubtful result, since the dishonesty, cruelty, and treachery of the king and his chief officers were proverbial. It was, in fact, suspected that the taint of insanity could alone account for some of his eccentric ferocities.

At any rate, no project for taking the Kassala route was concluded, and very soon it became obvious that the government was pushing forward preparations for a regular advance from Suakim, and it was with surprise, not unnixed with satisfaction, that we began to understand that preparations were being made to "smash the Mahdi" with the aid of the latest resources of civilization.

A railway was to be constructed from Suakim to Berber, and the camel would give place to the locomotive, which would be continuously at work conveying troops, arms, stores, ammunition, and water across that vast expanse of desert. The railway, which a good many people had said years before should have joined the Red Sea port with the great *entrepot* of the merchandise of Egypt, the Soudan, and the Equatorial Provinces, was now to be constructed, and though there were those who represented that during the progress of the work every yard of it would have to be watched and defended night and day, not only against the surrounding hostile tribes, but against the silting and sinking of the sand, the remarkable celerity with which the scheme was devised and the materials provided in England and transported to Suakim was regarded as a cause for considerable satisfaction.

Early in June the first freight of plant for the proposed military line consisted of seven or eight hundred tons of railway iron, and the same vessel that carried it took from Woolwich the necessary

materials for erecting huts and machinery. This first instalment would, it was thought, be sufficient for about 25 miles of railway, and it was reported that the sidings, level-crossings, and other fittings kept in store, would be sufficient for the whole line, and the small locomotives in use at the royal arsenal were pronounced most suitable for the work, chiefly on account of their easy transport and their small consumption of fuel, about 150 lbs. of coal being ample for a day's work. The railway was to be laid by native labourers, under the direction of a company of royal engineers from Alexandria and others sent from England, and a light overhead telegraph was to be erected parallel with the line for its whole length. In the composition of the force which was to form the expedition it had been determined that mounted infantry should take an important place, and a thousand saddles of a special pattern to fit the small Arab horses of the country were demanded from the harness-makers at Woolwich at the request of Captain Barrow. Returns were required of the commissariat department showing the provisions of all kinds in store, and it was believed that there was a sufficient reserve for all requirements, even with the proposed expedition in view.

The next consignment was a number of passenger trucks, each to carry twelve soldiers and a brakesman on a platform in rear. They were lightly built, with tilt covers, and open at the sides, but with stout blinds of oiled canvas on rollers, for use if necessary. Although the under carriage was fitted to the narrow gauge of 18 inches, the body of the vehicle was 6 feet wide, and the seats balanced over the wheels like those of an outside car. The goods trucks were longer, but not as wide as the passenger carriages, and were more numerous. Ordnance and commissariat stores, and a considerable freight of medical necessaries, were also sent at an early date, more than two million pounds of preserved meat and other provisions for the men forming the proposed expedition, being drawn from the reserve stores in Woolwich dockyard, together with a supply of compressed forage for the horses. India-rubber tanks were provided for holding water in the desert.

The rails (in 21-foot lengths), weighing 36 lbs. to the yard, were

to be attached to the iron sleepers by a simple grip; the sleepers, being formed of $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch iron plates bent into an "M section," were 6 inches wide and 3 feet long. This form of line had been amply tested by use at the arsenal and other dockyards for conveying heavy stores and trucks. Carriages 6 feet wide could safely run upon it with 15 or 20 horse-power engines by means of a short under-carriage in frequent joints which enabled a train to turn sharp curves. It was understood that the entire line could be laid in a few weeks, and though no announcement was made by the government the continued despatch of material and stores to Suakim was sufficient evidence that the railway so long talked of was to be constructed, and that an advance to Berber was contemplated for the rescue of Gordon and the relief of Khartûm.

There is no need further to describe the provisions made for constructing this line, for it never was laid. Apparently in order that no time should be lost, the material had been transported on the probability of the Suakim-Berber route being determined on; and when, a few days afterwards, all efforts for concentrating supplies, guns, ammunition, and provisions were directed to Alexandria and Cairo, it was equally obvious that the proposed railway had been abandoned and that the expedition would go by the Nile after all—a conclusion which was manifested by the orders given for providing a large number of whale-boats and other vessels of light draught suitable for the conveyance of troops and provisions beyond the first cataracts. As a matter of fact little more was heard of the Suakim-Berber railway. The idea of making Suakim a base of operations was entirely relinquished, and it was soon understood that the railway plant and materials would be reshipped and utilized either in India or at the Cape.

On the 13th of June intelligence came from Korosko which seemed to settle the matter of the route. According to the testimony of an Arab, who said he had been captured by the rebels in endeavouring to escape from Berber,—Cuzzi, who had escaped with him, had turned Moslem, and had been compelled to profess a belief in the Mahdi and to adopt his uniform of a white loose-sleeved smock, decorated with a fancy border and three coloured

squares in front and three behind. This Arab said that 1500 men of the garrison and 2000 of the male population of the town had been slaughtered. It was also reported that the Mahdi was marching on Dongola with a vast number of followers—85,000 was the number mentioned—and that he hoped to capture the town before the sacred month of Ramadan, which would commence in twelve days.

At any rate there were serious apprehensions that this was the intention of the false prophet, and Major Kitchener was reported to have expressed the opinion that if Dongola should fall Egypt would undoubtedly be invaded, and he should devote every effort to the holding of Dongola, as otherwise the Mahdi could penetrate Egypt without touching Assouan, where, moreover, defence would be difficult. The Mahdi, it was rumoured, had announced his intention of starting on his next pilgrimage from Cairo, and Major Kitchener was reported to have said:

“I find the position much more serious than I imagined when I arrived. If the British troops go to Suakim and Berber they may reach Khartûm about the time when the Mahdi reaches Cairo. They should go by this route.”

At that time the great protection against the rebels was the length of the 10-days' desert journey from Berber, while the defences made by the disposition of the troops were represented by 300 Egyptian soldiers, two English officers, two English sergeants, and one Gatling gun at Wady Halfa, where the force was to be at once augmented by the addition of another company of infantry. At Korosko there were three companies, with three English officers. At Assouan there were 1000 men and six guns, with four English officers. Other troops were rapidly being towed up the river. Between the Nile at Korosko and the Red Sea at Mergashab the frontier line of Upper Egypt was guarded by 1500 Bedouins, recruited by Majors Kitchener and Rundle. These Bedouins were taken from the three great sections of the Ababdeh tribe—the Ashabah, the Fagalla, and the Aboudeein—and had been so placed that each sub-tribe guarded its own territory. Some 140 of the Fagallas were stationed at Abu Benhah, at three hours' distance

from Abu Hamad; 60 were close to the Half-way Well at Murad; 40 were at El Bad; and 200 near Korosko. There were also 200 at Korosko, the headquarters of Majors Kitchener and Rundle, who had with them the three great sheikhs of the tribes in question. The remaining Bedouins occupied posts between the Nile and the sea. On the other bank of the stream 500 Bedouins from the Tunisian tribe of the Gowast were to leave Assiout and to form posts in the oases of Khargeh and Selimah, under Major Stuart-Wortley.

It may be imagined that considerable excitement was caused among the natives at Assiout and other places by the arrival of the British troops. When the Royal Sussex regiment, for instance, took possession of their camp at Assouan on the 10th of July, and the soldiers marched in single file through the narrow bazaar, the people were amazed, and when the order was given to fix bayonets and trail arms, took to their heels and ran right and left in genuine alarm; but their fears soon subsided, and when the drums began to beat and the tremendous reverberation dislodged a number of dusty old jars, stuffed alligators, and other trash which had been stowed away in some of the top shelves of the shops and brought them toppling down, the applause and laughter became general. The natives were soon to become more familiar with British troops, for it was necessary to keep a watchful eye on Dongola, and therefore to strengthen the force at Wady Halfa. Before the middle of August there was a general movement of regiments. Troops going from Simla to England on ordinary reliefs were ordered to Egypt, while others, including battalions of the Royal Irish and the East Surrey, were ordered to embark at Bombay for the Egyptian service. Several of the Turkish mutineers of Assiout were tried and sentenced to penal servitude and two of them to be shot, but the remnant of the battalion, 70 strong, commanded by their redoubtable colonel, went to Assouan by the postal steamer on the 13th of August. The Egyptian camel corps (150 men and 75 camels), under Major Marriott, embarked for the same place, and the railway was in active operation, the management of the transport service having

been confided to the agent of Messrs. Cook, the famous organizers of the "tourist" system, who, however, found that the sidings and the means for shunting and unloading the trains were exceedingly defective, and in view of a large movement of troops and military stores would be altogether inadequate.

By that time there was no longer any doubt as to the intentions of the government to send an expedition. Mere "observations" had already taken the form of "operations." On the 14th of August Captain Boordman had taken command of the flotilla of five war steamers on the Nile in place of Captain Bedford. The 56th Regiment, numbering 670 men, had arrived at Assouan at daybreak, to be enthusiastically received, and it was understood at Cairo that Sir Redvers Buller was about to leave England for Egypt to act as chief of the staff to Major-General Earle, who afterwards took command of the forces proceeding by the Nile, and known as "the Nile column." At that date, August 14th, however, it was understood that General Stephenson had been appointed to the direction of the expedition for the relief of Gordon.

The troops under orders for Wady Halfa were:—The Royal Sussex and the Essex Regiments, the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, and the South Staffordshire Regiment, a squadron of the 19th Hussars, and the Mounted Infantry, making a force of about 3000 men. Drs. Hedley, Maconachie, and Irvine being the medical staff, and chaplains Brindle and O'Neill attached. Commander Hammill, of the *Monarch*, was also attached to the expeditionary force to superintend the passing of the Nile steamers over the cataracts, with the general naval charge and superintendence over all the boats and steamers above Wady Halfa.

A gun-boat commanded by Lieutenant Reeve, R.N., was at Assouan on the 16th, and quantities of tackle for hauling steamers over the cataracts were being hurried thither. Six naval officers and 80 sailors were there with Commander Hammill, but the passage of the steamer *Nile* over the first cataract was left to the Arabs, and was nearly wrecked because of the hawser which was let go from the bank, being entangled with the paddle-wheels

while the current was running six miles an hour and the engines were going at speed. The entangled hawser broke the crank, which disabled the engines, and round swung the steamer's head in the current, upon which the Arabs let go the remaining hawser, and the steamer was about to be whirled down the cataracts unchecked by the anchor which was let go, but to which the Arabs had omitted to make fast the hawser. As the hawser of the second anchor snapped the situation looked desperate, and the Arabs, having done their worst, prepared to swim ashore; but Captain Bedford and Mr. Reid, who were on board, discovered some coils of telegraph wire, and directed the sailors to use these as anchors, or rather as grapnels, by which they were able to take hold of the rocks and eventually to bring the steamer up. The second steamer, *Benousief*, crossed in safety some days later, but on that occasion the sailors were standing by, ready each to lend a hand.

On the 26th Sir Redvers Buller left England for Egypt with his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Lord F. Fitzgerald, King's Royal Rifle Corps, and Lieutenant-Colonel Alleyne of the Royal Artillery, who was appointed to special duty to superintend the fitting up of the boats which were being rapidly built for the passage of the Nile. Lieutenant-Colonel More, who had been serving as deputy-adjutant quartermaster-general at headquarters, had already gone forward to take the duty of organizing the transport. On the following day (August 17th) several detachments left Aldershot for Portsmouth, where they were to embark on the troop freight-ship *Goorkha* for Alexandria. They were—Captain A. S. Stephenson, one serjeant, two corporals, and ninety-eight privates of the 1st Royal Highlanders; ten officers, ten serjeants, four buglers, and two hundred rank and file of the mounted infantry, with Lance-Serjeant Sheehan, 7th Hussars, as instructor in riding; one warrant officer, and thirty non-commissioned officers and men of the Commissariat and Transport Corps; Quarter-master H. Copping and J. Mullins, with ninety-six non-commissioned officers and men of the army hospital corps. Instructions were issued for every man to be prepared to enter the train with his kit-bag

in his hand, so as to be ready for embarkation on arrival of the special train at Portsmouth.

The expedition was being pushed rapidly on, for it was desirable that the men should arrive and arrangements should be well forward during the cool season. In two or three days, on the arrival of the Princess Charlotte of Wales Berkshire regiments at Alexandria, eleven infantry regiments were at the disposal of General Stephenson in addition to the Royal Irish and East Surrey ordered from India. With the other corps and detachments this made a total of about 11,000 British troops in Egypt. On the 25th the *Orontes* with Major-General Earle and the 831 officers and men of the Berkshire regiment arrived at Malta from Gibraltar, and sailed on the following day for Alexandria; and on the 23d the hired transport *Goorkha* left the Royal Albert Docks, having on board nine officers and one hundred and forty-four men belonging to the Commissariat and Transport Corps. She proceeded to Portsmouth, where she embarked about five hundred and fifty troops.

It need hardly be said that numerous applications were made to the war office by officers who desired to go to Egypt on active service, and many of these officers were willing to serve under General Wood in the Egyptian army, but the vacancies there were comparatively few.

Of the troops under the command of Lieut.-general Sir Archibald Alison, a detachment of 101 non-commissioned officers and men of the 1st Royal Highlanders under the command of Captain A. S. Stevenson, were to go out to reinforce their comrades of "the Black Watch," and the 220 officers and men specially trained as mounted infantry were selected from various regiments and were to be reinforced strongly by six officers and 161 men. The detachment of the transport and commissariat corps included one warrant officer and 30 non-commissioned officers and men, while it was understood that 200 men of the royal engineers would proceed to Egypt in about a week following. The army hospital corps consisted of 98 men of all ranks, who were specially selected after medical examination; but this department was afterwards

largely increased, the bearer company consisting of eight medical officers, two quarter-masters, and 213 army hospital men, most of whom embarked, with the ordnance, commissariat, and transport corps, in the *Anglian*, which took from the arsenal at Woolwich sixteen tons of medicines. It is to be noted that the arrangements made for the medical and surgical care of the expedition were ample and the organization was complete, as might have been expected from the knowledge and experience of the principal officers: Administrative Deputy-surgeon O'Nial, C.B. and Surgeon-general Irvine, the principal medical officer, who had left Egypt to go home on leave, and now returned to take medical charge of the expeditionary troops. The number of the hospital corps, including those already in Egypt, was stated to be three hundred, and the staff of efficient regular medical officers was so complete that it was calculated there would be five to every thousand men, the full proportion provided in an Indian campaign. The provision also included a case of medical comforts for each of the four hundred small boats constructed for the Nile journey. The number of these boats was, however, afterwards increased to 800, which had also to be provided with their regular equipments, arms, and provisions. Four lady nurses were also to go with the medical department as nursing sisters from the Herbert Hospital and the Guards Hospital, and these were afterwards on duty at the stationary hospital at Wady Halfa.

It is not professed that the troops mentioned include every draft made for the expeditionary force up to the end of August, but enough has been said to show not only that a considerable number of men, including those from India and the East Indies, had been rapidly despatched to the Nile that they might thence go to Dongola, but that the force was varied in character, including men trained to all kinds of service, and most of them prompt in resource and capable of adapting themselves to almost any circumstances of a campaign.

It is not necessary here to enter upon further details of the regiments from which they were selected; and though by the time they had reached Egypt the general nature of the proposed opera-

tions had probably been decided, it was not till the last days of August that the public generally was aware that Lord Wolseley himself was on the way to take the chief command.

That there was to be an advance by the Nile was, however, obvious enough, for orders had already been given for the construction of some hundreds of small boats resembling whale-boats, by which the troops were to be conveyed; and it was rumoured that 500 Canadian boatmen were to be enlisted, whose experience of the rapids would enable them to navigate these vessels past the Nile cataracts.

The engagement of these Canadian "voyageurs" was said to have been due to Lord Wolseley's experiences on the Red River, and they were promptly enlisted for the special service required of them. As labourers or rowers to assist in navigating the boats, 300 Kroomen from the west coast of Africa were also engaged, and were expected to arrive at about the same time as the Canadians, in the first week in October. The voyageurs were engaged in various parts of Canada, and, under the command of Colonel Denison, embarked on board the *Ocean King* at Quebec, whence they went to Sydney, Cape Breton, for coal. Some of the men got ashore there and delayed the voyage because they could not be found: but they reached Alexandria on the 7th of October after again coaling at Gibraltar. The vessels which these men were to navigate were chiefly the small boats already mentioned; but there were also some hundreds of Nile boatmen engaged for the tug-steamers, dahabeeahs, Nile nuggars, like half a walnut shell in shape, luggage-steamers, launches for officers and special service, and the steam yacht or stern paddle launch for the general and the staff; a vast and diversified flotilla, which was to make the passage of the Nile in detachments, following the two or three steamers and some boats and nuggars which had already got over the second cataract. The command of the whale-boats was, of course, divided according to the detachments, Colonel Alleyne and Major Dorward (in charge of the engineers) taking the direction of two of the divisions, the latter being in command of the five boats appointed to pioneer duty, and these reached Ambugol only



SURGEON GENERAL O'NEAL, C. B.

after a very arduous and difficult journey with much labour and at a slow rate, so that they did not reach Dal till the 13th of November. These boats, known as the whale-boats, had been constructed with considerable rapidity by various boat-builders on the Thames, the Tyne, and the Clyde, and were designed to be conveyed in the transport and store vessels as quickly as they were finished. Some of the steamers and launches were, of course, sent in sections to be put together on arriving on the Nile, but the whale-boats were sent entire, and trials were made not only of their complete suitability for the purpose for which they were intended, but of their capacity for receiving the stores, arms, rations, and various appliances which each boat was to carry besides the men, who were to form a double bank of rowers. The prices of the boats varied from £75 to £90 each, the higher price being demanded at Glasgow at the yards where there would be some difficulty in completing the contract and delivering the boats in London in 27 days. One of the boats, specially built at Portsmouth, was the first to be experimented upon, and will serve to illustrate the general dimensions and arrangements.

Roughly speaking, the boats were to be 32 ft. in length by 7 ft. beam, with a depth of 2 ft. 8 in. each, to carry sails with a 12-ft. hoist, and to be equal to the carriage of a weight of 6500 lb. The experimental boat was 30 ft. long, with a beam of 6 ft. 6 in. and a depth of 2 ft. 6 in., and was built of fir, painted white inside, with twelve oars and two long sails, her weight being about 10 cwt. It was roomy and buoyant, and with provision for awnings and other conveniences, and was fully loaded for the sake of testing its powers. A working party of seamen stowed on board $2\frac{3}{4}$ tons of commissariat stores, including biscuits, preserved meat, vegetables, lime-juice, and ammunition, it being intended to allow 850 rounds of ammunition for each of the twelve men to be carried. The provisions were estimated to last for a hundred days, the period required for going up and down the Nile. The stores were packed in oblong and square boxes, and though some difficulty was experienced in conveniently placing them in the vessel with twelve men also on board, her mean draught was

1 ft. 8 in., or 4 in. under the prescribed limit. The total weight then on board was estimated at over $3\frac{1}{2}$ tons, and the boat abundantly answered all expectations, and was pronounced by the War Office and Admiralty representatives all that could be desired, though it was observed that the process of storage would have to be much less rough and ready if the rowers were to occupy seats for rowing purposes in any but the most cramped positions.

The figures eventually decided on for further orders were, that each boat, which would practically have everything on board for its own crew, and so would represent, as it were, an unit of force, should be equal to the carriage of a weight of 6700 lb., the little vessel itself to weigh 1300 lb. Each boat was supplied with awnings divided into three, with the object of giving shade when the masts were stepped, and carried twelve oars, rowing double banked. There was a crutch at the bow and stern for the purpose of steering from the stern, or, in the event of the boat turning round suddenly in a rapid, permitting of utilizing the bow oar for steering purposes. Each boat was to be constructed like an ordinary clinker-built whale-boat, and to carry six punt poles, iron-tipped.

The quantities of stores for rations, including the Chicago tinned beef, which the soldiers called "bully beef," forming the chief rations of meat, were exceedingly varied, though, as mostly happens in a campaign, many of the articles which were meant as luxuries were not very systematically distributed, and got a good deal mixed before the expedition was very far on its enterprise. According to the original intentions, though it was expected that the troops would be able to make or purchase bread occasionally, tinned meat and biscuits formed the staple provision, and for the sake of variety as well as of health the biscuit was to be of two kinds, "naval" and "cabin," the latter being slightly medicinal. The coxswain of each boat was to be a non-commissioned officer, and to have absolute command of the stores and of the discipline. He was to be provided with a spring-balance for weighing out the rations, and strictly under his charge was a box of medical

comforts, containing three bottles of brandy, three bottles of port, twelve 4-oz. tins of Liebig's extract of meat, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of mustard, 1 lb. of yellow soap, 1 lb. of candles, $\frac{1}{4}$ lb. of salt, four tins of condensed milk, six tins of cocoa and milk, two boxes of safety-matches, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. of compressed tea, a corkscrew, and a cutter for opening the tins in which every article was hermetically sealed. This box was only to be resorted to in case of great necessity, and several of the commodities kept there in reserve were also furnished as articles of daily food, such as salt and tea.

The ruder necessities of life included vegetables, and solid soup, flour, oatmeal, and rice, baking-powder to serve for yeast, vinegar, pepper, and lime-juice, and herbs to flavour the soup. There was also a sufficient supply of common soap, a small quantity of permanganate of potash for purifying purposes; a few cheeses for change of diet, and for those who smoked there was tobacco. To every boat was to be assigned a $12\frac{1}{2}$ -gallon tank of india-rubber protected by a canvas cover, with straps attached for carriage, and each of the ten soldiers and two sailors was to have his metal drinking-cup, his tin plate, deep enough for soup, his knife, fork, and a plated spoon. For the common need of the whole boat party were provided a nest of kettles, fitting one within another, two soup ladles, two butcher's knives and a flesh fork, a baking dish, two zinc pails, three leather buckets, a frying-pan, and a flour dredger; while the more warlike equipment consisted of each man's rifle and ammunition, a pick, two felling axes, a spade and shovel for intrenching, and a tent to shelter the whole dozen men. To these must be added six boat "fenders," or buffers, a boat-hook, oars, two masts and sails, a coil of rope for towing, and a few other indispensables, and, with twelve men thrown in, there was a pretty full boat-load; indeed on the voyage afterwards it was often a squeeze for the rowers, especially if the stowage got a little deranged.

However, on the trial at Woolwich, after an hour's labour, with a good deal of coaxing and contriving, the whole of the burden was comfortably stowed away in the bottom of the boat, and space was still found for a dozen men to sit and navigate the craft,

besides finding room among the packages for their rifles and all the other necessities of their journey. It was found practicable even to take a punt in each boat, as originally ordered. To the conveniences previously provided were also added a charcoal stove for cooking. Three nets were supplied, with line and hooks, to be in charge of the Canadian boatmen. Special stores were provided for the use of the boatmen. Forty-five of the boats were to act as outlying pickets, serving such offices as videttes do in the advance of an army, some leading and feeling the way, while others guard the rear. These 45 boats were to carry red lanterns, the remainder having white lights. The force was to advance in half battalions of 500 soldiers and 100 sailors in 50 boats, each half battalion being as far as practicable one day in advance of the next.

It is remarkably suggestive of the provision made for a modern armed force to note the particulars of the millions of rations and other stores supplied: corned beef (about 500,000 lbs. from Chicago forming the chief supply), preserved fresh meat, bacon, boiled mutton, cheese, navy and cabin biscuit, flour, baking-powder, tea, coffee, sugar, salt, pepper, compressed vegetables, jam (for extra rations), lime-juice, marmalade, erbswurst (preserved soup), cocoa and milk, pickles, vinegar, rice, oatmeal, tobacco, yellow soap, embolic soap, matches, extractum carnis, Tarragona wine, preserved potatoes, brandy, rum in quantities for regular rations, a small quantity of ale and stout and a little champagne in pints, for hospital use, and tins of condensed milk. No intoxicants, except those belonging to medical comforts, were to be carried in the boats, and the tobacco was to be issued by the non-commissioned officers in charge of the stores at a charge of sixteen pence a pound. Corned beef was to be the ration for dinner four days per week; preserved fresh meat, boiled mutton, bacon, and erbswurst being served out on the other three. The pickles were to be given with the corned beef, and the jam and marmalade to relish the daily pound of biscuit or the substituted dumpling on flour days, but only at the rate of 3 oz. per man per week. The rearrangement of the rations was, however, left to the discretion of the commanding officer, who might also, if the supply were

sufficient, have extra bacon for his men instead of the boiled mutton. The tea, sugar, &c., was supplied in quantities sufficient for daily requirements.

It should be mentioned that beside the contingent of blue-jackets a considerable force of marines were taken from Chatham, Portsmouth, and Plymouth for the Nile service, while some were also drafted from Suakim. The detachment from the Egyptian army, which was to serve beyond Wady Halfa, were picked men and mostly negroes.

It may be added, as we have been noting the provisions for victualling the troops, that "the sinews of war"—the sum of £100,000 in gold—was sent to Lord Wolseley almost immediately after his arrival, being shipped in the steamer *Australia*, which left the Albert Docks on the 24th of September along with the *Deccan* to receive the camel corp and other troops at Portsmouth. The money arrived by railway from the Bank of England, and was contained in strong boxes about a foot in length, each containing 4000 sovereigns. The boxes were lifted on board in big baskets, which shot them into the hold like coals, to be picked up carefully, counted and checked, and packed away in the iron safes of the bullion room. This apartment, when the hatches were down, could only be approached from a lazarette entered through the first-class saloon, and was perfectly safe from intrusion. The coin was for the pay of the troops in Egypt and for the hire of native auxiliaries. A portion only, therefore, would be debited to the special war vote. Altogether, a quarter of a million pounds was sent from the bank, £150,000 being taken to India in the *Chusan*, a fine new ship belonging, like the *Australia* and *Deccan*, to the Peninsular and Oriental Company.

The prevailing activity in our dockyards and arsensals had few signs of hurry, for there were ample stores, and though the later consignments and the boats were not completed without a rush against time, very little confusion was observable. It may be imagined, however, that, to say nothing of Alexandria and Cairo, at Assiout and Wady Halfa the scene was bewildering, and only the custom of command and the appointment of officers of

experience and ability to organize the reception and arrange for the transport of the rapidly arriving stores, could have prevented a muddle that might have assumed the aspect of a calamity.

A correspondent who was at Assiout on the 25th of September gave an interesting picture of the scene there as witnessed on the bank, or, as a Southern American would call it, the levée:—"The brown-red Nile, with a thin line of green on the farther shore, was very picturesque in the declining light, and the donkeys on the land, beaten brutally with batons, but comfortable looking withal, and carrying each a sack of wheat or flour; the hideous buffaloes—surely the lean kine of Pharaoh's dream—drawing creaking wooden-wheeled wagons, or arabas as they are called throughout the Mussulman world; the nuggar and dahabeeahs in the water receiving and giving up freight, their pointed felucca-like yards clear against the tender Eastern sky, formed a picture that can never be presented in an illustrated paper, for it needed the colour and the Babel around—the Greek, Italian, and British oaths and execrations, the Arabic gabble, the hee-haws of the donkeys, the lowing of the kine, the growls of the camels, the snorting of the postal steamer on which we go in an hour, the hurry and rush of everything, here, there, and everywhere—to give it form and semblance. But one began to get an idea of the way in which the mighty works of Egyptian antiquity were made when one saw the endless lines of men of every type toiling under loads of now two or three sticks of wood, which a boy of eight in England would think it a 'lark' to carry, or a box of compressed beef, or of tea, or of what you will, weighing from 40 lbs. to 56 lbs., in every case with precisely the same amount of apparent exertion, and in every case with precisely the same aspect of mere beasts of burden. Yet here were not only negroes from the Soudan and the Congo and the Niam Niam country—freed negroes many of them—but Turks of unmistakable type; red men—not the Iroquois we are promised, but the middle race here; simple fellaheen, Arabs of more or less pure type; and here and there a Levantine of a sort—a handsome piratical sort—Byron wrote about, which some of us have seen at Athens and Syra, and among the Archipelago, which is half

Turkish, half Hellene. The movement resembled that which the most casual observer notices at Port Said, or Suez, or Aden, or Singapore when a mail steamer is coaling; but it was far more interesting—the variety of packages, none ever being like its predecessor and yet all preserving some sort of order; the variety of their bearers, the constantly-varying hue of nature now trending towards repose, all combining to show an ensemble which might have been represented, in a dim and distant way, on the walls of the Royal Academy, but could never have been shown by an artist in black and white, for the 'general shindy,' to use the expression of an Irish serjeant of a Scottish regiment, which was the essence of the scene must have been omitted. I fear I have very imperfectly presented it; but when it is said that I have written this on my hand, by the flickering light of a Nile steamer, any inelegancies will be pardoned by those who know what campaigning is."

Let us for a moment glance at the territory within which the preparations for the expedition to Khartûm were being carried on, and the protection of which against the possible descent of the Mahdi was considered essential. In previous pages we have followed the outlines of the geography of the Nile provinces and the Soudan, as occasion arose, to indicate the various localities mentioned in the narrative, and we now find ourselves on the river and its banks from Assiout to Assouan, Wady Halfa, and on the way to Dongola.

Assiout or Asyoot, the capital of the province of the same name and officially the residence of the governor of Upper Egypt, is on or near the site of the old "City of the Wolves," *Lycopolis*, so named from the inhabitants offering worship to Anubis or Taphera, "the watcher of the streets," the deity with the jackal head, so commonly depicted in Egyptian wall sculptures. The wolf appears to have been the sacred animal there, for mummies of wolves have frequently been found in the smaller caves and recesses or excavations of the rock. It is a considerable town, and perhaps with an outlook more picturesque than most others in Egypt. The city stands about a mile from the river, near the foot of a

mountain in which are numerous interesting grottoes and ancient remains, and is, in fact, on an island formed by a fork or branch of the main stream. This branch stream is crossed by an arched bridge built of stone, and beyond this commences the ascent of the mountain; thence fifteen minarets can be counted rising amidst groves of palm and acacia, and the view from the hills over the town of Assiout and the green plain is very charming in the early part of the year, when the almost dazzling green verdure stretches for miles on either side "unbroken," as Dean Stanley said, "save by the mud villages which here and there lie in the midst of the verdure like the marks of a soiled foot on a rich carpet." Assiout is really a fine town, with many good houses belonging to the merchants and others, exceedingly handsome baths with a beautiful marble fountain, first-rate bazaars and shops where all kinds of commodities are sold, and where the best pipe bowls in Egypt are a great feature since they are of local manufacture. There are several schools, institutions, and missions, the most important being in connection with the American consular agency.

But the caravan trade with Assiout had been declining even before the troubles in the Soudan, and the local industries—pottery and indigo-dyeing—and the commerce in cotton and opium, had considerably fallen off at the time of the occupation of the port by our "preparations." The great canal which conducts the water to the town at high tide, the fine embankment planted with handsome trees leading from the landing-place to the town, and the picturesque entrance by a grand old gateway and a large courtyard forming a part of the governor's palace, were all significant of Oriental repose, and now here was a complete topsyturveydom of European hurry and excitement, not only at El Hamra, the small village on the river-bank which claims to be the port, but at the railway station between this port and the town, at the post and telegraph office, and even in the ancient streets and sequestered places of the city itself.

Assiout is in many respects one of the most attractive towns in Egypt, and it is with regret that the visitor leaves its baths with the fine dome supported by pillars of red granite, and fountain and

pavements of white marble, its market, and lively, though narrow and unpaved, streets, as are all streets in all Egyptian towns, its well-stocked bazaars, and its outskirts, especially the mountain above the town where are the grottoes cut out of the limestone rock, and the tombs and catacombs. Most notable is the tomb of the Arab chief Antar who lived in the XIIIth dynasty, and the door of whose last resting-place on earth is guarded by colossal sculptured likenesses of himself, while within the catacomb is an elegantly ornamented vaulted ceiling, and a large room containing sculptured figures representing some festive or ceremonial observance. Sundry small chambers bear the marks of having once served as lodgings for the peasants of the locality, who have left the walls blackened with smoke, though it may be remembered that the tombs on the mountain at Assiout were once the abode, or rather the refuge, of many of the early Christians, who retired thither either to be out of the way of molestation or to live in seclusion.

It does not come within the scope of these pages to describe the various towns and villages in the valley of the Nile or on the Nile route from Assiout to the first cataract at Assouan. There are some considerable towns not very far from the banks of the river, and many villages, some of them picturesque, and where they are inhabited by Copts moderately clean and tidy, while several of them lie amidst fertile and verdant land, and are made pleasant by groves of date and other trees. The great attractions of Thebes, of Luxor and Philæ, need only be barely referred to here, for they come within the scheme of every voyager who visits Cairo with the object of going at all events as far as the first cataract by the Nile steamers provided for tourists, or by the dayabeeah or river boat hired by the dragoman for a private pleasure party.

Assouan itself, the frontier town of Egypt proper, on the right bank of the Nile, and on the site of the ancient Syene, with its arid and bare surroundings and its adjacent quarries, has already been referred to; and here the organized movement of the expedition may be said to have commenced 580 miles from Cairo.

From the first cataract it is about 110 miles of river journey to Korosko, the starting-point, as we have seen, for the journey across the desert to Abu Hamed, and thence the river is obstructed by many rocky shoals and has in its centre large sand-banks, where the crocodiles often bask. The great bend of the river makes the course between Korosko and Derr s.s.e., so that the boats are often hung up on the voyage, and if a north wind is blowing can make no headway at all. The journey from Korosko to Wady Halfa, another hundred miles, includes a good many places of interest, the most important of which is, of course, Abu Simbel, where the temples hewn in the gritstone rock, and especially the vast façade of the great temple with its superb colossal figures and marvellous sculptured ornamentation, are the most interesting monuments in Nubia. The whole of this district, including Ferâyg, opposite Abu Simnel and Forras on the west bank, is full of marvellously suggestive remains: temples, tombs, tablets, columns, grottoes, and at Ferâyg the small excavated temple, consisting of a hall supported by four columns, two side chambers or wings, and an adytum, had, ages after it had been formed, become a Christian church, and on the ceiling may be seen paintings of Christ blessing St. George, who is spearing the dragon. It is not easy to imagine the strange effect of the rapid rush and turmoil of a modern force of armed English soldiers and sailors making its way amidst what is usually a still and silent scene—the solemn relics of the old world—the stories of tomb and temple, and of those to whom they were dedicated, written on the walls themselves in a language of enigma. It is not easy to picture the uproar and bustle on the banks at those places where consignments of stores, arms, and accoutrements were collected: the shouting and clangour, the tramping and general confusion in towns which, in ordinary times, may have some periodical fair or market to suit the coming and going of caravans across the desert, but around which the dust of ages has gathered upon ruins devoted to the owls and the bats.

At Wady Halfa, a good-sized irregular village with a dreary desolate outlook, but lying in a belt of palms and separated from

the deep channel of the river by several sand-banks, this bustle and confusion was for a time concentrated, until a new kind of order was evolved from the chaos of boats, bales, cases, casks, forage tents, and the agglomeration of stores and appliances that belong to a campaign, till something like a regular camp or station and military discipline is established.

It might be convenient if the reader would at this point of the narrative glance at the map in order to take in the general bearings of the country, the windings of the Nile, and the relative situation of the cataracts as far as Abu Hamed. Southward of the first cataract lies Lower Nubia, a mere strip of arable land watered by the river, the cultivation nowhere exceeding four miles, and at several points disappearing into the desert, which on the east extends to the Red Sea, where Suakim is the only practicable port; while on the west is the continuation of the Lybian desert, which flanks the actual territory of Egypt. Nubia proper (or the Wadi Kunuz and the Wadi Nuba) extends from Assouan to Lebua and thence to Dongola. Granite and sandstone hills line the greater part of the valley, in many places closing in upon it, so that up to Wady Halfa cultivation is confined to the mere banks of the Nile. At Wady Halfa the second cataract begins and extends for 100 miles in a series of rapids through the Dar el Hajar to Sukkût, where the valley widens and the sterility disappears. Fertile plains stretch out on both sides, and well-cultivated islands are to be seen in the river. Here the Nile seldom overflows, and artificial irrigation is necessary. Cultivation continues up to the third cataract, but contracts again on passing the island of Argo. At Ordu or New Dongola, Lower Nubia terminates, and the *Belad es Sudan*, or Country of the Blacks, begins.

Such is the concise and clear reference to this territory in the report issued from the War-office by the intelligence branch (quarter master-generals' department, Horse-guards); and the mention of this admirably compiled report reminds us of the lamented Colonel Stewart, who took so prominent a part in furnishing the particulars from his own accurate and untiring

observations. It was to Dongola that the expedition was to be first directed, a country of which M'Coan speaks as one of the finest of the Soudan provinces, whose southern districts are within the zone of the annual rains, while it is washed northward by the overflow of the Nile over the area known as Wady Jaijar or Great Dongolese plain. By the great curve of the river, which begins some miles above old Dongola, is inclosed a peninsula, often misnamed the desert of Bayuda or the Bayuda desert. This, though greatly affected by the insurrection in the Soudan, was properly a fairly inhabited territory peopled by several tribes, who reared large flocks of sheep, goats, and camels, and cultivated considerable tracts of land. It was across this district, on the line of the wells, from Korti, beyond Ambukol and the third cataract, where a camp had been formed for the whole force, that the column commanded by the gallant Sir Herbert Stewart afterwards crossed the peninsula to Abu Klea and Gukdal, and so striking the Nile again by Gubat Metammeh and Abu Kru, hastened, as it was believed, to the relief of Gordon at Khartûm—a story to which we shall presently have to give our attention.

In the great curve of the river (the difficult journey round which and the weary work of passing the cataracts is saved by the march straight across) the country of the Berbers is passed,—another fertile tract, to the south-east of which lies the province of Toka, already noticed as one of the most productive portions of Egyptian territory. Of the other provinces belonging to the Soudan we have already noted some particulars in earlier pages.

The first cataract at Assquan does not present any great difficulties at any season. At high Nile boats may sail up with a favourable wind, and even at low Nile 30-ton boats can be towed up;—the Nile steamers passing from the months of August to January;—but at low Nile the dayabeeahs and nuggars usually discharge both ascending and descending. Between the first and second cataracts navigation is practicable all the year round, but at low Nile constant vigilance is necessary for avoiding the numerous sand-banks, and the passage of sailing boats is uncertain, because

they have to depend on the direction of the wind. At Wady Halfa, however, water transport of an ordinary kind may be said to cease. The cataract itself is nine miles in length and the passages are narrow, winding, and dangerous. Even at high Nile, though the passage may be made, there is considerable risk and good pilotage is required, so that as the highest Nile occurs there about the third week in June, and only lasts fifteen days, during which alone boats of small draft can pass, the difficulties are almost insuperable, even to steamers drawing only three feet, except for this short period. The Nile valley between the first and second cataracts is only about a quarter of a mile wide, and beyond the narrow strip of cultivation on the banks extends a glaring reddish-coloured desert studded with black rocks. The distance between the second and third cataract (at Hannek) is only navigable at high Nile. At the head of the cataract, at the village of Haffir, the river flows in a broad bed between banks of the richest and best-cultivated land in Egypt; but between Wady Halfa and Saye Island in Dar-Sukkût, a distance of 140 miles, and before reaching the third cataract at Hannek, there are really eight cataracts, of which two are impassable at low Nile and difficult at high Nile, and the distance between Wady Halfa and Hannek is about 241 miles. The fourth cataract is above Barkal, and in the long journey between this and Abu Hamed, where there is the almost impassable cataract of Mogru Island, five miles long, there are 140 miles quite impassable at low Nile, and only to be passed by small boats at high Nile. Within this distance there are seven distinct cataracts known as the Cataracts of Shaikeyeh. Abu Hamed is, so to speak, the turning-point of the great loop of the river which incloses the Bayuda territory, and the stream then returns, and after the two cataracts of Abrashim and Bergerr reaches the fifth cataract at Drekeh and arrives at Berber, and so goes beyond the Atbara river to Shendy, and thence by the sixth cataract to Khartûm. The journey from Berber to Khartûm is 204 miles; the distance from Korosko to Berber, 766 miles; the entire distance by the Nile from Cairo to Khartûm, 1629 miles; while by the desert Korosko to Berber is 363 miles; and the desert

journey on the Red Sea side from Suakim to Berber is 250 miles, 100 miles of which is without water.

By the Nile from Wady Halfa to Barkal the distance is about 465 miles, and above Wady Halfa the character of the Nile valley changes completely, and the desert, instead of approaching the banks only at intervals, now makes a close boundary, and at distances of ten or twenty miles the verdant spots are formed by a series of patches of the black mud deposited by the river, and carefully cultivated with beans, lentils, or dhurra, according to their extent. At Okma the mountains of the eastern chain approach to the bank and form a series of rocky islands and rapids; while near the island of Kulb the Lybian chain closes in and the banks are rocky and steep, rising to a height of about 80 feet. Towards Sukkût, however, about 100 miles above the second cataract, the valley widens, and instead of dreary sterility there are fertile plains on both sides, and there are also well-cultivated islands, for in its course from Assouan to Barkal the Nile forms a number of islands, some of them of considerable size, notably Argo, between Hannek and New Dongola, about thirty miles in length. Between the second and third cataracts are the basaltic rock of Sarras, 150 feet high, and with an old castle on its summit; Murki, an eminence of somewhat similar appearance; and some two miles above, Mongolfi, and then successively Tommuka, Naoni, Sanniet, and Mushab. The cultivated plains are not dependent on the overflows of the Nile,—which are not frequent in that part,—but are irrigated in the usual Egyptian manner. At the third cataract the cultivated areas are contracted, but at the island of Argo open out on the left bank to a fertile plain extending two or three miles from the river to a low ridge of sandstone hills. The alluvial plain then gradually narrows again, and at Hannek the sandstone hills on the west come down to the river bank, and this continues to Shaba, above which only a fringe of cultivation extends as far as Old Dongola, when fertility broadens out again. Both above and below Debbeh the land on the left bank is rich with luxuriant crops, while on the right are only shifting sand dunes with an occasional narrow strip of green. The Nubian sandstone, which

is the geological formation of the Nile valley above Wady Halfa, soon gives place to granite, basalt, and volcanic rock, and this is again succeeded by sandstone, which, however, disappears at Kohe about 150 miles above Wady Halfa, where it was once intended to bridge the river for the line of the Soudan railway. Here are found traps, schists, and slates; and the bed of the river is composed of schistose rocks, which frequently appear above water. These are succeeded by granite and porphyry formation up to the third cataract, when the sandstone appears again. It may easily be imagined that the rocks scattered about the river bed add greatly to the danger of navigation.

New Dongola, a town of mean appearance on the left bank of the river, is important because of its situation. The merchandise is chiefly ivory, gum, and senna, brought from the Blue and White Niles, by numerous vessels which discharge their cargoes at Haffir at the head of the third cataract, whence the consignments are carried overland to Wady Halfa. The country around New Dongola is fertile, and the crops are abundant wherever the land is well cultivated. Old Dongola is on the right bank on the summit of a high rock, but it is now a place of no importance and is almost a ruin. The Nile there is about 700 yards wide. Debbah, a few miles above it on the left bank, is another place, which, though insignificant as a town, is in the midst of rich and productive land, and therefore a considerable population, and is, or was, the place to which gum and ivory were brought from the interior, and to which European goods arrived to be distributed onward to Khartûm, Kordofan, and Darfûr. This business was, of course, suspended because of the disturbed state of the country, and it is doubtful whether it will be recovered.

We have now, so to speak, reached the point where the Nile commences to turn to form the great loop, and from Debbah we come to Ambukol, Korti, and the Shaikeyeh district, north of the so-called "Bayuda desert," a district which was formerly a kind of military republic. The Shaikeyehs or Shaggeyihs, famous horsemen and with famous Arab horses, offered a determined resistance to the mission by Ismail Pasha and to the Egyptian troops who

were brought against them, and they have been referred to more than once in the present narrative. It was at Korti, the chief town of Shaikeyeh, that, as we have just noted, General Lord Wolseley formed his camp, and it was determined that from Korti a double expedition should be despatched, the desert column commanded by General Sir Herbert Stewart to cross the Bayuda district to Metammeh, and a Nile column commanded by General Earle to proceed to Abu Hamed and thence towards Berber, with a view to co-operating with the desert column, for the relief of Gordon at Khartûm.

When it is considered that the Nile journey had to be made by these forces chiefly in the so-called whale-boats, each of the 800 boats carrying its own provisions, clothing, appliances, arms, ammunition, and 1200 days' rations, or 100 days' food for the twelve men who formed the crew, it may be very well believed that the task was a stupendous one, and that the ten soldiers had their work to do in "tracking" the boats from the land, or rowing and towing, or hauling them across the rapids, no less than the two sailors, one of whom was the Canadian voyageur, who had to direct the navigation of the vessel. Of course there were numbers of natives engaged to help in the towing and hauling, and at Wady Halfa a large force of men were kept at work, so that the boats were rapidly passed beyond the second cataract in detachments; the labour having been greatly aided by the construction, by Lord Charles Beresford, of a portage nearly 2500 yards in length, the boats being passed along by parties of men thirty-five strong, who with the help of rollers and levers were able to get the heavy boats across the portage and to avoid some of the more serious difficulties of the cataracts. The duty was extremely heavy in that climate, but from the very first our men began to work with a will and a cheerful determination to overcome obstacles which characterized them during the whole campaign, and makes the story of the British expedition in the Soudan one of the most remarkable records of courage and endurance to be found in the history of the world.

So actively was the business of transport carried on that, apart



MAJOR GENERAL SIR HERBERT STEWART K.C.B.

from the whale-boats, it was calculated that all the mounted troops and guns would be able to leave Wady Halfa before the end of November. The variations in different years of the period at which the Nile attains its greatest height and the differences in the time of its rise and subsidence at the various places included in the journey, added, of course, to the difficulty of making any accurate calculation, but preparations had been pushed on as rapidly as possible when the expedition was once determined on and the route decided, and vast quantities of stores, arms, and ammunition were accumulated before the last of the forces had arrived.

On the 12th of November the official statement of the command then in Egypt under General Officer Commanding-in-chief Lord Wolseley was:—military secretary, Lieutenant-colonel Swaine; aides-de-camp, Major Wardrop, Major Creagh, Lieutenant Childers, Lieutenant Adye, and Captain Lord C. Beresford; chief of staff, Major-general Buller; aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Lord Fitzgerald; acting-adjutants and quartermasters-general, Colonel Furse and Colonel W. F. Butler; deputy-acting-adjutant and quartermaster-general, Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne; brigadier-general, Major-general W. O. Lennox; aide-de-camp, Captain B. Holme; brigade-major, Lieutenant-colonel R. W. Gordon; brigadier-general, Major-general Davis; aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-colonel C. Douglas; brigade-major, Lieutenant-colonel T. B. Hitchcock; brigadier-general, Major-general Lyon-Fremantle; aide-de-camp, Captain Hon. F. W. Stopford; brigade-major, Lieutenant-colonel W. F. Kelly. Cavalry, 19th Hussars. Artillery—B Brigade, C Battery; 2d Brigade, I Battery; 5th and 6th Batteries Scottish Division, 1st Battery Southern Division. 8th, 11th, 17th, and 26th companies Royal Engineers. Detachment of Telegraph Battalion and Field Post. 9th and 11th companies of Commissariat. C company Ordnance Store Corps. Infantry—1st battalion Royal Scots, 1st battalion Royal Irish Regiment, 1st battalion Yorkshire Regiment, 2d battalion East Surrey, 2d battalion Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, 1st battalion Royal Sussex Regiment, 1st battalion South Staffordshire Regiment, 1st battalion Royal High-

landers, 2d battalion Essex Regiment, 1st battalion Berkshire Regiment, 1st battalion Royal West Kent, 3d battalion King's Royal Rifle Corps, 1st battalion Gordon Highlanders, and 1st battalion Cameron Highlanders. Besides the above there were drafts from various regiments forming the Camel Corps.

For special service:—Colonel Sir C. W. Wilson, K.C.M.G., R.E., as head of the Intelligence Department; Colonel R. Harrison, C.B., R.E.; Colonel H. Brackenbury, C.B., R.A.; Colonel Sir H. Stewart, K.C.B., 3d Dragoons; Colonel Webber, C.B., R.E.; Colonel Henderson, King's Royal Rifles; Brevet Lieut.-colonel J. F. Maurice, R.A.; Captain Lord Airlie, 10th Hussars.

Had the Soudan railway scheme by the Nile ever been carried out, this expedition might have reached Shendy in time to retake Berber and deliver Khartûm, or we may go further and say that the whole aspect of affairs might have been different; in fact the rebellion itself might have been barred from extending to Khartûm and Berber. This, however, is only a speculation, and the completion of the line had, as we have seen, been prevented by the refusal of Gordon to have the cost of an undertaking, which had been already half frustrated, thrust upon the finances of the Soudan provinces, which he had to administer during his first governor-generalship. He had refused to be responsible for the completion of this line, and had proposed an alternative scheme for providing tramways by which the Nile traffic might be made comparatively easy, but this had never been completed, and now the line of railway, imperfect, interrupted, and inefficient, ended, as the phrase is, "in the air."¹ The southern terminus of this line was to have been at Shendy, the most convenient centre for traffic moving by the Nile, the point at which the camel routes from nearly all the fertile provinces converge, and above which the river is more or less navigable. From Shendy the line was to cross the so-called Bayûda desert, a tract well provided with water and small timber, and to reach the Nile again near Debbeh, a convenient commercial centre for Darfûr, Kordofan, and the western provinces.

¹ See vol. i. pp. 186, 187.

From Debbeh the line was to run near the Nile, along that portion of its course (about 220 miles) where the rapids known as the second and third cataracts render navigation difficult or impossible, to cross the river at Kolbe and to reach Wady Halfa, from which the river to Philæ, at the head of the first cataract, is always navigable. Thence to Assouan a short line of railway had been constructed to avoid the first cataract, and from that point water communication is open to Siout, the southern terminus of the upper Egyptian railway. There are 33 miles of rails laid from Angash, about 4 miles north of Wady Halfa, and about 22 miles further of permanent way to a point within 11 miles of the Nile. As the line was left in 1878 so it is to-day. Running along the right bank of the river for some twelve miles, it leaves it just at the head of the "Shelal el Amka," or Second Cataract, and passing along a broad inland valley, cuts off a bend of the river, at the same time avoiding the broken ground of the Nile bank at the rapids of Wady Matuga. From the fourteenth to the twenty-third mile the line again follows the river, and after skirting the eastern foot of some rough hills, and then again following the course of the Nile for a short distance, it once more turns inland, striking the river at the Sarras Station, a little south of the village of that name. Here, for all practical purposes, is at present the terminus of the line; for from this point, in order to avoid the heavy works that would have been necessitated by carrying the line along the broken and in many places precipitous river bank, the route across the Murat desert was selected.

Of course some of the difficulties of the journey were to be avoided by a certain number of men, who travelled on the short line of railway skirting the cataract at Assouan and the longer line between Wady Halfa and Sarras, while some of the stores and heavy cargo could also be conveyed for that distance, and consequently the whaler-boats assembled at Jamai (23 miles south of Wady Halfa) and then proceeded to Sarras (32 miles south of Wady Halfa) to take in stores. In October Lieutenant-colonel Alleyne, R.A., went up the Nile in whaler-boats as far as Dal (123 miles south of Wady Halfa), and reported, as he had done

also the previous month, when inspecting only, that the rapids were practicable. The voyageurs, many of whom were half-breed Indians, did their work admirably, for it was soon discovered that though they made light of the first and second cataracts the rapids of the Nile differed so much from those to which they had been accustomed, and offered so many difficult and dangerous obstructions that they needed all their experience and all their practised alacrity of eye and hand to carry the expedition to the end of the journey even in comparative safety. Each of the boats employed in the Red River expedition of 1870 carried ten men, with two or three months' provisions, and could be sailed, rowed, poled, tracked, lifted, dragged, or portaged. Between Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg (500 to 600 miles) were fifty interruptions from rapids, over which these boats were passed. In three months a force of one battalion of infantry, some artillery, and engineers traversed the double distance (1200 miles), having carried their boats, provisions, stores, and munitions on ninety-four occasions, a total distance of fifteen miles.

The conditions of the Nile ascent were in many respects very different from those of the Red River, and more unfavourable, although the Nile has a fall of only one foot per mile, whereas the fall of the Red River is two and two-thirds feet per mile. On the Red River portages were made by felling trees on the spot, and making slides 40 to 1800 yards in length, over which the boats were pushed, and their contents carried; moreover, rocks were easily seen and avoided, the water being clear to a depth of 20 feet. On the Nile river the banks are at the rapids (Wady Halfa to Dal) precipitous on the east bank, and of shifting sand from the Libyan desert on the west bank; there is no timber, and rocks cannot be seen, the water being laden with silt.

As eventually ordered, each whaler-boat, 30 feet long, 6 feet wide, 20 inches draught, was built of fir, and weighed about 1000 lbs. The weight when fully manned and equipped was about 10·347 tons, made up as follows, the fractions being given in decimals of a ton:—Weight of boat, 0·44; two boatmen and ten soldiers, 7·5; 100 days' supplies, 2·4; one filter, 0·007.

The route to be followed in its various stages was—Cairo to Assiout, by rail, 229 miles; Assiout to Assouan, by steamer, 318 miles; Assouan to Shellal, by rail, 8 miles; Shellal to Wady Halfa, by steamer, 202 miles; Wady Halfa to Muhrat Wells, by rail, $46\frac{1}{2}$ miles; Muhrat Wells to Ambukol, by desert, 15 miles; Ambukol to the foot of the Tanjor rapid, by boat; foot of the Tanjor rapid to the head, by portage, 2 miles; head of Tanjor rapid to the foot of the Dal rapid, by boat; foot of the Dal rapid to the head, by portage, 4 miles; head of the Dal rapid to the foot of the Khaibar rapid, by boat; foot of the Khaibar rapid to the head, by portage, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles; head of the Khaibar rapid to the foot of the Hannek rapid, by boat; foot of the Hannek rapid to the head, by portage, 4 miles; head of the Hannek rapid to Debbeh, by boat. The total distance from Cairo to Debbeh by the Nile is 1157 miles; deducting the distance covered by rail, steamer, and portages, as above, 830 miles, we have as the total distance traversed by laden boats 327 miles.

Along the route southwards stations were established at the following places:—Cairo, Assiout, Assouan, Shellal, Wady Halfa, Sarras, Muhrat Wells, Ambukol, Akasha, Tanjor, Sarka Matto (Dal), Absaret, Khaibar, Abu Fatmeh, Dongola, Korti. At each station was placed a commandant, his rank being generally that of colonel with staff degree. Under him were a detachment of Egyptian soldiers and a commissariat depôt for the wants of passers-by. All proceeding up the Nile took 13 days' victuals from Wady Halfa. At Cairo the commandant was called "the commandant of the base;" and there was also a lieutenant of Royal Engineers as officer in charge of the railway base. The distance between Wady Halfa and Korti being 400 miles, there was, on an average, one commandant for every 33 miles. On ascending the Nile, the whaler-boats carried each 100 days' victuals; but stores generally were sent up in this wise:—between Wady Halfa and Muhrat Wells, by rail; between Muhrat Wells and Ambukol, by camel; between Ambukol and Tanjor and between Tanjor and Sarka Matto, by convoys of whaler-boats; from Sarka Matto to Khaibar, from Khaibar to Hannek, and from

Abu Fatmeh to Korti, by native boats and by whalers. An English officer took charge of a number of whaler-boats, usually ten, manned by Dongolese, by kroomen, or by Egyptian soldiers; and with them went up and down his section of the Nile, it being his duty to see that there was no loitering and no incurring of unnecessary work. At the places of portage (Tanjor 2 miles, Sarka Matto 4 miles, Khaibar $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, Hannek 4 miles) the stores were disembarked and carried on camels. The station commandants looked sharply after the nuggars, and paid the British soldier that went in each nuggar store boat a sum of money in inverse proportion to the length of time in which he made the voyage. A nuggar is a vessel 150 ft. in length, 15 ft. in beam, 24 in. to 36 in. in draught, with flat bottom, and of about 5 to 10 tons burthen (40 to 90 camel loads). The hull is of sunt wood (*Acacia arabica*) 2 in. to 3 in. thick, secured with nails and caulked with rags and Nile mud. The mast is 35 ft. in height; the sail 50 ft. by 20 ft., of Nubian cloth, is attached to the upper and lower yard (if any); the rudder is 10 ft. in length, with a tiller beam of some 16 ft. at which ever squats or stands the reis, or one of the crew well acquainted with the currents and channels of the river. This large size of rudder is imperative, since the navigation of the rapids necessitates frequent sharp and short turns in order to avoid collision with the rocks in the channels, or to take advantage of a few yards of back eddy or other favourable water. For some time steam pinnaces patrolled all the waters from Ambukol to Abu Fatmeh; but eventually they were ordered southwards.

As early as the 28th of August the steamer *Benisouef*, of which we shall hear more presently, reached Wady Halfa with a second detachment of the Sussex regiment. Others had already arrived and more were coming next day, and the orders were that the battalion should push on to Dongola without delay with three months' rations for a thousand men. At that time Commander Hammill was at Wady Halfa with 80 men of the naval brigade to superintend the steamers passing the cataract; the Mudir of Dongola had sent twelve 20-ton boats to Tanjour to assist in the

transport service above the cataract, and other boats were on the way. On the 29th seven steamers had got well over the first cataracts, and the Nile was rising; there were 2000 labourers sent from Dongola at Wady Halfa for assisting in the portage and haulage work at the cataracts. These with 400 camels, collected by the mudir, required considerable supplies of food and forage, both of which were slow in arriving till a consignment of biscuit and forage was forwarded by special train from Cairo. There was fortunately a good crop of dates and a fair supply of barley in the district. The mudir had gone to Dongola, whither the first contingent of troops with stores and provisions were pushed, and on the 27th the river had reached a point where steamers might be hauled over the second cataract.

At Assiout were the means of transport at that time provided, namely, steamboats, dayabeeahs, and barges, the two latter requiring to be towed. Of the barges there were a large number on the Nile, previously used for conveying coal to the sugar plantations and pumping stations, for carrying labourers, and for transporting machinery, produce, and troops. They were about 120 feet long, with a beam of eight feet, and the same depth; they were decked and floored below, leaving seven feet between. Being flat-bottomed they drew little water, and were well adapted for the transport of men or material on the navigable portions of the river. The passage from Assiout to Assouan would, it was calculated, take a steamer towing six such barges from eight to twelve days; a steamboat without incumbrance occupying from four to six days.

From the commencement of the expedition it became evident that the general in command had great objections to the presence of special correspondents even of the leading newspapers and journals with the forces on the Nile. There had been some complaints on the part of correspondents during the former campaign for the suppression of Arabi's rebellion, and it was generally understood that General Wolseley expected all communications sent by telegraph from newspaper correspondents to be first submitted to headquarters, where they might be considerably revised, or rather abridged. The reasons alleged for this

were the rapidity with which news travelled from England back to Egypt, or the probabilities of messages being communicated to Arabi or other hostile chiefs, who might thus have been enabled to frustrate the operations of the expedition either by counter-arrangements or by intrigue.

Some complaints and even a few innuendos were made at that time, but many of the leading chroniclers of the events of the Egyptian campaign afterwards conceded that the general might have had sufficient reasons for the restrictions which he adopted, especially as it was found that accounts of the various operations which did not reveal the probable future movement of the troops were allowed to be despatched unaltered. Into the questions discussed in relation to the presence of special correspondence we need not enter, as it is far from the scope of these pages; but it may be mentioned that a distinct notice was given at Cairo that no newspaper correspondents or representatives of the press would be permitted to join the force in the journey up the Nile. The notification went farther than this, and in a direction which tended to show that the prohibition was chiefly occasioned by the determination to confine the arrangements within military limits, and to include no one who would not be entitled to share in the rations and provisions calculated to be sufficient for the use of the expedition on the Nile journey. It was announced that no private gentleman would be permitted to accompany the force, and that no employment would be found for gentlemen seeking to join it and willing to render service. This, of course, seemed to preclude anyone but those officially appointed to the expedition from taking any part in it even as spectators, and though there does not seem to have subsequently been any serious opposition to the presence of special correspondents and artists at the camp at Korti or with Sir Herbert Stewart's column, it was supposed the notice given at Cairo was in a great measure prohibitory. The "war correspondent," however, has attained to a position which cannot be ignored, and the representatives of leading newspapers are frequently hardy and adventurous explorers or campaigners who have held rank or are quite capable of holding rank in the army,

and are accustomed, not only to the privations and the dangers of a military expedition, but to the expedients and resources, a knowledge of which mitigates the sufferings and inconveniences caused by being separated from many of the comforts and some of the necessaries of ordinary life.

Consequently the special war correspondents were not the kind of men to turn back. On the contrary, either by one of the first steamers that passed the cataracts before the expedition and were at Dongola in advance of the main body of the troops,—or by a private “whale-boat” of their own which had been secured beforehand, and being well provisioned and navigated by a competent *reis*, went gaily, flying the “press” flag, along the course traversed by the great flotilla,—or by successive stages of river and land transport,—the special correspondents were to the front, and though the accounts of the Nile journey were not voluminous, they were sufficiently indicative of the fact that more than one “chief” was “takin’ notes,” either by pen or pencil, for descriptive articles or illustrations which afterwards appeared in newspapers and magazines.

That the newspaper correspondent had more serious difficulties than ever to contend against was asserted without contradiction, and one communication in a leading daily newspaper revealed that his telegrams were doubly countersigned, first at the front and again at headquarters, where they were delayed *en route* for inspection. A rigid order had been issued that on no account was he to be allowed on board government boats. He must make his way along the banks of the Nile by camel, and as the distances between the various points of interest were immense, and as only one representative of each journal was permitted to pass Wady Halfa, he was much puzzled from day to day, or, rather, from week to week, where to place himself. “I had hoped,” wrote the correspondent who sent this letter, “myself to have gone on with the *Nassif-el-Kheir* to Merawi, and although her commandant kindly offered me a passage, Colonel Sir Herbert Stewart at Dongola was obliged to enforce the order which forbids English journalists, whether there is room for them or not, to put foot on

any of the vessels belonging to their country now navigating the Nile. The Mudir of Dongola, an Egyptian clerk, or an officer's native servant might be allowed a passage, but the representative of an English newspaper on no account whatever. As matters stand, should an unfortunate correspondent be chased to the bank by a crowd of howling Arabs, the officer in command of any government craft, if he did his duty, would be obliged to refuse him refuge, saying civilly, no doubt, but firmly, 'No correspondents allowed on government boats.' We are thus, in a manner, branded officially as outcasts, although we come neither asking nor receiving medals or honours, but seeking simply, while willing to share the dangers and hardships of the troops, to do our duty."

Well, of course, "special newspaper correspondence" was not one of the duties recognized by the military authorities as, perhaps, it should have been. At all events, it was at that time discountenanced by the commander-in-chief, and to him, as compared with the more hospitable and friendly disposition of other officers of rank, the prohibitions were attributed. In the case of the correspondent whose complaint has been quoted, however, the public were perhaps the gainers, for not being allowed to go by the steamer he determined to return to Wady Halfa from Dongola, to accompany the first batch of Nile boats. He made the journey to Wady Halfa by camel by the reverse route which would soon be taken by the camel corps, travelling from Wady Halfa or Sarras to Dongola. The consequence was that he wrote in his "special letter" a very entertaining account of his journey by the camel route of 245 miles, "which, on good trotting camels, if no baggage is carried, might be traversed in five or six days. For some time previously, in Dongola," he wrote, "we had all been busy supplying ourselves with camels. From eight pounds each, the market price of a good animal had risen to fifteen pounds and twenty-five pounds. As many Englishmen during the present expedition are beginning to learn, the camel is not a pleasant beast to ride. The novice for the first time on a camel's back experiences a general feeling of insecurity. In the event of a mishap, the distance to be traversed before the ground is reached is felt to be

great; and then, for some time at least, the conviction is firmly entertained that should the camel trot round to the left while the rider intended him to go to the right, it would not be possible for the latter to adapt his movements to those of the former in time to prevent a catastrophe. After a while this feeling wears away, more or less; but I have found no Englishman as yet who, when asked if he liked camel riding, replied in the affirmative. A question of frequent discussion is the kind of saddle to be adopted. The camel corps are accommodated with saddles, on which the men sit astride as on horseback, and on these they soon feel as much at home as is possible on a camel's back. But, undoubtedly, the best form of saddle, both for man and camel for a long journey, is the Soudan native pattern, on which the rider seats himself like a lady equestrian, with rugs and blankets laid on the top, and a prop behind to lean against. A long journey on these may be accomplished with comparatively little fatigue—provided always that the camel is an easy one to ride. Camels vary very much in that respect. The jolt of a rough camel is perhaps the most unpleasant motion that a human being can be subjected to, while a smooth-going one will carry his rider at a gentle jog for hours, as easily for the rider almost as if he were seated in an arm-chair. As may be understood, the vast majority of camels supplied to the troops belong to the former category and very rarely to the latter. The other day I heard a gentleman, who had ridden his animal for the first time, inquire how many feet at each jog an ordinary camel threw his rider into the air. He wished to gauge whether his own was an extraordinary one or not. A blue-jacket at Wady Halfa admired a camel he rode exceedingly, because, being pitched up out of his saddle incessantly, and caught dexterously as he descended, 'the camel had only missed him twice during the afternoon.'"

After the usual delays and obstacles to making a start which the traveller in the East has always to overcome on beginning a journey, he, with two guides and a servant, left Dongola behind in the early morning, having on the previous evening encamped outside the walls. His camels were induced to leave the town

with difficulty. They seemed to understand thoroughly that it was no mere afternoon ride upon which they were bound, and made their protests accordingly. This they did by sitting down every few yards and remaining on the ground until flogged up again. "A camel is alway in a state of extreme mental depression. He whines and groans incessantly, and never, apparently, like other animals, makes friends with his master. He trots along all day with an air of hopeless misery which nothing seems to alleviate. Only the courbash has any effect upon him. The courbash is as necessary an accessory to comfortable camel-riding as, according to Ismail Pasha, it was to successful government in Egypt. The hide of the Nile hippopotamus tanned and oiled and cut into long strips forms a whip that, as elastic as gutta percha, is yet much harder than that material; and it twines round the body of its victim with electric effect. Probably there is no more excruciating pain than the cut of a courbash, and it switches through the air with a ping like a rifle-bullet—a sound by itself generally sufficient to induce the most obstinate camel or fellah promptly to obey orders." By the margin of the desert they rode where it encroaches on the strip of cultivated land that follows the Nile from its source almost to the sea. Overhead the sun glared fiercely, and on every side a misty mirage distorted the horizon. From the first moment of starting until the end of the day's march the four camels stretched out in front their long necks, peering anxiously for the halting-place, and groaning with disappointment as each clump of palm-trees was passed, and they still pushed on. For the night they stopped at a small hamlet of half a dozen huts, the inhabitants of which brought, by way of hospitality, a chicken in the last stages of starvation, some dates, an egg or two, and a gourd of milk. They had forgotten to bring cooking utensils, so they had to make a meal of cold "bully" beef and the eggs, with some tea brewed in the empty meat tin, and so went to sleep side by side with their camels, with a new moon overhead, by the dim light of which the villagers sat round curiously watching them in their bivouac. Not far off was the usual village water irrigating wheel, which, during high Nile period, relays of bullocks turn night and day. A sound not

conducive to continued slumber was the creaking of those cumbersome wooden contrivances for lifting Nile water on to the land.

In the evening he had been much astonished by being addressed by one of the natives in the village in the words, "Good evenin', sar," and found that the man had been an officer's servant on board a paddle-steamer for nearly six years, and had visited Bombay, Singapore, and China, but had come back to his native village with his savings. According to him the wealthier classes of the population—and he himself, in his native village, was considered a capitalist—viewed the threatened approach of the Mahdi with dread. The radical theories as to distribution of property and so on, preached by the Mahdi, were no more fancied by men of substance in Nubia than they are elsewhere.

Early in the morning throughout the journey, away on the other side of the Nile, a red gleam in the sky betokened the approach of dawn. Kneeling on mats on the ground, and with heads turned towards Mecca, the two guides were to be heard repeating their morning prayers, alternately crying out with loud voices and alternately muttering their petitions for a successful day's journey. "The most praying country in the world is this Soudan. Quite independent of the Mahdi's movement, the people everywhere are filled with religious fervour, which, it is easy to understand, with little effort may be turned into fanaticism. In his rigorous observance of the laws of the Koran lies in great part the secret of the mudir's power; and Osman Digma at Suakim, by dressing like a fakir, in a single dirty cotton cloth, and covering himself with dust, and praying continuously, induced the Haden-dowas to follow him first to victory and then to their death. In Suakim itself the moolah in the little mosque began to call the people there to prayers at four o'clock every morning. At first the sonorous sound of his deep voice, rising and falling in musical cadence, was pronounced interesting in a high degree; later on we described it as bellowing and a nuisance of the first order."

The second day the camel of one of the guides broke down, and they were obliged, albeit with heavy hearts, to sacrifice sundry little comforts which had been provided for the journey. The

trotting camel must carry nothing but its rider and a day's food. To the fact that three tins of bully beef and a spare suit of underclothing had been intrusted to him in addition, the guide attributed the collapse of his animal. But, once having started, nothing should ever stop you on a journey in eastern climes. Consent to even a day's delay, and you may be unable to advance again for a week. So, sternly refusing to halt while he endeavoured to procure another camel, the traveller proceeded with one guide, leaving behind the other, and trusting to replace the stores he carried with eggs and chickens from the wayside villages. Every morning they breakfasted as they jogged on their camels' backs over the sand, half a dozen eggs each and some dates forming their repast; but he explains that a Nubian egg is a very different article from that deposited by an English hen. "An average wood pigeon, if fed well for a week and put on her mettle, would probably surpass in the size of her produce the best egg-laying bird in the Soudan."

The journey was from Dongola to Haffir, six hours, about thirty miles, with a good road and frequent villages; Haffir to Fakr Bender thirty miles; thence across the Mahass desert to Koke, where the river is crossed in native nuggars which the camels seem to understand. Koke to Dal, where there was a large commissariat station and rations were issued. Thence to Sarras, with twenty-eight miles' journey across the desert and over rocky ground.

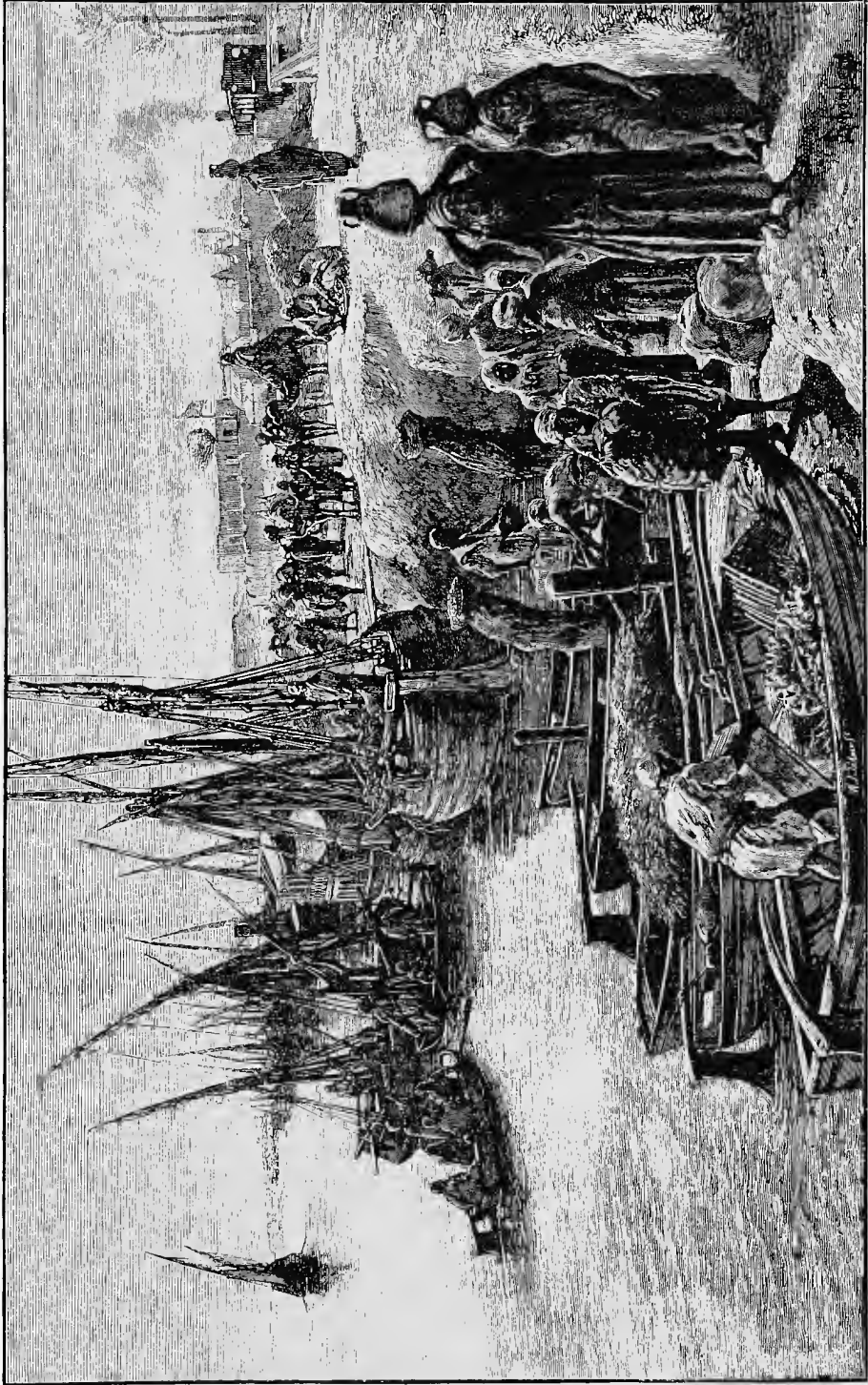
During this journey the correspondent was much struck with the ignorance of the people as to the objects which the English had in view in entering their country. At Dongola itself the inhabitants considered that the troops had been sent to assist the mudir in reconquering the Soudan; but elsewhere the people thought they had come to annex their country, as they believed they had already done Lower Egypt. In Lower Egypt itself the wildest stories were circulated and believed in the villages; and although Englishmen individually, of all the foreigners who mix among the people, were most popular with them, our interference with their government was strongly disapproved of. They be-

lieved that the main object we had in view was the recovery of vast sums lent to Ismail Pasha, and every tax and every act of oppression were put down to us, who were supposed to have taken since Tel-el-Kebir fabulous sums away from the country. Of our good intentions, of our efforts to abolish the courbash, and of our offer to advance money for their relief, they knew nothing; the fact being that we took no trouble to tell the people what we were doing on their behalf. The misrepresentations were chiefly of French origin, but we did little to counteract them, although a few Arabic proclamations, judiciously worded and posted in all the bazaars from time to time, would have had a most excellent effect.

These were the experiences of a writer who evidently spoke from trained observation, but the description of the perverse opinions of the people he describes is strangely seconded, or as some may think contrasted, by the declaration of another correspondent, that the people along the Nile banks, the patient tillers of the patches of maize or beans, and the herders of goats, had little notion of what was going forward. At some of the villages they had not so much as heard of the Mahdi, still less that there was an expedition for the relief of Gordon. At one village they said that there were more Nile travellers than usual coming up, and that the season was beginning earlier; but they had not seen any soldiers, and they were quite incredulous when told that the steamers were carrying or towing English troops. The state of ignorance of what was passing daily under their eyes was almost incredible, but it was evidently not assumed, and in the whole village there was to be found only one man who had heard of Gordon, and he declared he had gone away to his own country long ago. The villagers were willing to sell what few supplies they had, but their flocks were few and small, their herds confined to the couple of oxen employed at the water-wheels, and the small seed of the dhurra was not palatable to Englishmen. Thus lambs, eggs, and the milk of sheep were practically the only provisions they had to sell, and the value of the lambs as food for soldiers may be guessed from the fact that one lamb, picked from a number on account of its good looks,

weighed, when skinned and paunched, only 9 lbs., and it cost at the rate of 8*d.* a pound. A sheep would have cost four dollars, and the value of the meat would have been even less in proportion to the money, for they seemed to run almost entirely to wool, and the best of them were too fat in the tail. Turkeys were about the only things worth buying, and they could only be got at the largest places, from all of which it was gathered that the promise of regular rations of fresh meat on certain days in the week when the men took to the boats, was one that it would be almost impossible to keep. This, however, mattered the less, as the American tinned meats had hitherto proved of invariably excellent quality, and to the corned beef in particular the men had taken quite a fancy, though it was doubtful whether it would not pall upon their tastes even when with potatoes and onions it was made into savoury sea-pie.

The labour of hauling the big steamers at the cataract at Wady Halfa may be imagined when it is remembered that when the *Nassif-Kheir* had grounded amidships through the fall in the river, nearly 3000 men on the east bank and the adjacent islands were employed at the hawsers. The vessel was got afloat and passed the first rapid, but at the second rapid the bow hawser parted, and the blue-jackets who brought a fresh cable down the cataract in a boat, narrowly escaped being wrecked because of the strength of the current and the difficulty of navigation. The new hawser and the men were taken on board, but the boat was subsequently wrecked lower down the cataract. At the second attempt to get the steamer along the bow cable parted again, and she was finally eased into a safe berth about 500 yards down the stream, but above the original starting-place. She had sustained so much injury by coming against the rocks and otherwise that she had to be repaired. This steamer had been taken over by the admiralty some months before, and, armed with a Gardner gun and manned with about fifteen blue-jackets and a couple of officers, had the duty of patrolling the Nile between Philæ and Wady Halfa as one of the vessels already referred to. In the middle of September, at the time of the passage of this steamer, which was berthed at



SCENE ON THE NILE AT WADY HALFA.

BASE OF OPERATIONS OF THE NILE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, 1884-85.

Sarras, the operations at Wady Halfa were being carried out with the utmost energy, and every native who chose to work could find constant employment. When the patrolling of the Nile by armed vessels was first ordered there had been little property at Wady Halfa to need protection, except the enormous accumulation of material for constructing the line which had been abandoned; material which had cost Egypt dear, since, by the terms of the agreement with the contractors, royalties and compensations representing fines for breach of contract, had been claimed. For seven years a large quantity of the valuable but unused materials and stores, worth perhaps nearly a million of money, had been accumulating unrecoverable interest in the sheds and workshops at the Wady Halfa station. The battalion under the command of Colonel Trotter had recently been at Wady Halfa and were ready to protect them, but until the rebellion they had been left comparatively uncared for, though the inhabitants of the district were not likely to loot the buildings, except for the lighter portion of the materials, since railway bars and sleepers, steam-cranes, engines and boilers were not very portable, and even the picks and shovels were not adapted for everyday use in Egyptian husbandry. However, there had been a certain amount of watchfulness on the part of the Mudir of Dongola's men, and when Colonel Trotter came into occupation, the accumulations of the "plant" were very large, and some additions had probably been made to them when it was determined to repair the line and the trucks, and to complete the slight extension where works had been commenced.

The railway buildings stretch along the inner bank some 50 yards inland for about half a mile. The chief buildings are, of course, the station-house and engine-shop, which are of stone and of considerable size; the others, placed at intervals along the river bank, are little more than huts or sheds with the usual mud walls; the last group of them forming a sort of small square at the entrance of the village, between which and the station were to be seen the heaps of materials left at the time the work was abandoned. An eye-witness thus catalogued them:—"Steam

engines of various sorts, with and without wheels, with and without boilers, and in every stage of decay; steam-pumps, steam-cranes, pyramids of rails and sleepers, mountains of iron bolts and rivets, a huge cairn built entirely of wheelbarrows, a mound of camel saddles, and another mound of camel nets; great coils of cable, numerous red iron tanks, capable of holding each a couple of tons of water; a few miles of telegraph wire, with a number of poles, a heap of iron chairs—not chairs to sit on, but for the use of the sleepers—barrels of blasting fuse and of paint, stacks of dry water-skins, a lane of oil jars, both full and empty, a bristling breastwork of picks and shovels, and innumerable other articles, complete and incomplete, in good and bad repair, the names of which I know not, are strewn about the ground in such strange confusion as to recall to the mind of the beholder the story of the sleeping beauty, and its quaint illustrations of the effect of the spell on all within its influence.”

The actual line, which runs in the direction of Dongola for 34 miles, starts from about a mile above the station, skirts the village, and, touching the river at the commencement of the cataracts, takes a loop across the rocky desert through one or two cuttings which must have cost a large amount of labour, and strikes the river at Sarras. Beyond that point no rails had been laid; but the permanent way had been prepared for a further distance of 22 miles to within seven miles of the head of the Ambukol cataracts—some very difficult rapids. A cutting of about 300 yards in length, which would here have carried the line to the edge of the river, had been carried on for some distance. It had been decided that though there was not sufficient time to complete this work, the railway should be carried to the entrance of the cutting, and this, with the repairs, reinstatement of engines, &c., and the reconstruction of the trucks, which were to answer the purpose of carriages as well as for the transport of baggage, munition, &c., would, it was calculated, occupy some weeks.

But not only was the sleepy and forgotten village startled into activity by the invasion of an army of engineers and labourers who seemed capable of resuscitating the mechanical vitality of

forge and engine. The chief buildings were metamorphosed and were devoted to a new purpose. The workshops were alive again with the sounds of saw, file, and hammer, the clink and clang of iron upon iron, the roar of the bellows, the harsh squeal of drill and augur perforating sheets of metal, were to be heard from morning to night; while the station-house, a two-storied building surrounded by a broad verandah and so roofed as to keep the upper story (probably intended for offices) pleasantly cool, was converted into a "base" hospital—that is, a hospital at the base of the position from which the expedition was to start, and to which seriously invalided or wounded men could be sent back. There was room there for sixty patients. The other railway buildings had also been adapted to different purposes, one of them being Sir Evelyn Wood's headquarters, another was the commissariat; and the large engine-shop—already referred to as having been converted into a fort by Colonel Trotter—was used as a magazine.

Of course the troops, which at the earlier date arrived from Assouan, only remained at Wady Halfa till they could be sent on, and they chiefly occupied the houses at the head of the village, the officers taking up their quarters in the house of the local governor. It may be imagined that the bank of the Nile at Wady Halfa presented a lively bustling scene, and that the heaps of heterogeneous merchandise mingled with the stores and rations landed from the barges, dahabeeahs, and nuggars made a very entertaining spectacle to those who had little responsibility, if any such could be found. Certainly there were none among the officers, who, like the men, were living chiefly on "bully" beef and preserved potatoes. They must have regarded with a certain curious anxiety the discharged cargoes of beer, of ostrich feathers, bales of gum and senna, elephants' tusks, jars of castor-oil, mixed up in almost inextricable confusion with pickaxes, railway sleepers, boilers, heaps of camel saddles, and all kinds of gear to be used in the passage of the coming boats. There was some method even amidst the apparent confusion, however, and every day the fifty-four trucks of the railway made the journey to Sarras heavily

laden with stores or with troops, who were to await at that station the means of transport. Long strings of camels too were sent forth to supplement the insufficient work of the railway. Wady Halfa had become a place of commercial importance, and the Greek merchants had opened stores there for the sale of tinned provisions and other possibly less wholesome delicacies, as well as for articles of clothing of strange make and purpose; but they were not allowed to sell drink. The expedition was intended to be organized on strictly temperance principles, and this was carried out as far as possible. It was only when there were reasons for believing that the health of the men would seriously suffer by total abstinence from stimulants, considering the vicissitudes of the climate, the privations that they had to undergo, and the almost unremitting labour that they had to perform, that rations of rum were served out on certain days to the troops so engaged.

The most important event which had happened with regard to the expedition was the passage of the great cataract by the steamer already referred to. Commander Hammill had then surveyed all the cataracts of the Nile as far as Hannek—within a day's march of Dongola—and the commander-in-chief and indeed all the officers were striving to push forward the troops to that place, and it was pretty certain that if the *Nassif-Kheir* steamer could get on, the rest of the Nile fleet could follow. Of course her paddles could not work in the great fall where she had to be hauled, and a strong wire-hawser was slung and fastened below water-line in the bows, and arranged for raising the head against the rush of water when any great strain was placed on the head hawsers, and for providing for the use of strong guide-ropes both forward and aft. There were all kinds of gear and tackle on board; the Gardner gun had been removed from its platform and lay on deck abaft the engine-room; two or three men who could not swim were put ashore, and life-buoys, in the shape of inflated skins, were stowed on deck ready for use. As we have already seen, there was an army of soldiers, sailors, and labourers waiting for the steamer and ready to help below the "first gate," the passage, about a hundred yards wide, between the east bank and the

island, where the stream flows at the rate of some twelve knots an hour. The correspondent of the *Times* wrote:—

“The scene on the east bank as the steamer drew up to it was quaint and striking. Squatting here and there on the rocks were the native labourers in two great groups separated by the little band of English sailors, who looked square and solid by the side of the slightly built Nubians. The Esneh men, clad mostly in the blue galabieh of the fellahen, brightened the uniform yellow and black of the background. The Dongolese could not be said to contribute much in the way of colour. Each man blacker than his neighbour, clothed, when clothed at all, in a few yards of dirty cotton cloth, with their bare bullet heads, some shaved, some with the wool cropped close, some with thick bushy hair hanging about their shoulders, their appearance was certainly not calculated to prepossess the beholder; but what they lacked in comeliness they made up in cheerfulness and lightness of heart, and while the Esneh men were dull, stolid, and sad, looking on the *corvée* but as one more act of tyranny and oppression, the Dongolese, accustomed to oppression all their lives, and not understanding any other existence, appeared to think themselves on a pleasure trip, where there was a little more to be got to eat, a little more money to be earned than at home, and nearly as little work to be done, and munched their doura and water, chattered to and chaffed one another, and held shrill and animated conversations with friends a couple of hundred yards distant, with the jovial *insouciance* of children out of school. Like children did they steadfastly refuse to work until driven to it by the courbash, armed with which formidable instrument and a beltful of other weapons, some fifty Bashi-Bazouks stalked gravely hither and thither amid the various groups. When the Wakeel of Dongola, come from Halfa in the *Nassif-Kheir*, emerged from the steamer gorgeous in bright green coat and brighter scarlet trousers, a momentary silence fell upon the noisy crowd, and each man rose to his feet, while Colonel Grant, R.A., who had charge of all the labourers, advanced to meet him. After a few words of conversation, the wakeel gave an order to a subordinate, who passed it to a chief of Bashi-Bazouks.

In a moment the Bashi-Bazouks were urging a portion of the crowd—the swimmers—down to the water's edge, where each man, after a moment's pause to deftly bind his garment round his head and to inflate the water skin which is the travelling carriage of every Nubian dweller on the Nile, committed himself to the stream and paddled over to the island. In a few moments the surface of the river was dotted with innumerable little bobbing figures, some being borne down stream at tremendous pace by a race more than usually swift, some stationary in a stretch of back-water, some spinning top-like round and round in an eddy from which it was not easy to escape, and all laughing and shouting or *coeying* to each other with a peculiar and not unmusical double note, by which these river dwellers convey their voices to a great distance above the rush of the water and the roar of the stream."

The temporary but awkward accident which prevented the steamer from achieving the passage triumphantly instead of clumsily, was said to have been caused by the necessity for using grass ropes instead of hempen cables. The swiftness of the water, the distances over which the hawsers had to be carried to the different rocks and islands where the hauling parties could gain foothold made it important, if not absolutely essential, to use a rope that would float and not be a dead weight against the tremendous current. But the grass ropes were weak, the strain was great, and we have already referred to the consequences. Two five-and-a-half-inch hawsers parted just as the steamer had reached the top of the second "gate," whence she swung in against the shore. There were four more of these gates to pass, and the Great Gate, which was the most difficult, and the Nile began to fall; but Sir Evelyn Wood and Commander Hammill, after tackling Sheikh Coco, the navigator, who had come from Dongola to pilot the steamer over the rapids, determined with the permission of the admiralty, to try a channel which they had previously explored, and the passage was made after eight hours' hard work, with more parting of hawsers, and fresh cables taken out by a boat from the island. After being tracked through many difficult channels, and with the loss of three men, drowned by the carelessness and idleness of the

natives on shore in the course of tracking a ship's boat, the steamer passed the Bab-el-Kebir, or Great Gate, a narrow passage some 50 yards long and at its widest part 34 feet across. On either side are high rocks between which the water boils and surges down an incline of 1 foot in 10 feet, ending with an actual fall of about 5 feet. In this passage the steamer's paddles would, of course, be useless, so they were removed—and it was necessary to trust entirely to the wire cable round the steamer, to the 8-inch hempen hawsers which were to track her, and to the good-will and energy of the 3000 natives who were to do the actual work of hauling. This work was accomplished, however, much to the joy of these labourers, who, as the steamer was brought to the top of the channel and into calm water, shouted, danced, clapped their hands, flung themselves on the ground, and even jumped into the water and paddled round the vessel to relieve their excitement or to manifest their delight.

Of course the passage from Assiout to Assouan and, even after the first cataract, to Wady Halfa was an entirely different affair, and to General Earle and his staff, who had the khedive's superb yacht placed at their disposal, and to many others who went by the ordinary Nile boat, the journey was pleasant enough. There was an evident desire to get promptly to the front, and Sir Herbert Stewart had been sent to Dongola to take the command there. The real difficulties began at Wady Halfa. The seven miles of railway round the first cataract at Assouan was in pretty good order, and it was correspondingly easy to forward men, horses, and stores from Alexandria to Wady Halfa; but the thirty-three miles of rail from Wady Halfa to Sarras was a rickety affair. Trains broke down and blocked the traffic, the lines caved in, or some other cause of delay occurred repeatedly. But by the 25th of September some of the Royal Sussex men and the mounted infantry, with three months' provisions, were already at Dongola, and the remainder were well on their way in the native boats sent to Sarras by the mudir, in which they had been embarked by Major Sandwith, acting under the orders of Sir Evelyn Wood. The first contingents from Cairo were able to get on by the same

means. It was felt, however, that the general advance of the expedition could not take place till the arrival of the whale-boats.

On the 20th of September the headquarters of the mounted infantry and some 280 officers and men embarked on board nine nuggars which lay ready for them at Sarras, and though they knew that they had before them many days of hard work in tremendous heat or under a scorching sun, they were by no means disheartened, but cheerfully looked forward to the journey in open boats as a real change from the noisy, close, and dusty quarters at Wady Halfa. On each nuggar there were 40 men with all their stores, rations, and ammunition for 90 days, and about ten camel saddles. One boat had a tent awning and was kept in case it should be wanted as a floating hospital; only Major Gough, the adjutant of the corps, and the surgeon being on board. In illustrating the temper and the cheerful alacrity of the British soldier, and his readiness to make the best of whatever situation he may be placed in so long as he is actively engaged, it is among the distinct records of the expedition that in the 300 miles' journey from Sarras to Dongola, the frequent stoppages and the necessity of towing the boats for distances varying from 400 yards to three miles was regarded by both officers and men as a great relief from the tedium of sitting in the boats exposed to the scorching glare of the sun. No one could move on board a boat, and if a man dared to stand up the *reis* or native captain declared with frantic gestures that the vessel would be wrecked, and that he could not steer if anyone prevented him from seeing forward. The towing and hauling were therefore regarded as pleasant changes. A correspondent with the expedition wrote:—

“On these occasions the different boat parties displayed great spirit of rivalry, and some most exciting struggles for best place animated each band of trackers. The officers were quite as interested in the result as were their men, and it was amusing at more than one difficult point in the latter part of the voyage to see Colonel Sir Herbert Stewart, the new commandant of Dongola, and members of his staff, with coats off and shoes full of black mud, hauling, in the midst of the soldiers and the native crews,

on to a grass hawser, which almost invariably snapped suddenly and overthrew the whole party. The struggle over, the first boat round the difficult point would sail triumphantly away, the soldiers on board cheering and railing at the less fortunate occupants of the other boats still plodding wearily on the bank. The labour ended, and all the boats, save some one laggard, well under weigh again, the soldiers would sit, as Tommy Atkins will always sit when he gets a chance, with their pipes upside down in their mouths and their legs hanging over the sides of the boats and almost touching the water, and as one nuggar now and again overhauled another a volley of chaff would be exchanged between the occupants of the two crafts. Shortly before dusk the halt would be signalled from the major's boat, and all the crafts would, if possible, join and moor up to the bank. Then, as soon as guards were placed, all the men were allowed on shore, with, however, strict orders to keep out of the village if there happened to be one near. Orders were also given to spare the date-palms, but strict compliance with such a mandate was hardly to be expected. . . .

Sometimes when the wind failed altogether, or was so adverse as to render towing absolutely impracticable, the halt was necessarily called quite early in the afternoon. Then was Thomas Atkins in his element. He bathed in some shallow part of the stream, took his tea comfortably and at his ease reclining on the bank, and then, attired in his favourite off-duty undress, lounged about the bank enjoying the inevitable pipe and the jokes and conversation of his friends. Comfort in costume to the British soldier is represented as follows. His jacket and shirt are replaced by his great-coat, the cuffs of which are turned back. His trousers, unbraced, are rolled up to his knees. His boots are unlaced, his pipe, of course, upside down, and his helmet is put on wrong side before. Has he been able to obtain some particularly uncouth head-dress—such as an old and mangy rabbit or rat skin cap, a battered tarboosch, or broken-down and brimless felt hat—he dons it with pride and satisfaction, provided always it be thoroughly disreputable—for otherwise where would be the merit; but failing this, he is content with the helmet worn as I have described. In this attire,

and with a convenient post or tree to lean against, or with a rail or a bank to sit on, he enjoys the assertion of his dress, of his momentary freedom from restraint, and feels that he has, for the time being, retired into private life, where care cannot reach him till the next bugle-call."

At night there was usually a great fall in the thermometer, and the one blanket supplied to the men was not too much—especially as no stimulant was supplied, and there was no regimental canteen as there is at home, while the poor peasants on the banks had nothing to sell but a cup or two of goat's milk, which they could ill spare.

The dangers of the voyage were illustrated by an accident to a boat containing a number of the Sussex regiment in command of Lieutenant Crawford. It was in full sail when it ran on a sunken rock and split open. The boat was alone, and the stream wide at this point; the officer in command fired near a hundred rounds to attract attention, but some time elapsed before another nuggar could be brought to his assistance, and in this interval of time two men were drowned. Of the 40 men on board very few could swim—and the Nile current is dangerous even to the most powerful swimmers. Lieutenant Crawford insisted on the men sticking to the boat, as long as she held together, and having managed to attract the attention of Captain Powell, who was in another nuggar half a mile off, he was able to save all except the two mentioned. The wrecked boat went to pieces as soon as the men could be got on board Captain Powell's nuggar; and rifles, ammunition, stores, and kits were all lost.

On arriving at Dal, Major Gough was met by Sir H. Stewart and his staff. General Stewart had started from Sarras on horseback with little or no baggage, and had ridden for a day and a half, covering a distance of 40 miles. The road from Sarras was so rough that from the time of their start until their arrival at Dal, the commander and his party had been unable to get anything beyond a walk out of their beasts. General Sir H. Stewart, however, being determined to push on, resisted for the time being Major Gough's invitations to him to leave his horses and join the

boats as a less fatiguing and equally rapid mode of travelling. Two days later, however, the riding party succumbed and confessed themselves beaten. The boats met them again at Apsarat, 60 miles from Dal, and the ponies being by this time completely done up, and requiring at least two days' rest before proceeding, General Sir Herbert Stewart decided to throw in his lot with Major Gough, and the ponies were left behind in charge of their grooms. From Apsarat on to Dongola the country is fertile and cultivated, and the villagers brought down small articles for sale. As the boats neared Dongola these supplies increased, until, instead of the goats' milk and bad dates which for 150 miles had only been obtainable, the men were able to purchase sheep, fowls, eggs, and vegetables, all of which were very welcome to them as a change from the monotony of tinned rations.

It was soon to become known that there was an additional reason for hastening towards Dongola and the further rendezvous at Korti, whence the two forces would be directed, one to continue by the river, the other to cross the peninsula to Metammeh. General Wolseley had heard for certain that Gordon was now alone in Khartûm:—that the mission of his companions Stewart and Power had failed, or rather had been cut short almost at the outset:—that Stewart, Power, the French consul Herbin, and all, or nearly all, who were with them had been foully massacred. In the latter part of October the investigations which General Lord Wolseley had ordered confirmed the worst anticipations, and he sent the following telegrams to Sir Evelyn Baring:—

“Two messengers sent to inquire as to the fate of Colonel Stewart's party have returned. They report that the steamer was towing two boats containing M. Naoom with his brother and family. As the enemy was found to be overtaking them the convoy boats were cut adrift, and all on board of them were made prisoners. Shortly afterwards the steamer struck on a rock near Catadich. There were at this time forty-five persons on board, four of whom were women. Colonel Stewart and two consuls, one of whom was named Nicola, were among those on board. The whole party, except two natives, were killed by Sheikh

Suleiman. This information was obtained from one of the two survivors by the messenger. The man said that Colonel Stewart, whom he described as a tall man with a light beard, was certainly on board the steamer."

It was not, however, till four months later that the full truth was known. Then Hussein, the stoker of Stewart's steamer, escaped from the enemy, and came into the British camp. This is the story he told:—The party had left Khartûm in September. There were with them two other steamers. On board the *Abdai* were Colonel Stewart, two pashas, two European consuls, Hassan Bey, twelve Greeks, and some Egyptian soldiers, besides the crew. When they reached Berber they shelled the forts there. After this the other steamers went back.

They came on down the Nile. Nothing happened until they had passed Abu Hamed, but on September 18th the steamer struck on a rock. They were then passing through Wad Gamr's country. As they had passed down they had seen the people running away into the hills on both sides of the river. When it was found that the steamer could not be got off the rock the small-boat, filled with useful things, was sent to a little island near. Four trips were made. Then Colonel Stewart himself spiked the guns and threw them overboard, and also two boxes of ammunition. The people now came down to the right bank in great numbers, shouting, "Give us peace and grain." Stewart's party answered, "Peace." Suleiman Wad Gamr himself was in a small house near the bank, and he came out and called to Colonel Stewart to land without fear, but said that the soldiers must be unarmed or the people would be afraid of them. Colonel Stewart, after talking it over with the others, then crossed in the boats with the two English consuls and Hassan Bey and entered the house of a blind man, Fakir Etman, to arrange with Suleiman for the purchase of camels to take the party down to Dongola. None of the four had any arms, with the exception of Colonel Stewart, who carried a small revolver in his pocket. While they were in the house the rest began to land in the boat. After a little time these saw Suleiman come out of the house with a copper water-pot in

his hand. He made signs to the people, who were all gathered near the house. They immediately divided into two parties, one entering the house, the other rushing down towards those gathered on the bank shouting and waving their spears. Hussein was with the party who had landed when they charged down, and on seeing the move he and the rest threw themselves into the river. The natives fired, killing some of the swimmers; many others were drowned, and the rest speared as they came near the bank. Hussein swam to the island and hid there till dark, when he was made prisoner with some others and sent to Berti. He heard that Colonel Stewart and the two Englishmen were killed at once. Hassan Bey held the blind man before him so that they could not spear him. They spared his life, and he afterwards escaped to Berber. Two artillerymen, two sailors, and three natives are still alive at Berber, where they were sent by Suleiman. All the money found on board and in the victims' pockets was divided among the men who did the murder. Everything else of value was placed in two boxes and sent under a guard to Berber. The bodies of Stewart, Power, and the others were thrown in the river.

It will, perhaps, be convenient, in view of the consecutive character of the narrative, if we here follow the further details afterwards made known from information obtained by Major Kitchener:—

“The steamer struck a rock at the entrance of the Monassir cataracts, just below the island of Kanaiett, on the small island of Um-Dewermat. Stewart, Power, and the French consul were on board. Stewart ordered the spare ammunition to be thrown into the river, and, after spiking the small gun, threw it also into the river.

The inhabitants were at first much alarmed, and ran away, but Stewart sent the reis Mohammed on shore to reassure them, and promised them peace. The natives sent word at once to Suleiman Wad Gamr, who came to the house of Etman Fakir, a blind man living on the right bank of the river, who has considerable influence over Suleiman, and was his principal adviser during the subsequent proceedings.

Stewart ordered camels to be brought to take him and his party to Merawi. The camels were brought, and the baggage was brought on shore by the soldiers in a small boat, and the camels were being loaded, when Stewart ordered the sheikh to come and receive full payment for them as far as Merawi.

Suleiman Wad Gamr had previously seen the reis Mohammed, and found out from him who the party consisted of. He then promised him that his life should be spared if he would bring Stewart and the consuls unarmed to his house.

On receipt of the message from Stewart to come and receive the hire of the camels, he replied to the effect that he was ruler of that part of the country, that he considered Stewart as his guest, and that if he would come and pay him a visit in his house he would be very glad to receive him, and would then receive half the price of the camels as far as Merawi, the remainder to be paid on their safe arrival at Merawi.

Stewart started to go to the house, when he was met by a messenger to say that if he came with an armed party or with arms the sheikh's people would run away, and requesting him to leave soldiers and arms behind. This was accordingly done, and Stewart, with Power and the French consul, accompanied by their interpreter, the telegraph clerk Hussein, went alone to the house of Etman Fakir.

They were well received, and supplied with dates and coffee. Suleimen went out and called in his men, who rushed in shouting 'Surrender.' Stewart gave up his pistol, and said he surrendered. The consuls were immediately attacked with swords. Stewart fought hard with only his fists, but was overcome. Hussein, the interpreter, caught hold of Etman and protected himself with his body from the blows made at him. He was severely wounded, but not killed. After Stewart and the consuls had been killed the party sallied out and surprised the soldiers, who were busy loading their camels. They rushed for the boat, which was upset. Two men of the Monassir were shot, and the Turkish soldiers were then despatched as they came to the bank; the blacks and Dongolawi men being taken prisoners. The steamer was then looted, but

was not otherwise damaged. The prisoners and papers found were sent to Berber.

Suleiman paid 400 of his men $1\frac{1}{4}$ dollars each out of the money taken on the steamer for their work."

There was, perhaps, no more striking indication of the far-reaching resources of the British empire than the engagement of the Canadian voyageurs, the grave skilful boatmen and half-breed Indians of the Great Lakes, to enlist for duty in navigating the Nile and guiding the great flotilla that was to carry British soldiers to the remote border-lands and arid deserts of the Soudan. That troops leaving India and the West Indies should be intercepted and conveyed to Egypt was a less striking circumstance than that many of the children of "Red Indians," the Cree and Iroquois half-breeds, should be seen quietly and confidently steering through the land of Nubia to the Land of the Blacks. The greater number of the Canadians undoubtedly did their work well, and the manner in which the pioneer expedition surmounted the difficulties of the river entitled them to confidence. They did not quite approve of the build of the boats which they had to take through the rapids, and thought they would have been better without keels; but they did not, at first at any rate, regard the navigation of the Nile as dangerous, though it was more laborious and difficult than they liked or expected. In the pioneer expedition, too, the boats were manned by the engineers under Major Dorward, and damages were readily repaired. When the river began to fall the volume and force of the water diminished, but the stream had previously run pretty smoothly and with sufficient depth in places that at lower level showed a series of rapids. The soldiers, however, thoroughly appreciated the skill and alacrity of the Canadians, without whose coolness and experience at the helm the voyage could not have been made, even with the help of soldiers and labourers to haul up the boats and to take out the cargoes at the foot of the cataract, to be portaged to the upper end by the Egyptian soldiers. The voyageurs at first rather under-estimated the difficulties, and at Wady Halfa were asking, Where are the cataracts? Colonel Alleyne, too, considered that the second cataract was but a trifling

obstacle as compared with some of those on the Red River. The men discovered afterward, however, that the Nile rapids have peculiar dangers and difficulties of their own which require great skill and promptitude, and it cannot be denied that these qualities were characteristics of the steersmen.

To the voyageurs the aspect of the country and of its inhabitants was of course strange, but they entered on their duties with a cheerful determination to make the best of circumstances, and Colonel Denison had made judicious arrangements for their general comfort. They went the voyage to Assiout in two large barges covered with temporary roofs and fitted up with old-fashioned camp-fires of clay and brick, so that a dozen cooking pans could be set upon them at once. A man out of each gang was selected as cook, to convert the rations of bread and canned beef into savoury messes by the addition of preserved vegetables and seasoning. The men were all in the best spirits, some playing cards to amuse themselves, and others pelting the natives along the shore with bits of biscuit. On arriving at Assouan they were transferred to the cars, which took them to Shellal, and there embarked in the expedition boats, which were tied together with ropes four abreast. One of the men suffered from ophthalmia and was left at the hospital at Assouan. On the 3d of November they were encamped three miles above Wady Halfa, and the next day began the work of taking the boats up the rapids. The correspondent of the *Toronto Globe* who accompanied them wrote: "The men were eager to see who would be the first to get into quiet water above. One of the officers in charge of the boats told me it took from fifteen to twenty natives to take a boat up in a day; we accomplished the same work in two hours with seven men, and not only did we 'astonish the natives,' but the officers of the sailors' camp as well. This was our first stage up the rapids. After waiting two days at the first portage we were divided into four squads. One was left at the first camp, one moved to the head of the first stage, four miles up, and the third squad four miles further on. One of the gangs was sent to the head of the rapids to ascertain what the boats would carry at the pitch which the water had



HAULING BOATS PAST A CATARACT OF THE NILE.

NOVEMBER, 1884.

then reached. Here the foreman of the Caughnawaga Indians was drowned." Another of the same company of voyageurs had been drowned on the 31st of October in the rapids at Wady Halfa.

Major Dorward and five pioneer boats arrived at the Ambigol Cataract on the 5th of November after a very arduous journey with hard rowing all the time. The Canadians were of opinion that the boats were too deeply laden for safety, and that the difficulty and danger would be best met by the army advancing in parties of ten boats at a time. There would then, they said, be enough voyagers to man the boats and take them up through the difficult places.

The ascent of the Ambigol Cataract was a very stiff piece of work, as the height of the river was changing every day, and between Ambigol and Mangol the stream for twelve miles presented the appearance of a continuous rapid, with intervals in which it broke in foam over a rocky bed. The boats passed up the rapids nearest to Ambigol without accident. They were partially unladen. They were then taken up separately, two Canadians taking their places in the boat to steer her, and the united crews of fifty men laying on to the hawsers, and so hauling them one by one up the rapids. The shores near Ambigol were strewn with the timbers of wrecked boats. While the engineers' boats were ascending the rapids Alleyne's boats came down and shot the rapids with great velocity, to the immense astonishment of the native and Egyptian soldiers.

The descending of the Nile is in some respects more difficult and dangerous than the ascending. In ascending it is easy to stop the boat's way by lowering the sail, the current will then sweep her away from a danger ahead. In descending, the current constantly tends to sweep the boat on to any danger in front. In Lord Wolseley's whaler-boats, the masts being struck, the descent by oars was as sure as the ascent, save that greater care in steering was required, and that the rapids, in whole or part, could be shot instead of tracked. A course down a rapid being chosen, the men rowed as strongly as they could in order to get good steerage-way

on the boat. Slack rowing leads to disaster. A man upset in the fairway course of a rapid must inevitably be sucked down and drowned. The nuggar descends in a manner peculiarly her own. She goes stern foremost, with the sail either closely furled or slightly unfurled to deflect her from danger, or to carry her into the strongest downward current. Thus the boat is steered partly by the great rudder acting on contrary currents and partly by the wind acting on the sail. The natives in the Upper Nile valley manage their boats with surprising skill. One instant the traveller will consider, as certain, his destruction on a rock whereon he is being swept by a furious Nile torrent, the next he is in safety, how, he can scarcely say.

It may be very well understood that the Canadians had a very poor opinion of the natives, who would squat by the shore or on a boat, and do nothing unless they were stirred up by the kourbash of the Bashi-Bazouks who were sent by the mudir to keep them at work, and who, in their gaudy uniform and with sashes full of knives and pistols, stalked about among the labourers and waked up the skulkers. The younger generation of Dongolese boatmen and Nubians, however, elicited the admiration of the voyageurs for their cheerful alacrity and the manner in which they would plunge into the river, even amidst a whirlpool, and carry a rope to boat or shore. Many of these young black fellows had what to them was a jovial time. They had more to eat than they were accustomed to, and though they worked hard it was in jolly company, for the rough but good-humoured patronage of the British soldiers delighted these merry fellows, who were quickly initiated into the outdoor sports which even there were carried on by our men; and the "tug of war," the long and the high jump, and other athletic games, well suited the cheerful, active, muscular youths whose black-bronze faces were expanded in a perpetual grin.

It is necessary to pause for a moment to consider what an undertaking this expedition was committed to. The labour was enormous. There were fortifications to dig, the railways to repair and to extend, and the constant business of hauling, tracking, and transporting stores up the cataracts and at the various portages.

In all these operations the British troops were aided, and exceedingly well aided too, by two thousand of the Egyptian soldiers of the army of Sir Evelyn Wood. These men were all stationed at various places south of Assouan, and everybody acknowledged that they did their duty.

The work of towing the boats was enormously heavy, and the whole voyage was so difficult and dangerous that the loss of a percentage of the boats was to be expected. The river banks were altogether unsuitable for towing. Heavy sand, interspersed with trees and rocks, is not easy to walk over under any circumstances; but when dragging a long rope—with a boat at the end of it—which catches in trees and has to be passed round projecting stones continually, the labour becomes severe in the extreme. A correspondent asking two or three voyageurs what they thought of the river as compared with Canadian streams, they explained that the cataracts on the latter are far more difficult and formidable than anything they had yet seen on the Nile. But then on the Ottawa “they guessed” that when they had passed a cataract they generally had a fairly long stretch of slack water; but here the rapids “seemed pretty thick, and came out one top of another a little too soon.” When informed that sixty miles further on, the *Batn-el-Hajar* came to an end, and that they would have two or three hundred miles of comparatively slack water, they ejaculated, “Sixty miles! Then this business is a big job, and no mistake.”

The passage of the first or pioneer boats, described by an eye-witness, gives a fair picture of the manner of the voyageurs. “The breeze comparatively was light, and for half an hour I watched ere the leading boat entered the lowermost point of the rapids; which she did in advance of the *dahabeeah*. The lofty expanse of sail the latter exposed to the wind enabled her, however, to pass again the smaller boat, and slowly, but surely, she breasted the stream, and entering the quieter water above, went on her way but little delayed. In comparison with her the five whalers looked like cockle-shells floating on the current as they swayed across rapidly from eddy to eddy, or paused in mid-stream as the gusts of wind or water caught them. Although deeply laden and carrying nearly

two tons of stores, besides twelve men each, they seemed to have sufficient freeboard, and appeared under perfect control. The leading boat I could see with my glasses carried the native reis told off to act as guide. He stood in the bows beside the Canadian, endeavouring to direct the soldier who steered, but for a long time they remained motionless in the current, making little or no headway. At several points they essayed to ascend, but always apparently found the current too strong, and drifted back again to their former position. All the time the voyageur, seated in the bows filling his pipe, evidently abstained from interfering with the reis. There cannot be two captains to a boat any more than to a ship. But boat No. 2 was all the time rapidly approaching. Her voyageur I could see go aft and take the tiller himself. Coming close inshore he made for a rock, behind which a long eddy tailed for a hundred yards. Up this he sailed with great velocity, and just as, apparently, he was about to collide with the rock he sheered out into the stream, steadied and paused for a moment as his boat met the rush of water—her timbers, as one of the men told me afterwards, quivering with the shock—and slowly but perceptibly, with the aid of a friendly puff, passed over the critical point. Making for the shore again near the opposite bank he entered slack water, and tore on after the dahabeeah. Still the boat under native command fails to ascend, and the other three also lie huddled together in mid stream, their sails flapping between the gusts against the masts. But all, apparently, are put on their mettle by the success of the boat that has gone before them. The men put out their oars. The voyageur who has a native reis to assist him has lit his pipe, and tells, I suppose, that reis to hold his tongue, for the latter sits down quiescent on a thwart, and interferes no more. And then they breast the stream with sails and oars together, taking advantage, as did the first boat, of all the eddies, as far as possible, before attempting to enter the main current. In twenty minutes after the leading boat, the other four had passed; and the first obstacle on the voyage to Dal was overcome.”

“But by and by the wind dropped and the channel narrowed,

so that the water flowed too swiftly down to sail or row against. So, putting in to the bank, one-half the crew of each whaler took tow-ropes ashore and began laboriously to track up stream. But in this was seen the advantage of small boats over large. The dahabeeah aforesaid, heavy and unwieldy, had to stop altogether, waiting for the breeze to freshen, while the boats went on until sundown. While they were pulling up against the rapids I was struck with the comparative degree of efficiency the soldiers displayed in the use of their oars. Probably no nation in the world, save ours, could venture to despatch an expedition like this one. For there are few English lads, to whatever class they may belong, who have not one time or other, on river, lake, or sea, mastered the rudiments of rowing. And so, amongst these fifty engineers there were half a dozen found to handle the tiller; some were able from the beginning to display high art in feathering their oars, while all could do their share of work in propelling the craft on which they had embarked. Every day, too, the crews will get more proficient, so that if ever we reach Khartûm it will be with three or four thousand soldiers who are experienced boatmen as well."

The adjectives and expressions employed by the voyageurs savoured very evidently of American backwoods and Canadian lumber rafts. Yet the names of the five Canadians in charge of the pioneer boats were: James Graham, foreman, a complete Scotchman in type, and cautious disposition. Anthony Milks, a handsome Anglo-Saxon, with soft blue eyes and brown hair, of the true old Viking stock. Robert Simpson, another Scotsman in descent; and William M'Nair, and James Elliott, who, although they never saw Ireland, were as evident sons of Erin in appearance and manner as may be found between Dublin and Cork. All five, although not selected men by any means, were of magnificent physique; far above the average of their respective mother countries in that respect; and good enough in every way to be put forward as specimens of the best of the race. There were neither Frenchmen nor Indians in the first boats; and the five Americo-Britons were proud of the fact that they had the pioneer boats of

the expedition in charge, and they were determined to do well with them.

But it was the second week in November before these boats reached Dal, and on the 14th a messenger from Major Kitchener arrived at Dongola with a letter from Gordon to Lord Wolseley dated November 4th, and despatches in cipher for the government. This was the letter referring to the death of Colonel Stewart. The Mahdi was eight hours' journey from Khartûm. The Mudir of Dongola had also received a message from Gordon promoting him and his fellow-notables, and expecting him to fight to the last, as he himself meant to do. The messenger had said that the general illuminated Khartûm in honour of Lord Wolseley and the advancing force, and it was reported that there was plenty of food, and that thirty boats had come in laden with grain from the Blue Nile on the day of the messenger's departure. Another messenger came in soon afterwards reporting that Gordon had been joined by some deserters from the Mahdi's camp. Affairs at Khartûm were evidently approaching a crisis. The Mahdi in all probability hastened his movements, and prepared to strike a blow at Gordon and take the place. He marched up from Obeid with perhaps 30,000 men and occupied Omdurman, only a few miles from Khartûm. Thence he summoned Gordon to surrender the already beleaguered city. The answer returned was:—"If you are the real Mahdi dry up the Nile and come over and I'll surrender." It was afterwards declared that the Mahdi actually essayed to accomplish what Gordon had ironically challenged him to do—that he ordered his followers to march across the river, and that three thousand of them perished in the attempt. He then commenced the attack, but Gordon with his twelve steamers and 800 brave followers, by means of eight hours' hard fighting outside the walls and by blowing up the enemy's forts with mines, drove him out of Omdurman southward to a place called El Margal, where the pretended prophet hid himself in a cave, and gave out that after sixty days of rest blood would flow like water.

Gordon's letter to Lord Wolseley had, as it was afterwards known, disclosed that there were at Khartûm enough provisions

to last forty days, and that he had sent some steamers down the Nile towards Shendy to await the arrival of the expedition.

This will explain the anxiety of the commander to accelerate if possible the passage of the expedition and the arrival of the whole force at Dongola (El Ourdeh), where the headquarters and the camp had been formed previous to the occupation of Korti.

The result was that a prize of £100 was offered to the battalion which should make the best passage from Sarras to Debbeh; and the following general order was issued:—

“To the sailors, soldiers, and marines of the Nile Expedition.

The relief of General Gordon and his garrison, so long besieged in Khartûm, is the glorious mission which the queen has intrusted to us. It is an enterprise that will stir the heart of every soldier and sailor fortunate enough to have been selected to share in it, and the very magnitude of its difficulty only stimulates us to increased exertions. We are all proud of General Gordon and his gallant and self-sacrificing defence of Khartûm, which has added, if possible, to his already high reputation. He cannot hold out many months longer, and he now calls upon us to save his garrison. His heroism and his patriotism are household words wherever our language is spoken; and not only has his safety become a matter of national importance, but the knowledge that our brave comrade needs help, urges us to push forward with redoubled energy. Neither he nor his garrison can be allowed to meet the sad fate which befell his gallant companion in arms, Colonel Stewart, who, when endeavouring to carry out an enterprise of unusual danger and folly, was treacherously murdered by his captors. We can—and with God’s help will—save General Gordon from such a death. The labour of working up this river is immense, and to bear it uncomplainingly demands the highest soldierlike qualities, that contempt for danger, and that determination to overcome difficulty which in previous campaigns have so distinguished all ranks of her majesty’s army and navy. The physical obstacles that impede our rapid progress are considerable; but who cares for them when it is remembered that General Gordon and his garrison are in danger. Under God their safety is now in our hands, and come what may

we must save them. It is needless to say more to British soldiers and sailors."

As we have already noted, Dongola had nothing to distinguish it in the way of picturesque situation or interesting buildings and monuments. The bazaar was only fourth rate; and there were few attractions notwithstanding the residence in the town of the mudir (who had been made a pasha by order of the khedive), and his resplendent Turkish, Circassian, and Albanian officers, who, according to the wont of their countrymen, had pretty well milked the cow of Egypt, were to be seen gorgeously attired, while the mudir himself was in religious seclusion and wore a comparatively shabby uniform decorated with tarnished lace and two or three sizes too big for him. Sir Herbert Stewart, the English commandant, had been two days in Dongola el Ourdeh before he could obtain an interview with the mudir, who had all along held somewhat aloof and behaved with an assumption of superiority which was supposed to be the effect of his aiming at a reputation for saintliness, and caused his protestations of sincerity and loyalty to be suspected.

The interview between his highness and the English commander took place just before the celebration of the feast of Kourban Bairam, however, and this was the occasion of a very ceremonial reception of all the notables at the government house, the court-yard of which was lined with the black troops and Bashi-Bazouks who had fought at Debbeh and at Korti, and after the reception these soldiers heartily greeted their pasha. Of course the holiday was signalized by sports and observances of various kinds, and equally of course the former chiefly consisted of galloping wildly about on horses and firing guns or beating tom-toms. Our officers and soldiers took a prominent part in them as observers. The mudir had apparently had a faint notion that he would be the commander of the British forces at Dongola, and that the *Nassif-Kheir* steamer, which he visited on its arrival, would be for his especial use; but he was gently allowed to discover that he had miscalculated his authority to exercise more than the civil governorship, and it must be conceded that he took the discovery

in good part, and as he was permitted to make it for himself had the shrewdness not to remonstrate.

It need scarcely be said that the British camp was quite a conspicuous feature in the town, or rather just outside the town—the site for the Sussex regiments having been very judiciously chosen; placarded directions to it and to the commissariat field hospital and mounted-infantry camp being one of the first objects noticed by passengers arriving at the river side on the nuggars or steamers. The 1st Royal Sussex, encamped in rows of tents between rows of date-palms to protect them from heat and dust, were old campaigners, for they had been living almost constantly under canvas for four years, and had adopted all the best contrivances for comfort and the best means for maintaining cheerfulness and good fellowship which could be discovered under the circumstances.

In the 1882 campaign, while this regiment was encamped on the Mahmoudieh Canal, the men had made their tents look something like some of the canvas abodes at Wimbledon by inscribing them with titles such as “The Old Grumblers’ Retreat” or “The Cottage by the Sea” mostly by the aid of charcoal; and though they had no leisure there for much recreation, they were worthy to be comrades of Mark Tapley in regard to jollity. At Dongola they remained faithful to their tradition, and held weekly concerts, and by the aid of a part of their band, which had contrived to get to the front, made very successful entertainments. It may be remembered that both the general in command and the officers of the expedition, not only permitted, but encouraged and occasionally stimulated by their personal presence these social amusements, and this will in great measure account for the cheerfulness, and even for the comparatively healthy condition of the men.

Beyond the “Sussex” camp was the commissariat headquarters, a little fortress of bales, barrels, and boxes, the field hospital, in a cool and shady spot, with spacious accommodation for some sixty patients, and occupied by a much smaller number, the average of sick among the troops being under 5 per cent, though a number of men had fallen sick early in the campaign during the passage of

the Nile, and had to remain at the hospital at Wady Halfa or to be returned there.

The mounted infantry camp at Dongola was in the same area beyond the Sussex, the camels being picketed neatly in lines in the plain some 200 yards from the tents. From these lines rose throughout the day a tremendous bellowing, roaring, screaming, and groaning. Save when worn out by fatigue the camel is never quiet. He is never at any time happy; he will mostly bite at the hand that feeds and tends him with the same animosity that he exhibits towards the hand that loads and bridles him. He knows naught of gratitude, is bereft of any of the softer passions, and looks on whomsoever approaches him for whatever purpose as his bitterest enemy. It must be remembered, however, that he has never been much encouraged to regard mankind otherwise. The men and officers of the mounted infantry sought by care and attention to improve his health and appearance by every means in their power. They even went so far as to groom him, an attention to which the camel is altogether unaccustomed, and which at first so filled him with astonishment as to deprive him of the power to protest. Soon, however, it dawned upon him that he was being cleaned, and, his resentment quickly roused, he at once filled the air with hideous roars and groans, which he never failed to renew each time the process was repeated.

It was a remarkable instance of the adaptability of the English, however, that our men who took part in the camel as well as in the horse and pony races which they were conspicuous in starting, although they were not actual winners, got very good places in the front, and yet they had only had about a fortnight's practice and competed with those who had almost lived on camels from their birth.

On the 1st of December the last boat with soldiers on board had left Wady Halfa, and the troops which had not already reached Dongola were then all advancing at various stages.

At Debbeh there were three companies of the Sussex Regiment (35th); at Handak, forty miles in advance of Dongola, the mounted infantry, the Guards camel corps, and one squadron of Hussars—in

all, eight hundred mounted men. At Dongola five companies of the Sussex Regiment, who were preparing to move forward.

On the line between Dongola and Sarras were six sections of the heavy camel corps, six sections of the light camel corps, a battery of artillery, and two squadrons of Hussars. At Wady Halfa three sections of light and four of the heavy camel corps. The marine camel corps was also at Wady Halfa.

The infantry below Dongola were at the following stations:— The Cameron Highlanders (79th) at Korosko; the West Kent (50th) and the Royal Irish (18th) at Wady Halfa; the Black Watch (42d), the Essex Regiment (56th), the Gordon Highlanders (75th), and the Duke of Cornwall's Regiment (46th) all in boats toiling up the long reaches of cataracts between Sarras and Dal; while, also in boats between Dal and Dongola, were seven companies of the South Staffordshire Regiment (38th).

The general impression at Dongola was that the main body of the expedition could hardly arrive at Khartûm before the end of March. The mounted troops under General Stewart were, however, to advance in the following week to Ambukol, and by the end of the month the entire camel corps, the Hussars, and two regiments of infantry were to be concentrated at that place. They would then be prepared to stretch a hand across the desert to Shendy to assist General Gordon, should he call urgently for aid, even if the main body had not arrived at the general rendezvous.

The advanced guard of the expedition was fast assembling at Korti, where it had been announced that a Frenchman, a reputed journalist named Olivier Pain, who was in the camp of the Mahdi and had his full confidence, had been in communication with a clique at Cairo, and that the Mahdi had been supplied with full information of the proceedings of the British expedition, and with suggestions as to the best means of opposing the advance.

The camp at Korti was a pleasant place after the long and toilsome journey, and was likely to be appreciated by the men who had worked on the boats. The tents of the camel corps were pitched under spreading groves of trees extending to the banks of the river, which there took a winding course in broad still

reaches. On the 12th of December Sir Herbert Stewart, with the mounted infantry and the Guards camel corps, started from Ambukol, on the 15th he reached Korti, and Lord Wolseley arrived on the following day. The advance was now being made as rapidly as possible, for the men of each battalion had striven hard in a rivalry with which *esprit de corps* had more to do than the offered reward. Very little regard was paid to native rumours, most of which were found to be false; but the story of the murder of Colonel Stewart still dwelt in the minds of the men, who looked forward to the time when they might be able to punish the treacherous cowards who had committed the crime. This, they discovered, would probably be at a spot some fifty miles above Merawi, where the hostile tribes were said to be assembling. The attention of the whole camp was for a short time devoted to preparations for celebrating Christmas-day. It was known that double rations would be issued on that day, and the regiments had been ordered to collect a vast quantity of firewood, for two great camp bonfires were to be lighted, around which the whole of the troops then at Korti were to assemble in the evening and to hold high festival with songs, amateur theatricals, and various forms of merriment; there was to be no fatigue duty on that day; but the promptitude of the expedition was tested a day or two beforehand by the sudden sound of the alarm, on hearing which the whole force turned out in a few minutes quite prepared to repel an attack if the enemy had been there to make one.

The camp at Korti was a refreshing and even a picturesque place, laid out in broad avenues, kept well watered by coolies from the adjacent villages, who were paid for the work. On the high bank above the river there were evening assemblies of officers and men to listen to the band of the Sussex Regiment. Korti was, in fact, a pleasant and welcome resting-place after the severe labour and hardship of the river and the desert. The men's spirits rose as soon as they had begun to recruit their strength there. All day singing and laughter might be heard in camp; and at night, when the slow water of the Nile shimmered in the bright moonlight, the echo of their choruses might be heard from the

opposite bank, and the dark figures of the men be seen, through the veil of smoke, moving about the camp-fires, perhaps with the silhouettes of two or three camels in the background.

On Christmas night, the day having been observed with no small amount of jollification, but soberly and decent withal, the whole force, from the general in command downward, assembled in a vast circle round an open-air stage erected by the Royal Engineers. There were no lack of entertainers, and excellent music, burlesque orations, comic, sentimental, and patriotic songs, part-songs and choruses, nigger dances, and serenades, topical songs, and other amusing performances were kept going with much spirit in accordance with a regular programme, to which both officers and men contributed, several volunteers filling up the intervals during which the performers had to be brought forward, among them a blue jacket from the *Nassif-el-Kheir*, whose appearance on the platform elicited unbounded applause. It was a striking scene, a creditable and highly enjoyable performance; and probably no finer body of troops was ever assembled, though they were hardened by toil, sunburnt, scarred, and, truth to tell, rather shabbily clad in worn, and many in ragged, uniforms.

Lord Wolseley was there all the time with cheery looks and words and sprightly confident bearing; and the entertainment was to have been repeated on New Year's night, but no more time could be spared for rest or amusement. Tidings of Gordon still holding on, but of the Mahdi gathering his forces, were received. Rumours, many, and often conflicting, at all events tended to show that there must be a rapid move towards Khartûm, and it was determined to push forward a column across the Bayûda territory to Metammeh, and at the same time to pursue the journey by the Nile with a force under General Brackenbury.

The latest news received from Gordon at Khartûm forbade unnecessary delay. His letter, dated November 4th, had said:—“At Metammeh waiting your orders are five steamers with nine guns. We can hold out forty days with ease, after that it will be difficult. The Mahdi is here about eight miles away. All north side along the White Nile is free of Arabs, they are on south and

south-west and east of town some way off. They are quiet. I should take the road from Ambukol to Metammeh, where my steamers wait for you." On the back of the letter was a small plan showing the distribution of the Mahdi's army (20,000 men) and the number and position of his guns.

The arrival of five of Gordon's steamers at Shendy, the fighting round Khartûm, the desertion of some of the Mahdi's followers (the Baggaras), and the report of sickness and starvation in his camp had been made known to General Wolseley and the officers of the expedition by their own messengers before their arrival at Korti; and some hostile bands had been seen on the desert between Debbeh and Khartûm, but none were reported between Korti and Metammeh.

All was bustle and excitement at the camp at Korti after the 16th of December; troops were arriving by land and water;—the various detachments of the camel corps after their dreary ride along the banks, shaken and stiff with the unceasing jog of the animals, to which, however, they had at last become accustomed; the men who came by water and toiled at the oars, strained and burnt, and with stiffened, blistered hands, but all, as the phrase goes, "fit" and in excellent form, and above all, cheery and determined. Though the Christmas-night festivities were permitted and enjoyed, there was no slackening of exertion, and as quickly as the troops arrived preparations were made for what was already known as "the desert march," while the advanced boats of the river column were being sent on to Belal and the foot of what for some reason the war department named the Gerendid Cataract.

It had been for some days pretty well understood that the original idea of making the advance only by river to Berber and thence to Khartûm had been abandoned, and that the only way to rescue Gordon within the time that he might be able to hold out would be to despatch troops across the Bayûda, and the camel regiments had been specially organized for this purpose: the camel battery, camel transport, camel bearers, and camel field-hospital. To those who already knew something of the country and of the desperate



MAJOR GENERAL H. BRACKENBURY C B

method of fighting adopted by the Arab followers of the Mahdi this desert expedition was regarded as a difficult and dangerous enterprise; but it had to be done, and to be done as quickly as possible if the sole end and intention of the expedition was to be accomplished. Barely stated, the future plan of the campaign was that the greater portion of the mounted troops under Sir Herbert Stewart was to advance across the desert from Korti to Metammeh, establishing fortified posts at the wells along the route. Sir Charles Wilson was to accompany the column, and on reaching Metammeh was, with a small escort of infantry, to proceed in Gordon's steamers to Khartûm, and having communicated with Gordon to return to Metammeh to report the result to General Sir Herbert Stewart. Simultaneously with the despatch of the desert column, a force under command of General Earle was to be sent up the river to punish the murderers of Colonel Stewart and the consuls, and then to advance to Berber to co-operate with Stewart's force in an attack on the Mahdi before Khartûm under the personal command of Lord Wolseley, who was to have joined Stewart with the remainder of the mounted troops and a force of infantry. Second in command of this river column and chief staff-officer to Major-general Earle was Major-general Henry Brackenbury, C.B., who, up to the time of his arrival at Korti on the 24th of December, had been engaged as deputy-adjutant and quartermaster-general under Sir Redvers Buller, the chief of the staff. From the work of this department he was set free on Christmas-day, and was replaced by Colonel Wolseley, assistant adjutant-general, that he might devote his whole time to organizing the river column, and at the earliest possible moment take a battalion of infantry and a few cavalry to establish an advance post at Handab, above the cataract and near Duguiyet, the point where the desert road from Berber strikes the river. The five troops comprising the cavalry of the expedition were to be divided between the desert and the river column, half to go with each, and the same with the royal engineers (with their equipment), who had made the journey to Korti by their boats. The first battalion of the South Staffordshire Regiment, which had led the way up the

river in the whalers, was to continue to lead the advance, with Colonel Eyre in command.

On the 29th Major-general Brackenbury was ready to start, following half a troop of the 19th Hussars under Captain Aylmer, 26 of all ranks, and thirty horses, who marched to overtake the battalion of the Staffords and a detachment of the 26th company of engineers, who had embarked by river on the previous day. Before starting Major-general Brackenbury went to say good-bye to Sir Herbert Stewart and Mr. St. Leger Herbert, both of whom had served with him in South Africa and who were old and esteemed friends, Sir Herbert Stewart having succeeded him as military secretary to Lord Wolseley, and St. Leger Herbert having been his companion in Cyprus. They were never to meet again in this world.

General Gordon's letter of the 4th of November already referred to contained on the reverse side the names of the Europeans who went with Colonel Stewart in the steamer from Khartûm, and in reference to this the letter said, "I sent Colonel Stewart, Power, and Herbin down, telling them to give you all information. With Colonel Stewart was the journal of all events from 1st March to the 10th September. The steamer carried a gun and had a good force on board." Then, in reference to the steamers sent to Shendy: "With steamers are my journals from 10th September to date with all details and map of Berber." Other paragraphs of the letter, which was somewhat of a series of detached jottings in Gordon's peculiar manner, said:—

"Mahdi says he will not fight during this month, Moharram.

"With him are all the Europeans, nuns, &c.; rumoured all are become Mussulmen. Slatin is there; Lupton, Mahdi says, has surrendered.

"Since 10th March we have had up to date, exclusive of Kitchener's, 14th October, only two despatches: one, Dongola, with no date; one from Suakim, 5th May; one of some [? same] import, 27th April.

"I have sent out a crowd of messengers in all directions during eight months.

“Get the newspapers to say I received letters through Kitchener from Sir S. Baker, my sister, Stanley, from Congo. Do not send any more letters private, it is too great a risk. Do not write in cipher, for I have none, and it is of no import, for Mahdi knows everything, and you need not fear him.

“I should take the road from Ambukol to Metammeh, where my steamers wait for you. Leontides, Greek consul-general, Hauswell, Austrian consul, all right.

“Stewart, Power, and Herbin went down in the *Abbas*.

“A letter came from Mitzakis, the 31st July, from Adowa.

“The messenger had a letter from King for me, but Mahdi captured it. Please explain that to his majesty.

“If journal is lost with Stewart we have no record of events from the 1st March to the 10th September, except a journal kept by doctor.

“Your expedition is for relief of garrison, which I failed to accomplish. I decline to agree that it is for me personally.

“Stewart’s journal was a gem, illustrated with all the Arabic letters of Mahdi to me, &c.

“You may not know what has passed here.

“The Arabs camped outside Khartûm on the 12th March. We attacked them on the 16th March, got defeated, and lost heavily, also a gun. We then from that date had continued skirmishes with Arabs. Stewart was wounded slightly in arm.

“On one occasion when river rose we drove off Arabs in three or four engagements and fired their towns. Sent up to Sennâr two expeditions; had another fight, and again was defeated with heavy loss; the square was always broken. This last defeat was on the 4th September; since then we have had comparative quiet.

“We fired 3,000,000 rounds.

“The palace was the great place for the firing. Arabs have the Krupps here, and often have hulled our steamers. Arabs captured two small steamers at Berber, and one on Blue Nile. We have built two new ones, steamers. The steamers had bulwarks, and were struck with bullets 1090 times each on an average, and three times with shot each. We defended the lines

with wire entanglements and live shells as mines, which did great execution. We put lucifer matches to ignite them.

“The soldiers are only half a month in arrears. We issue paper money, and also all the cloth in magazines. All the captives with Mahdi are well; the nuns, to avoid an Arab marriage, are ostensibly married to Greeks. Slatin is with Mahdi, and has all his property, and is well treated; but I hear to-day he is in chains. A mysterious Frenchman is with Mahdi, who came from Dongola.

“Kitchener says he has sent letters, and got none in reply. I have sent out during last month at least ten. Steamer with this leaves to-morrow for Metammeh.

“Do not let any Egyptian soldiers come up here; take command of steamers direct, and turn out Egyptian fellaheen.

“If capture of steamer with Stewart is corroborated, tell French consul-general that Mahdi has the cipher he gave Herbin.

“Hassan Effendi, telegraph clerk, was with Stewart. You should send a party to the place to investigate affairs, and take the steamer.”

On the 30th of December a messenger, who had been sent to Khartûm on the 29th of October, returned, and brought into Korti a piece of paper the size of a postage stamp, on which was written “Khartûm all right.” It was signed C. G. Gordon, and dated December 14, 1884; and the messenger said he was told to deliver a verbal message, the most important portion of which was, “The enemy cannot take us except by starving us out. Our troops suffer from want of provisions: the food we still have is little—some grain and biscuit. We want you to come quickly. Do not scatter your troops, the enemy is numerous; bring plenty of troops if you can. You should come by way of Metammeh or Berber; only by these two roads. Do not leave Berber in your rear. Keep the enemy in your front; and when you take Berber send me word, and come back by the east bank. Do this without letting rumours of your approach spread abroad.”

Surely there was reason for despatch!

No time was lost; on the 7th of January Colonel Stanley Clarke started for Gakdul in command of the light camel regiment

with a convoy of 1000 camels, and on the following day Sir Herbert Stewart's force was on its way.

Having halted at Howeyat and Abu Halfa, on the morning of January 12th they started for Gakdul, a short march, at the end of which they found that the guards had done admirable work in building a couple of stone forts, and laying out the ground for the camp on such a convenient plan, with paths made and signboards with directions put up, that the men fell into their proper places without confusion. Colonels Dorward and Lawson of the engineers had been busy ordering a small canal to be made, into which water was pumped for the camels: while a reservoir formed of biscuit-tins was filled by a pump from a higher level—a pool above the rock—for the use of the men, who, however, were too thirsty to wait for its coming, and drew the water from the pool itself with buckets and ropes. Here there was a short stay for rest, the formation of a complete station, and the organization of the convoy for the march on the following day. Major Kitchener, who had taken up his quarters in a cave on the hillside, received his orders to return to Korti with Colonel Stanley Clarke's convoy. The officers of the guards had prepared an excellent dinner for their friends, including gazelle and sand-grouse, which had been added to the larder as a delightful change from bully beef and canned vegetables. It had been understood that Colonel Fred. Burnaby was on the way, and the general had much desired to have him with the expedition, though he was, in reality, unattached, and had no regular command. He came in with a convoy, and brought with him Captain Gascoigne, who had been travelling in the Eastern Soudan and the Abyssinian frontier and reporting his observations to the war department. Colonel Stuart Wortley also came in to join Sir Charles Wilson for service with Gordon at Khartûm.

At Gakdul Wells the column had reached a point to which public attention had followed it in imagination. It was the point from which succour was to be carried as rapidly as might be to Gordon—the point beyond which the greatest danger was to be apprehended from the hostile forces of the Mahdi.

For a time—for less than a week, however—people in England anxiously waited to hear what was the next move, but no intelligence of importance arrived, till news came of a fierce attack and a bloody battle fought at Abu Klea Wells.

On the 21st of January a telegram was received from Korti from General Lord Wolseley, and was at once published. It said:—

“General Stewart had a most successful fight on the 17th inst. with about ten thousand of the Mahdi’s forces, near the Abu Klea Wells, which are about twenty-three miles on this side of Metammeh. The enemy’s force was collected from Berber, Metammeh, and Omdurman, which place, I regret to say, prisoners report was recently captured by the Mahdi, thus releasing men from there to fight Stewart.

On afternoon of 16th inst. Stewart’s cavalry reported enemy in position some few miles on this side of wells. It being too late to allow of advance and successful fight, Stewart bivouacked for night. Enemy kept up a harmless fire all night, and threw up works on Stewart’s right flank.

On 17th Stewart endeavoured to draw enemy on to attack, but they hesitated; so leaving all his impedimenta and camels under a guard of Sussex Regiment and some mounted infantry, he moved forward in square, all men on foot, and passed round left flank of enemy’s position, forcing him to attack or be enfiladed.

Enemy wheeled to the left, and delivered a well-organized charge under a withering fire from our men. Square was unfortunately penetrated about its left rear, where heavy cavalry camel regiment stood, by sheer weight of numbers. The admirable steadiness of our men enabled a hand-to-hand combat to be maintained; whilst severe punishment was being inflicted on enemy by all other parts of square, and the enemy at last driven back under heavy fire from all sides.

19th Hussars then pushed forward to Wells, which were in our possession at five p.m. Enemy left not less than eight hundred dead round the square, and prisoners report the number of their wounded to be quite exceptional. Many are submitting.

Necessity of obtaining water at Wells delayed for some hours his advance on Metammeh; for which place force was, however, about to push on when messenger left Stewart. A strong post has been established at Wells, where tents have been pitched for the wounded, who were doing well.

Stewart concludes his report thus:—‘It has been my duty to command a force from which exceptional work, exceptional hardships, and, it may even be added, exceptional fighting has been called for. It would be impossible for me adequately to describe the admirable support that has been given to me by every officer and man of the force.’

I regret to say our loss has been severe; but the success has been so complete, and enemy’s loss so very heavy, that it may dishearten the enemy, so that all future fighting may be of a less obstinate character.

General Stewart’s operations have been most creditable to him as a commander, and the nation has every reason to be proud of the gallantry and splendid spirit displayed by her majesty’s soldiers on this occasion. Our losses have been nine officers killed, nine officers wounded, and sixty-five non-commissioned officers and men killed, and eighty-five wounded. Stewart’s force was about fifteen hundred all told.”

Yes, our losses had been severe indeed. The list of officers killed comprised the names of:—Colonel Burnaby, Royal Horse Guards; Major Carmichael, 5th Lancers; Major Atherton, 5th Dragoon Guards; Major Gough, Royal Dragoons; Captain Darley, 4th Dragoon Guards; Lieutenant Law, 4th Dragoon Guards; Lieutenant Wolfe, Scots Greys; Lieutenants Pigott and Delisle, Naval Brigade; while the severely wounded included—Lord St. Vincent, Major Dickson, Royals; Lieutenant Lyall and Guthrie, Artillery; Surgeon Magill; and the slightly wounded—Lord Airlie, Lieutenant Beech, Life Guards; Costello, 5th Lancers, contusion; Major Gough, Mounted Infantry.

The feelings with which this intelligence was received in England were marked by more distress than triumph. It was a bitter reflection that so many men who represented the flower

of our army should have been cut down in a contest with the savage hordes who were blocking the way to the town where Gordon was waiting, counting the hours when help might possibly reach him. Public expectation waited also for further intelligence, but the story of the march to Abu Klea and Gubat, the battles at both these places, and the events that followed the attempt to reach the beleaguered city, must be told in another chapter.

END OF VOL. III.

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