

CASSELL'S  
HISTORY OF THE WAR  
IN THE  
S O U D A N.

BY  
JAMES GRANT,  
AUTHOR OF "BRITISH BATTLES ON LAND AND SEA," ETC. ETC.

Illustrated.

VOL. III.

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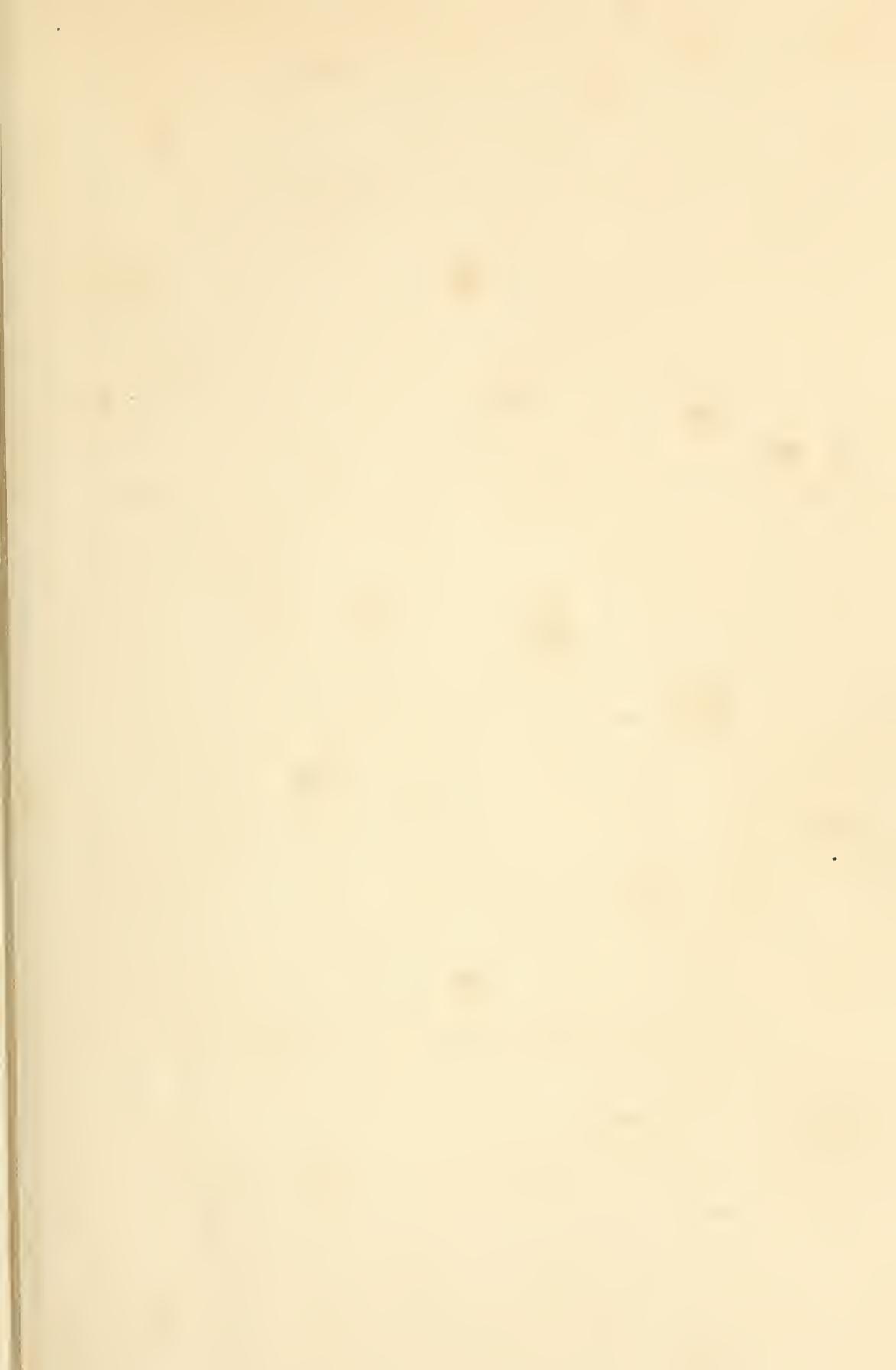
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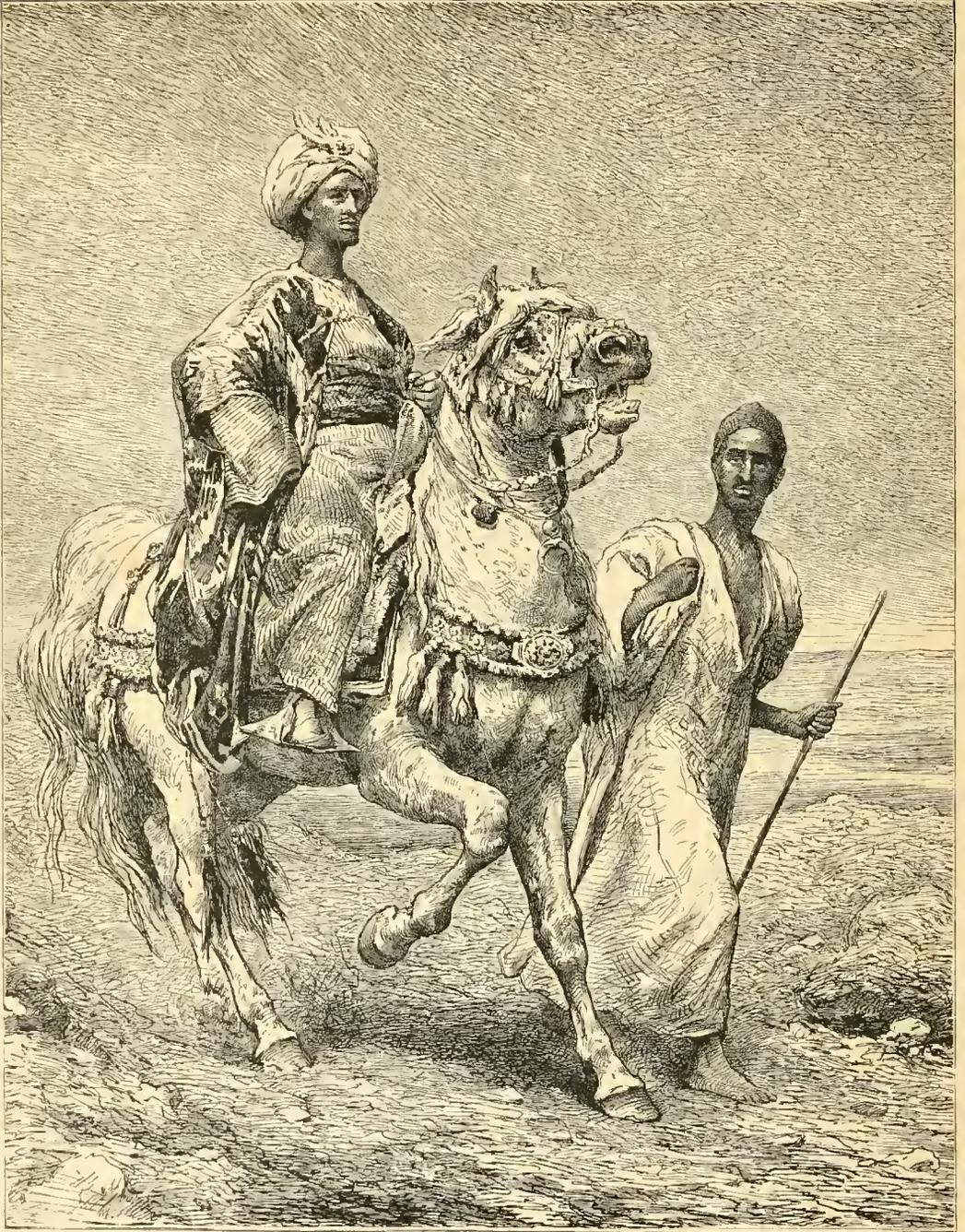
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SIR HERBERT STEWART.

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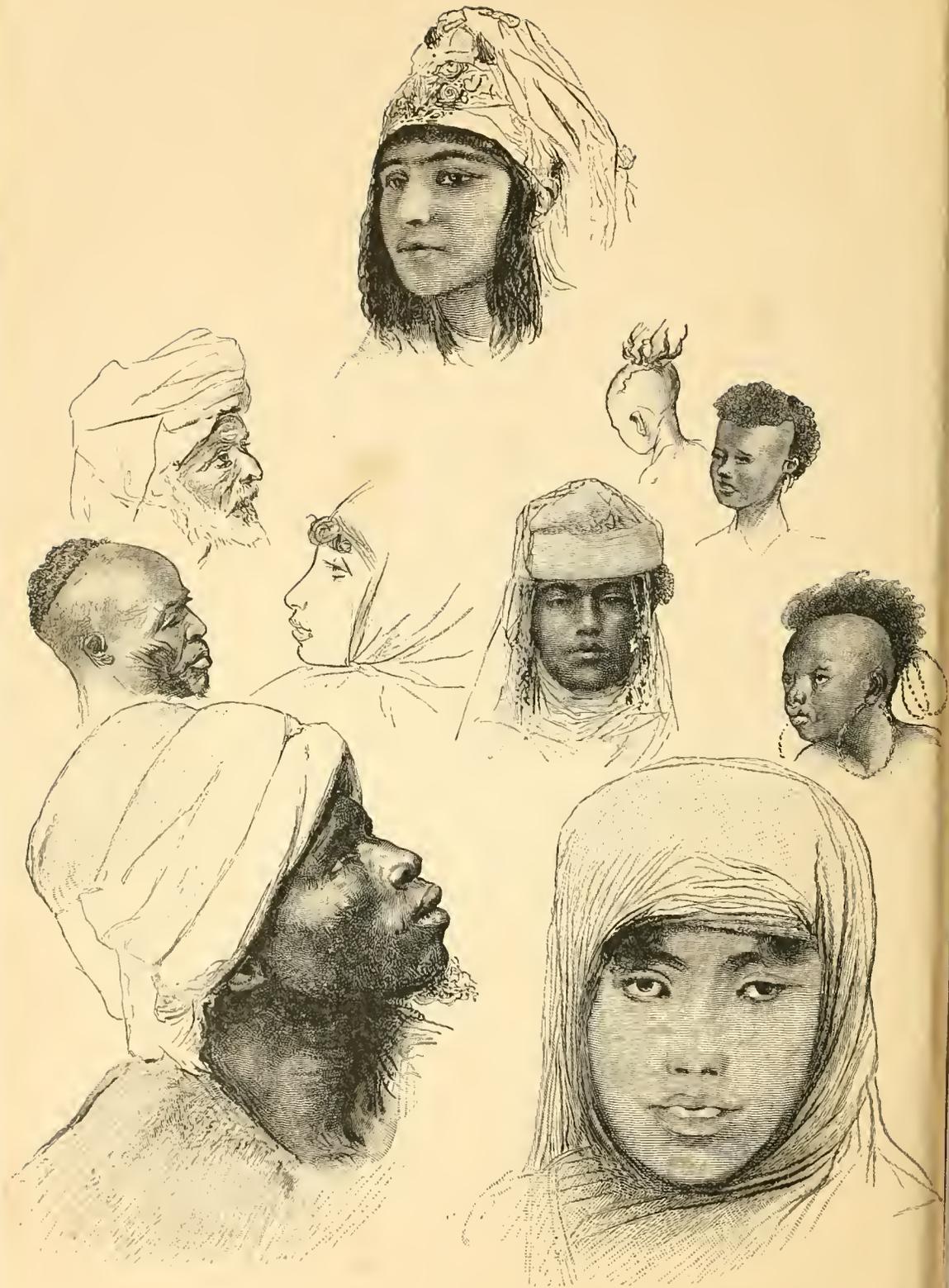




ARAB OF RANK.

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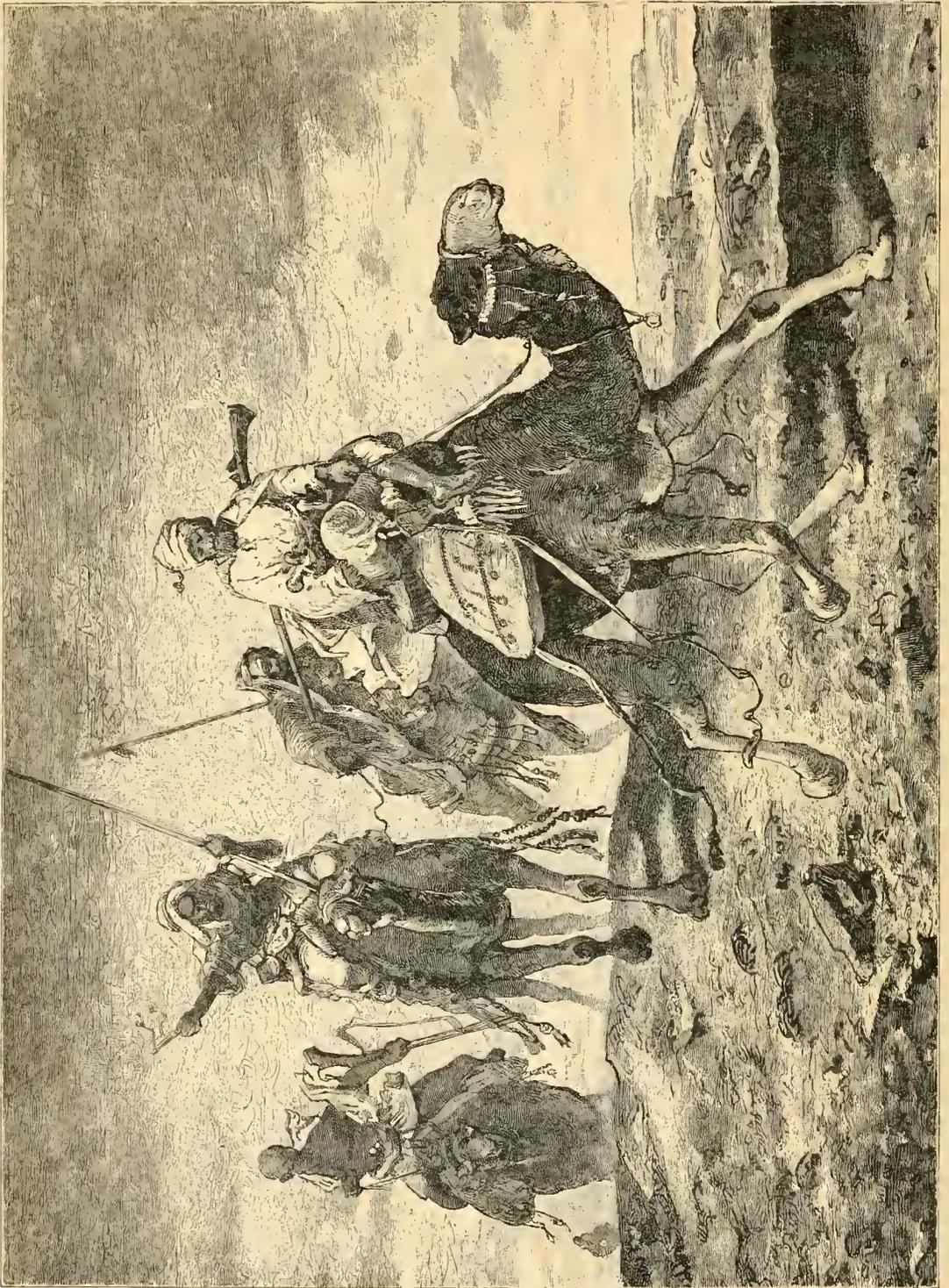




SUDANESE TYPES.

(From Drawings by W. Gutz.)









SIR ARCHIBALD ALISON

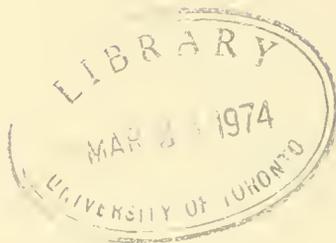
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WITH THE MAHDI.

SOUDANESE TYPES.

ARAB OF RANK.

SIR HERBERT STEWART.



CONFLUENCE OF THE TWO NILES.

# CASSELL'S HISTORY OF THE WAR IN THE SOUDAN.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE NILE EXPEDITION.

Opinions as to the Route—Arms of the Soudanese—Renewed Activity of the Enemy at Suakim—The Cataracts—The Flotilla of Boats—Staff of the Relieving Army—Passing a Cataract—"The Last Cry of Despair from Khartoum."

ALTHOUGH the British troops were being moved forward with considerable despatch, the final word of command had not been issued by the Horse Guards when the middle of August came, for the starting of the expedition. Difference of opinion had arisen between General Stephenson, commanding in Egypt, and the military authorities in London, on the question of sending out rowing-boats from Britain or utilising

the local craft, and this led to a prolonged correspondence.

On the 20th of August, the apprehensions previously entertained at Cairo, that "a bad Nile," as it was called, might seriously interfere with the operations of a column relieving Khartoum, became verified when an official telegram from Assouan stated that the great river was falling many inches daily, owing to the recent rise of the

White Nile. The passage of the cataracts was reported as impossible just then, and none of the steamers had yet passed the first one; so again military men urged that the base of operations should be at Suakim. But the authorities in London, notwithstanding many strong representations on the subject, insisted on the Nile route being adhered to; while, in reply to the suggestion that if the Expedition had to wait for rowing-boats from Great Britain the time most favourable for military operations would be lost, they stated that the boats would be all at Wady Halfa by the 1st of November, when the relieving force would start.

At the same time General Stephenson was instructed to purchase a limited number of local boats to work between the Second and Third Cataracts.

Meanwhile, the work of death was going on in various quarters.

On the 20th of August Major Kitchener reported from Debbeh that the Mahdi's Emir, El Hoda, had attacked and defeated the friendly tribe of the Sheikiyeh at Merawi, and that the dead bodies of the slain in great numbers, with the hands tied behind their backs—showing that they had been butchered in cold blood when in that helpless condition—were floating past Debbeh.

The nightly attacks at Suakim still continued, for in addition to their native weapons the tribesmen had plenty of Remingtons. The only tribe in the Soudan which uses the genuine javelin is that of the Mohammedan Jakrurie, who are very few in number. The best lances are those used by the Bedja

and Khaza races, which fought under Osman Digna at El Teb and Tamai; but these lances are rarely thrown away, and the Bedjas are not provided with extra weapons of the same kind. Those of the Baggara tribe, who are the principal adherents of the Mahdi in Kordofan, are upwards of five metres long. But next to the lance, the weapon most used by the Soudanese is the long, straight, and double-edged sword, mostly made at Solingen, and sold over all northern Africa. The Soudanese prize a good sword greatly, and keep the blade bright and clean. The shields they use are made of the skins of the elephant, rhinoceros, giraffe, and buffalo.

At Suakim, on the 28th of August, they succeeded in removing two mines that were laid, under cover of night, and captured three dhows southward of the harbour, killing several of the crew, and taking twenty-five prisoners.

It was finally decided that the route to Khartoum was to be by the Nile, and that the operations were to be superintended by Lord Wolseley in person.

This selected line divided itself into two portions, the first being that by which the Nile Valley is followed, and the latter, the passage across the so-called "desert" of Bayuda.

In the former portion were 400 miles of railway, 850 miles of navigable river, and 250 miles of consecutive rapids—the transport over each of which demanded totally different treatment—while the latter portion involved intense toil and no small amount of bodily suffering.

The total length of the route was estimated at something over 1,600 miles, about 300 being saved by avoidance of the river bends; and as the cataracts of the Nile had to be faced by our troops in hundreds of clinker-built boats, we may as well give a general explanation of what a Nile cataract is.

"The usual geological formations from Gebel Silsileh to Khartoum, being the districts in which the cataracts are situated," says a writer, "are the upper and lower Nubian sandstones; but these in certain places have been upheaved, and are traversed by bands of granitic rock, apparently radiating from the Sinaitic range. As might be expected from the softer character of the sandstones, cataracts, or, more correctly speaking, rapids, are found whenever one of these granitic bars crosses the river. At low Nile, these rapids are wild and desolate archipelagos, usually one or two miles, at least, in length, while the river bank on either side presents a broken series of precipitous and often inaccessible cliffs and ragged spurs. Their sombre and gloomy appearance is heightened by the colour of the rock, which, between high and low water mark, is usually of a jet hue, in many parts polished to such an extent by the long action of the water that it has the appearance of being carefully black-leaded. One or two big-winged dusky birds may suddenly flap across, with a harsh uncanny cry, or some small boy, whose tailors' bills must trouble him little, looks up from his fish-trap and shrieks for 'backsheesh;' but beyond these, and the ceaseless rush

of the water, sound or sight there is none."

By its rocky islands, the river is broken up into innumerable small channels, through which the downward currents rush with velocities that depend upon the slopes of the bed. Of these, for a boat ascending, the Sheikh of the cataract selects the channel according to the depth of water, those being generally chosen that lie north and south, in order that the most may be made of canvas with the prevailing winds, and so the labour of the shrieking, swarthy, and naked crowd who are tugging on at the lawsers be lessened.

At high Nile many of the islands are, of course, completely submerged; but a number of cross-currents are created, varying with the depth of the water, and rendering navigation difficult to all, and impossible to those unacquainted with each locality; thus the troops of the relieving column had no slight task before them.

In August the eastward movement began in force. On the 27th of that month the *Ghoorka* transport sailed from Portsmouth with 700 officers and men belonging to the Mounted Infantry, Commissariat, Transport Corps, Hospital Corps, and Medical Department.

All that day Lord Wolseley was at the War Office concluding the final arrangements for his departure to Egypt, and selecting the staff who were to accompany him. It was at first arranged that 5,000 men should form the expedition, but it was found necessary materially to increase that

number. The 1st Battalion of the Royal Scots, 700 strong, was ordered from the West Indies; two regiments from India, three from Gibraltar, Malta, and Cyprus. These, with the forces already at Alexandria and the Nile, would make a total strength, it was

at the stipulated price of £75 each, from thirteen ship and boat builders in England and Scotland. The first batch of these was to leave Britain between the 1st and 8th of September.

The dimensions of the largest class of boats were reduced from 32 feet by 7



SLAVE DHOWS.

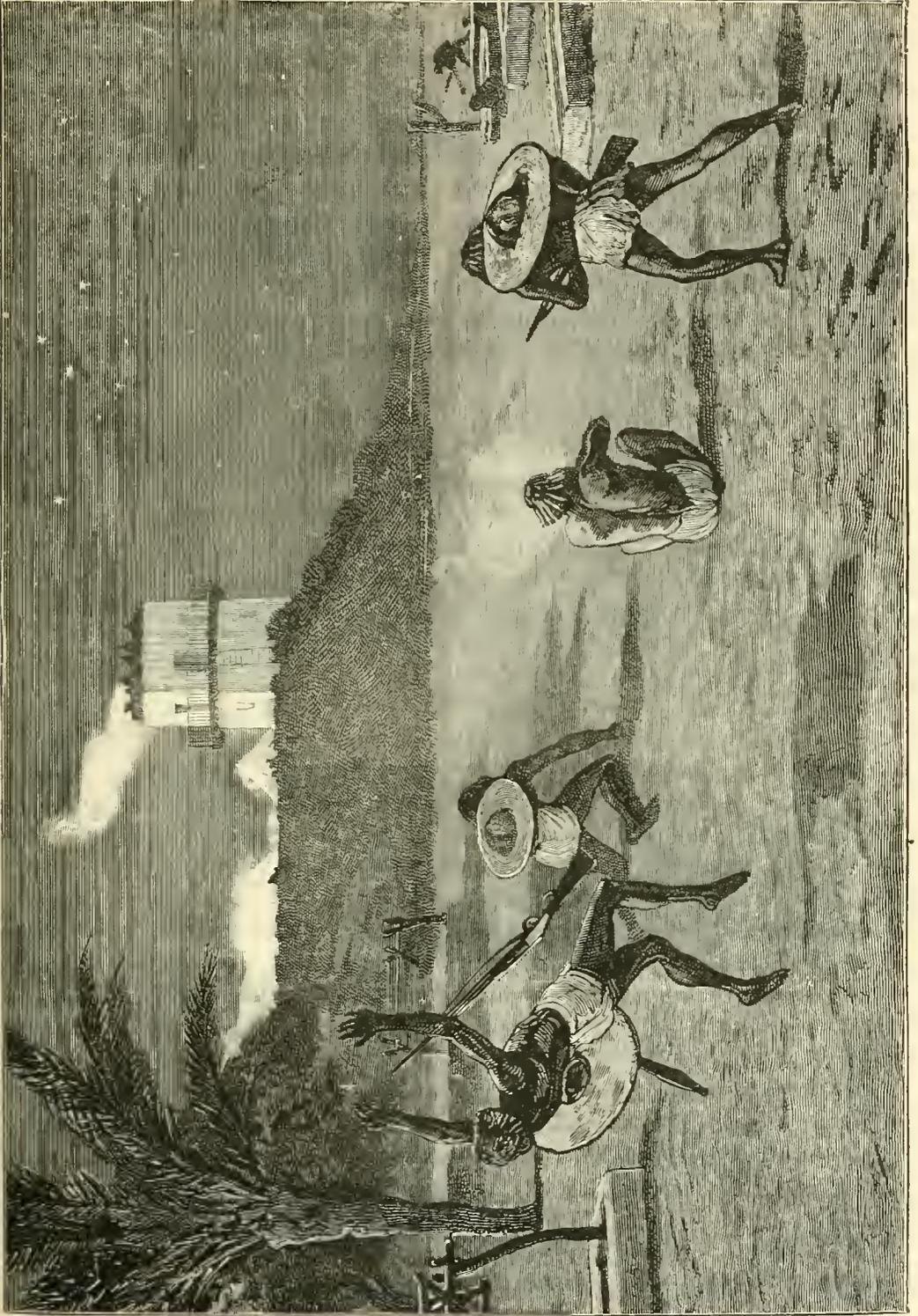
calculated, of 14,000 men, from which Lord Wolseley would be able to select an expeditionary army of 7,000 men.

The flotilla of 400 boats, for the construction of which contracts had been signed, was found to be numerically insufficient at this date, and the Construction Department of the Admiralty accepted contracts for about 400 more,

feet by 2 feet 8 inches, to 32 feet by 6 feet by 2 feet 6 inches.

The equipment for each boat at Woolwich Dockyard was ordered to be packed in large vats, one for each boat that was to ascend the Nile. These vats were to be unpacked in Egypt, and their contents stowed among the cargo which each boat was to carry.

The arrangement was that each boat



NATIVES ATTACKING THE WATER FORTS AT SUAKIM BY MOONLIGHT.

was to constitute a separate but perfect unit in the force, carrying its own provisions, drugs, appliances, spare boots and clothing, camp requisites, and ammunition. Each was to have 1,200 days' rations, being 100 days' food for twelve men, ten being soldiers and two sailors, or Canadian boatmen. And such of the soldiers as were able to manage the sails and oars were to take their turn in management of the boats, while the rest were to tow or track them on land with stout manilla ropes.

To give as much space as possible, all the pots, kettles, and drinking vessels were made to be packed into each other.

While all this was in progress at home, the greatest difficulties were experienced by our Commissariat Department at Cairo in procuring the necessary number of camels for the service in Upper Egypt, and by the end of August only a small proportion of the required 1,200 had been purchased; while, in America, some difficulties were experienced with the Indians who were to be engaged as boatmen on the Nile. They refused to enlist for a longer period than six months, and some insisted on guarantees that they would ultimately be returned to their homes safe and sound.

So early as the 13th of August, preparations for the advance were made in Egypt. On that day Sir Evelyn Wood and his Staff arrived at Assiout, on the left bank of the Nile, a town the greater part of the houses of which are mere hovels, though it has some handsome mosques. From thence he went to Assouan and Wady Halfa.

Major Sandwith accompanied him to select camping ground for the Royal Sussex Regiment, while the remnant of Colonel Grant's Turkish battalion proceeded to Assouan the same day.

The Staff of the British army for the Nile Expedition is given thus in the *Standard* of the 9th September, 1884:—

General Lord Wolseley, G.C.B., to be the General Commanding-in-Chief.

To be Military Secretary—Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Swaine, C.B., R.A.

To be A.D.C.—Major Wardrop, 3rd Dragoon Guards; Brevet-Major Creagh, R.A.; Lieutenant Childers, R.A.; Lieutenant Adye, R.A.

To be Major-General on the Staff—Major-General Sir Redvers Buller, V.C., &c., as Chief of the Staff.

To be his A.D.C.—Lieutenant Lord W. Fitzgerald, King's Royal Rifles.

To be Assistant-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General—Colonel W. F. Butler, C.B., and Lieutenant-Colonel G. A. Furze.

To be Deputy-Assistant-Adjutant and Quartermaster-General—Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel Alleyne, R.A.

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. Braekenbury, C.B., R.A.; Colonel Sir H. Stewart, K.C.B.; Colonel Webber, C.B., R.E.; Colonel Henderson, King's Royal Rifles; Brevet Colonel J. F. Maurice, R.A.; Captain the Earl of Airlie, 10th Hussars.

That most energetic officer, Sir Redvers Buller, took his departure for Egypt on the 26th of August. Soon after, the Canadian *voyageurs*, to the number of 500, embarked, and it was arranged that Father Brechard, who had been two years in Egypt as a missionary, was to accompany them.

Among the Iroquois Indians who volunteered for the Nile Expedition was a chief known as the White Eagle, who had served in the expedition to the Red River with Lord Wolseley.

The latter landed at Alexandria, and reached Cairo on the 10th of September.

Five days before that had been accomplished the successful feat of hauling a steamer, the *Nassifkheir*, over a cataract, known as the lower gates of that at Wady Halfa, a manœuvre much more difficult than was expected, and which required seven hours of incessant toil. She left Wady Halfa at 8 A.M., with Commander Hammil of H.M.S. *Monarch*, Messrs. Poore, Deelish, Hardy, and others on board. At nine she reached the base of the broken water, where no less than 6,000 labourers were waiting. These were divided into parties and placed on each side of the channel, being superintended by members of the Naval Brigade. The channel proved narrow and tortuous, but the steamer was brought into easy water with the loss of a few floats from the paddles, and one leak.

The Admiral and the fleet had now arrived at Alexandria, the ships being the *Inflexible*, *Alexandra*, *Monarch*, and *Superb*.

On the 12th September news came that Gordon had attacked Berber; also a report that he had been actively engaged on the river south of Khartoum, and captured two islands from the rebels.

On the 19th other telegrams were received from him, complaining bitterly of the delay in relieving him, and stating that the rebels were increasing in strength. On the 20th there came to Cairo a message to the Khedive, called—but evidently not by the signatories—“The Last Cry of Despair from

Khartoum,” which we insert here at length:—

“We, the military, the civilians, the Ulema, and inhabitants and settlers in Khartoum, submit for the consideration of the Khedive that for six months we have been unceasing in our defence of the capital, of our own lives and of those of our children, and of our property, day and night, till our misfortunes and dangers have assumed stupendous proportions which threaten our ruin. We are completely cut off from the outer world, and have in vain looked for reinforcements and succour from our Government. We have been allowed to delude ourselves with vain hopes from hour to hour, while the Government shows indifference and delays.

“Weakened and reduced to extremities, God, in His mercy, sent Gordon Pasha to us in the midst of our calamities of the siege; and we should all have perished from hunger and been destroyed, and our fate have been like that of most of the other garrisons in the Soudan, such as Berber and Kordofan; but, sustained by his intelligence and great military skill, we have been preserved in Khartoum up till now, nor does he in the arduous task of the defence omit his benevolent care for the people.

“We are penniless, and without resources, and our patience is exhausted.

“The Government neither succours us, nor does it regard God’s law, nor its own political duties. It makes no effort to suppress anarchy, or to prevent the effusion of blood; nor yet does it try to maintain its own and our honour, though we are its people, its own subjects, and co-religionists.

“Your Highness is aware that the Mahdi’s pretensions are not restricted to certain places, or only to the Soudan, but are universal; and that his first designs against the Powers are directed against our Turkish Government, whose total annihilation in war he is meditating. This is confirmed by the letters sent in to us by the rebel chiefs and commanders of the besieging forces.

“Therefore, if the Government persists in its inactivity, and abstains from quickly sending us aid to put down the revolt during the two months of high Nile, the whole Soudan will surely be lost, and the crisis culminate in our ruin! Such as we, who are besieged, will perish or be taken captive, sharing the fate of our comrades in previous similar disasters. Therefore, we appeal to your Highness, and show you the true state of our calamities, imploring your mercy to deliver us from this great and universal misfortune.”

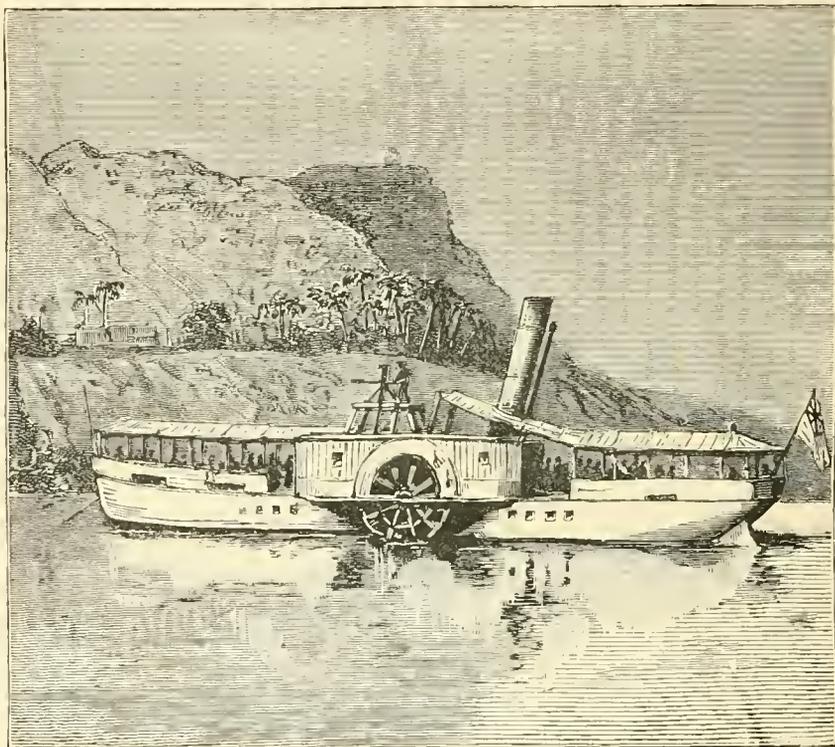
(Signed by 24 Superior Military Officers, and  
18 Civil Employés at Khartoum.)

## CHAPTER II.

## PASSING THE CATARACTS.

Lord Wolseley at Cairo—The Camel Corps—Its Commanders—Additional Stores for the Front—Lord Northbrook and the Khedive—Operations at Wady Halfa—Passing the Rapids—Inspection of Troops by Lord Wolseley—Departure of the Staff from Cairo—More Fighting at Suakim.

WHEN the *Iris*, having on board Lords Wolseley and Northbrook, entered the harbour of Alexandria on the 10th September; Lord Northbrook had a special saloon, in which were Sir Evelyn Baring, Nubar Pasha, and General Egerton. At

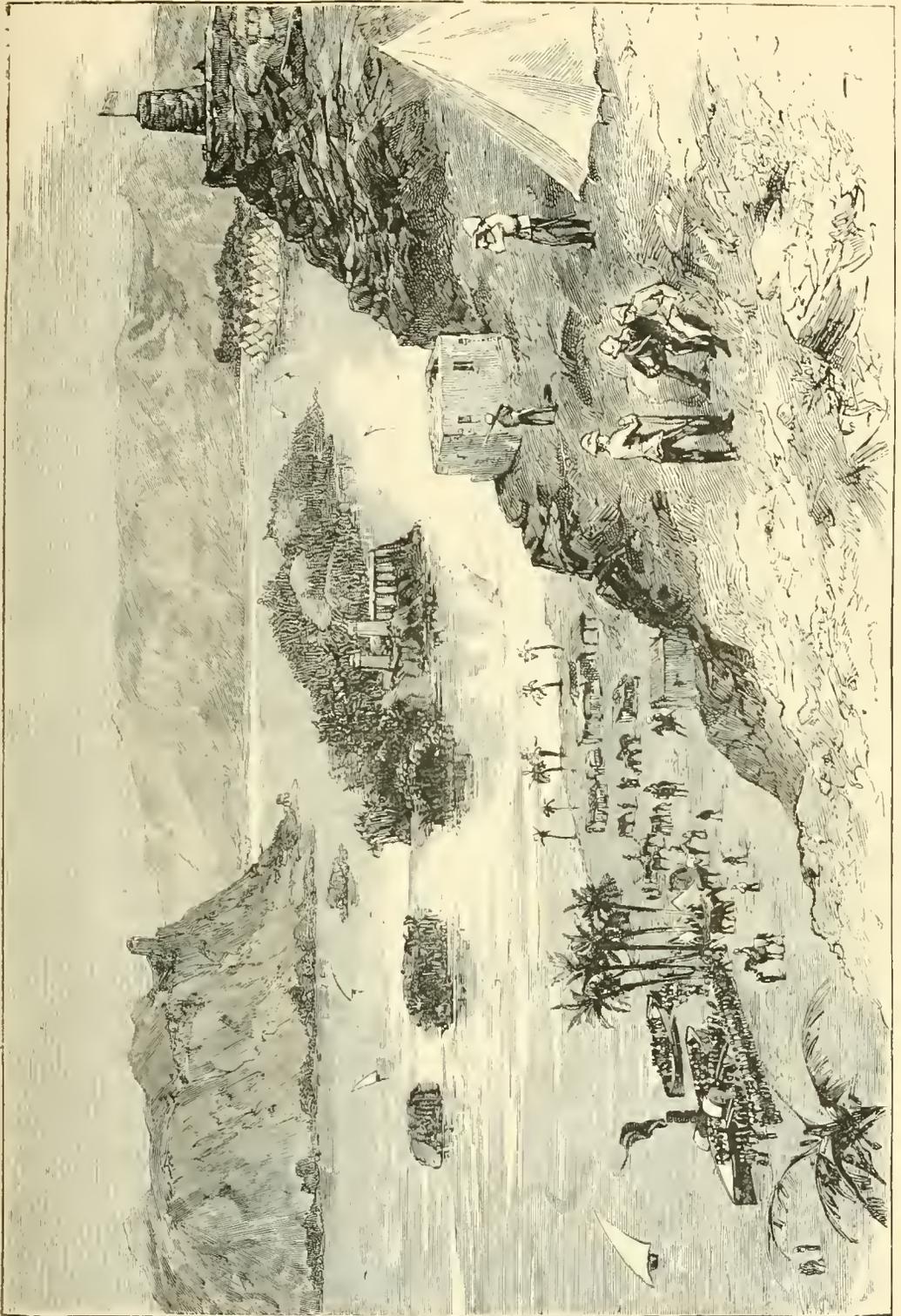


THE ARMED STEAMER "MAHMOUDIYEH" OFF ELEPHANTINE ISLAND.

(Nile steamer fitted up as a gunboat, and flying the British white ensign.)

tember, they were received by a salute from all the ships of war in the harbour; and, as soon as their vessel came to anchor, the various officials and ship-commanders went on board of her. At a little after 3 p.m. they left by train for Cairo. Lord Wolseley and Generals Stephenson and Dorner travelled to-

the Cairo platform they were received by a guard of the Black Watch, with band and pipers, and an escort of the 19th Hussars, who rode with Lord Northbrook to Sir Evelyn Baring's residence, while Lord Wolseley drove direct to the Kasr-en-Noussa Palace on the Shoobra Road. Lord Wolseley



THE NILE AT ASSOUAN, WITH THE ENCAMPMENTS OF BRITISH TROOPS.

announced that he had made no plans as yet, and would require some days to look about him before deciding. He, however, expressed his intention of having a Highland Brigade with him on the Expedition.

He also requested and urged the formation of that remarkable force, the Camel Corps, which was to be composed of volunteers from the Light and Heavy Cavalry, and the Guards, all to be picked men. But why two regiments of Cavalry, with their own officers who were all accustomed to work together, were not taken, excited much speculation in the army, and was put down to the idiosyncrasies of what was known as "the new system."

To command the Heavy and the Light Cavalry of this corps there were appointed respectively, Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. R. A. J. Talbot of the 1st Life Guards, and Lieutenant-Colonel Hugh M'Calmont of the 7th, or Queen's Own Hussars. It was, at first, to consist of 780 men, made up of draughts from the three regiments of Household Cavalry and from sixteen other Cavalry regiments stationed in the United Kingdom, the quota furnished by each being two officers and forty-four troopers.

When the same volunteer offer was given by Colonel Phillips to the 3rd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards, no less than 500 men responded to the summons at Windsor; and when the order was communicated to the troopers at the Albany Street Barracks in London, it produced a scene of the greatest enthusiasm, and several troopers who

had lodged money to purchase their discharge withdrew the notice, and volunteered for active service.

When the organisation of the Camel Corps was completed there were twenty-six troops, in three divisions, each troop bearing the name of the regiment from which it was drawn. With each were two officers, the senior ranking as captain, two sergeants, two corporals, a trumpeter, and thirty-eight privates, making a total strength of 1,128 of all ranks irrespective of the staff.

The Infantry—or Third Division—was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel the Hon. E. E. T. Boscawen of the Coldstream Guards, son of the Earl of Falmouth.

This corps was specially clad and equipped, the distinguishing features of their costume being their cord breeches and cartridge-belts, made to carry fifty charges. The departure of this magnificent body of men caused the greatest enthusiasm at Aldershot and in London, and they sailed from Portsmouth in the steamers *Deccan* and *Australia*.

On board the latter vessel was shipped £100,000 in gold for Lord Wolseley, in strong boxes, each a foot in length, containing 4,000 sovereigns, for the pay of the troops in Egypt and hire of native auxiliaries.

Two life-belts or cork jackets per boat were now added to the equipment of the Nile flotilla, and 2,000 of these articles were delivered at Woolwich, for conveyance to Egypt; and a collapsing boat of canvas, eighteen feet in length, and exceedingly light, was sent to

Colonel Webber, Director of the Telegraphs at Cairo, to whom were also sent several thousands of insulators and other stores for his special service.

Forty boxes, containing 2,000 lbs. of dynamite, twenty boxes, containing 1,000 lbs. of blasting gelatine, together with 13,000 detonators and fuses, were shipped with care at Messrs. Nobel and Co.'s Dynamite Wharf, Holehaven, (between Gravesend and the Nore), on barges, to await the arrival of the transport *Neptune*, which re-shipped the explosives midstream. They were being sent out to Egypt as part of the equipment of the Royal Engineers for mining operations.

On the 10th of September Lord Northbrook had an audience of the Khedive, to whom he presented a letter from Earl Granville, containing his credentials as High Commissioner, and requesting the assistance of the Egyptian Government in the solution of the important questions now pending, and chiefly with regard to the financial difficulties of the country. During the audience the Khedive displayed great cordiality towards Lord Northbrook, and, in Oriental fashion, returned his visit shortly afterwards.

On the following day his Lordship had another interview with the Khedive, to whom he presented an autograph letter from Queen Victoria, assuring him of her esteem personally, and expressing the hope that he would lend every aid in his power to her High Commissioner in Egypt.

Telegrams now reached Cairo of a victory obtained by the Mudir of Don-

gola over the Mahdi's troops at Ambigol, at the point of the western reach of the Nile, and that the body of the Sheikh Hodeyda, the chief rebel leader of the district, had been found among the slain, with the bodies of other Sheikhs, whom the Mahdi had named Ameers of various places in Upper Egypt.

By the 12th of September nothing seemed to have been decided as to the plan of the Nile Campaign, except that Lord Wolseley and his Staff would move up to Wady Halfa as soon as the troops and transport should have passed the Second Cataract. On the preceding day a telegram from that place announced that camels had been despatched to transport the Royal Sussex regiment round the Samneh Cataracts; but the boats had passed the latter without disembarking the troops. Sir Evelyn Wood was now appointed Inspector-General of the line of communication with the Nile Expedition.

And now to glance briefly at the operations in progress at Wady Halfa, Suakim, and elsewhere.

On the 8th of September a portion of the 1st Sussex Regiment embarked at Sarras for Dongola, taking all the necessary stores with them. There were nineteen boats in all, carrying each forty men. The latter were quite comfortable; there was plenty of room, and each boat had an open awning overhead. Two of the boats were devoted to hospital purposes. The 1st Battalion of the South Staffordshire, and the other troops as they arrived, were all conveyed up the river in the same fashion.

On the 9th operations were resumed by the troops to haul the steamers over the cataract at Wady Halfa, and by the 11th the *Nassifkheir* was got afloat, as she had grounded in mid-channel by the fall of the Nile. Three thousand men on the east bank and adjacent island were employed at the hawsers; she was floated with extreme difficulty, and then the first rapid was passed successfully.

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, owing to the fury of the current and the great difficulty of the navigation. The gig was at length brought up on the port side, and the men with the new hawser got on board, though subsequently the boat was wrecked lower down. The fresh attempt was frustrated by the bow hawser parting again; but the ship was finally eased into a safe berth 500 yards down the stream; but her paddles were badly injured by the rocks, and the whole affair was illustrative of the peril and toil our men had to undergo, beneath a blazing Egyptian sun, in getting the various boats connected with the Expedition up the Nile. Three days after, as a boat manned by our seamen was being hauled up the cataract, it swung round and filled. The men sprang out, and three were drowned, but their bodies were recovered.

The *Nassifkheir* was ultimately got to the Great Gate of the Second Cataract, where the strain was successfully borne by a treble eight-inch wire-rope

hawser that was passed completely round her.

On the 17th, the steamer *Benisouef*, with Colonel Wynne and a detachment of the 4th Egyptian Battalion, came to Wady Halfa, and the latter were set to work to lay down the railway from Sarras to a distance of twenty miles up the Nile. From Sarras the Mounted Infantry departed on a Sunday at noon for Dongola in seven large nuggars, but were able to proceed only four miles before nightfall, owing to the sudden subsidence of the river and the formation of a new cataract.

Wady Halfa, 793 miles from Cairo, is a large village lying scattered among a thick belt of palms, and it became a place of some importance in connection with the so-called Khartoum Relief Expedition, as it constituted, for a time, practically the base of operations. The village is somewhat picturesque, but the adjacent country is dreary and desolate. Wady Halfa is, however, often enlivened by encampments of traders on their way to, or returning from, the Soudan. There the merchandise is transferred from camels to boats, or *vice versa*.

The Second Cataract, or that of Wady Halfa, is about fourteen miles in length. Dahabeeyehs (native barges) cannot, as a rule, ascend above the cataract, where boats called nuggars come into use. Four miles from Wady Halfa was the terminus of the proposed Soudan railway.

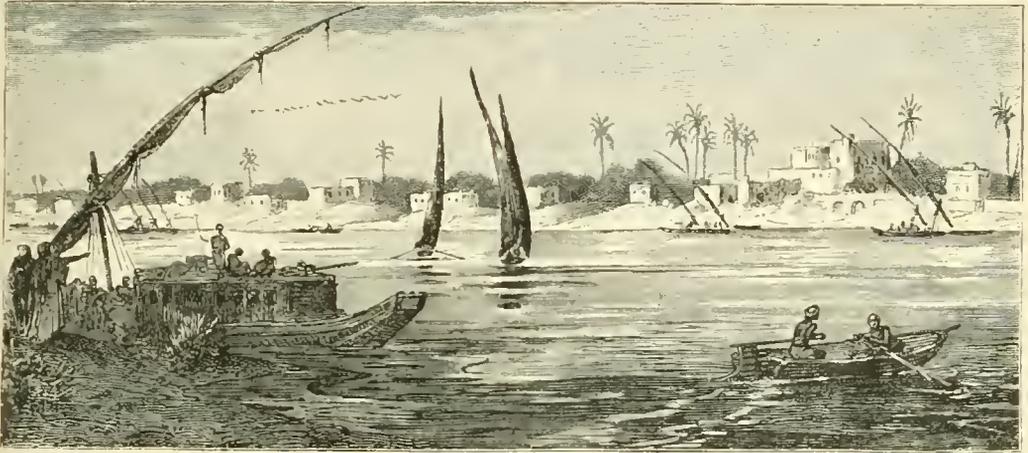
On the 23rd September, General Earle, with Colonel Stewart and the Staff, were at the Wady, *en route* to

Dongola, where he was to take up his command, and on that day a boat with stores struck upon a rock at Samneh, thirty-five miles from the Wady, at that part of the Nile called by the Arabs *Battu en Hogar*, or "the Belly of Rock," where, on either bank, are some wonderful temples, built by Thothmes III.

On the same day a messenger from

servant, Private Cash of the Foot Guards, who was carried off and partly devoured by a crocodile when bathing in the river. His remains were afterwards found.

The 26th of September saw all hands working with energy at Sarras, in preparation for the advance. Stores were accumulating fast below the cataract there, and were being quickly passed up.



KHARTOUM.

General Gordon arrived at Ambigol (where there is a cataract five miles long) with tidings that many of the besiegers were withdrawing from Khartoum, and that supplies were coming in well from the south, a relief, however, that was only temporary. He added that he had sent four steamers to relieve the garrison of Sennaar; and that, on their return, he would despatch a force to Berber to meet the British Expedition—that which he was fated never to see!

Among the early casualties of the latter was the death of Colonel Colville's

The apparent enterprise and co-operation of the Mudir of Dongola—of whose good faith many of our officers were doubtful—enabled them to make an amount of progress in forwarding the various munitions of war which would have been otherwise impossible, as we were short of boats. On that day the armed steamer *Nasefra* started for Dongola from Sarras, but her companion steamer stuck half-way up the cataract.

"Every day impresses more strongly the fact that the work has been begun altogether too late," wrote a correspondent. "Had the whole Expedition

been collected at this spot two months ago, its prospects would have been very different, as we could then have taken advantage of every rise in the Nile to get over the difficult points. At present there are frequent variations in the water level, and to-day (September 26th) there has been a slight rise; if it continues there are hopes that the stuck steamer may be able to get off to-night. The railway here is a very poor affair. The rails have, indeed, been cleared and put in something like running order; but there is only one engine, and that is in such a defective state that there are frequent breaks-down. The first instalment of Egyptian troops, one hundred strong, went forward yesterday, and it is intended that they shall occupy Dal, seventy miles up the river."

The latter rose as was hoped, and the stranded steamer passed upward.

A day or so after a party of Bashi-Bazouks arrived at Sarras from Dongola, after an eight days' journey, bringing with them—as a gift to General Earle, we presume—the heads of Hassan, Adady, Abdel, and Aziz Shamy, who were designated by the Mahdi as Emirs of Egypt and Tripoli, but had been killed in battle by the troops of the Mudir of Dongola.

On the 26th there was an exciting scene at the Samneh Cataract. The *Nassifkheir* had gone up, and had just reached the extreme end, when one of her hawsers parted, and she was swept with incredible force down the western channel. The crew cut the other hawsers, and she had a narrow escape from being dashed to pieces. The

second attempt to ascend proved successful, but one of her paddle-wheels was smashed by a sunken rock.

On the following day a boat with men of the Sussex Regiment was wrecked on its way up at the island of Nilworhall. Two of the soldiers were swept away and drowned, while the rest lost their arms and baggage.

The skill, care, and toil requisite for getting vessels up the Nile were incredible, but, by the 2nd October, our Blue-jackets scored another triumph there, when they achieved the successful passage of another large steamer, the *Gizeh*, over the great gate of the cataract at Abka. The vessel had been moored on the previous night in the basin below the smaller gate of the cataract; her paddles were unshipped, and a wire hawser passed round iron bollards and under a heavy spar in the after part of the ship, thus dividing the great strain equally all round. A treble eight-inch hemp hawser was seized on to a shackle attached to the wire rope, and the three parts were then laid right ahead to the south on the south end of the basin above the cataract. The hawsers were grasped by 800 men, and smaller parties were posted at four ropes which served as guys on the port and starboard bows and quarters respectively. The rush of water is there very great. A correspondent says, "As a set-off to the terrible force of the rapid, which comes foaming down between its narrow walls in broken waves, at a very visible incline, the height of the rocks on either side, and the fact of the land some distance ahead being in a

direct line with the channel from beginning to end, renders the operation of hauling a vessel through considerably easier than in many of the less formidable cataracts. On this occasion former experience was of the greatest value, and the two grass hawsers, attached this time on either quarter, served materially to steady the ship, and, together with the guys from the bows, to bring her back into position if momentarily she swerved to one side or the other. One difficulty in manœuvring the guys at this place is the sharp and rugged nature of the rocks on either bank; this not only retards the men, but often cuts the hawsers to a dangerous extent, and at each delay in passing the rope over high rocks the strain is necessarily relaxed, and the vessel is brought violently in contact with the rocks opposite. Yesterday slow but sure progress was made for about one-third of the distance, by which time the bows had entered the narrow gate, and most of the hands on board were engaged with long poles in trying to ward the vessel off the rocks. To those on shore it appeared as if her beam, which is more by two and a half feet than that of the *Nassifkheir*, must stop her progress, and the sponsons, catching the rocks on each side, be stove in, or render the attempt abortive. As it was, there were literally not six inches to spare on either side, and as she advanced foot by foot large pieces of rock would frequently become detached through her sides grinding against the shore; and this, combined with the ceaseless roar of the cataract, and the

yelling of the thousands of natives, lent a strange and thrilling interest to the scene. The waters, too, dammed up in their narrow outlet, rose high above their ordinary level, deluging the bows of the steamer with spray; while by the angle at which the vessel was suspended in the stream, the stern, where the white ensign waved over this unusual scene, seemed to come into dangerous proximity with the waves as they dashed past her."

By slow degrees she passed on through the narrows, and her bows had almost reached the smooth unbroken water, as it poured over the edge of the great reservoir in front. The force of the current was now tremendous, and above its roar a sudden crash was heard, as a piece of the shackle flew upwards and smashed her figure-head—a crocodile,—but she was successfully hauled over the rush into the smooth water beyond, amid the exulting yells of the Dongola men, whose pleasure was enhanced by the promise of an extra piastre each if the task proved successful.

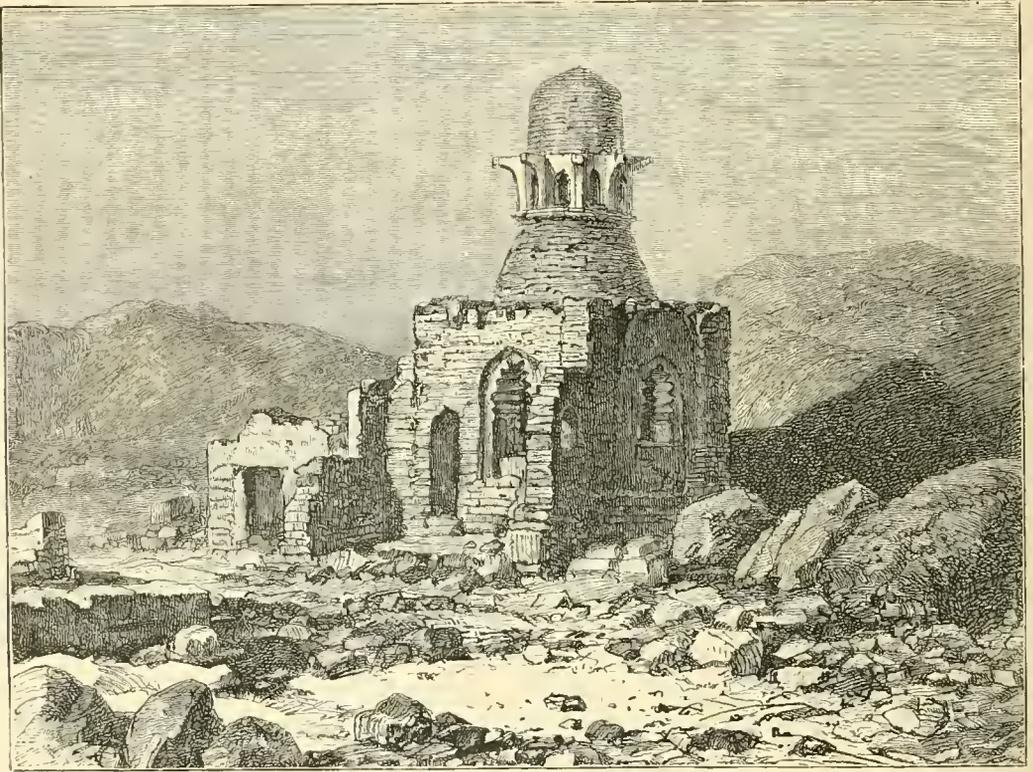
Sir Evelyn Wood, his Staff, and the sub-vakeel of Dongola in a most resplendent uniform, witnessed these operations, which were conducted by Captain Hammill, R.N.

Three days after his arrival at Cairo Lord Wolseley held an inspection of the troops, and after seeing the Black Watch march past, he thus addressed them specially:—

"Black Watch! I am truly glad to have this chance of meeting you again. I have often been with you before—in Ashanti, in Cyprus, and in the

Egyptian campaign, and, as I say, I am proud and glad to be once again associated with you. During the late campaign in the Eastern Soudan you were opposed to a most brave and determined enemy. You will believe me when I tell you that the people at home—not alone your own countrymen (in Scotland)—were proud of the gallant way in which you upheld the honour of your splendid and historic regiment: and there was no one in all England

where, on leaving the Nile, the road passes through sandy plains and rocky valleys, which make up the ordinary desert of that region. There the mountains rise sheer out of the plain. Not a blade of grass grows on them, and no living thing disturbs the vast soli-



MAUSOLEUM IN THE DESERT, NEAR ASSOUAN.

thought more of you than I did. Colonel Bayly and officers, non-commissioned officers and men, I am proud of the highly efficient state in which you have turned out this morning. It reflects the highest credit on all of you. In the coming campaign I do not think there will be much fighting; but there will be very hard work, and I want you to show that you can work hard as well as fight. If there is any fighting to be done, I know that I will only have to call on the old Black Watch, and you will behave as you have always done!"

On the 2nd October he inspected the British troops at Assouan, a place

tude, unless now and then a timid gazelle. On the same day the Khedive's yacht, the *Ferooz*, having passed the First Cataract, embarked Lord Wolseley and the Headquarter Staff at Philæ, where the most beautiful of the Nile scenery is to be found, a wild intermingling of rock, water, with vast ruined temples; she reached Wady Halfa on the 4th October.

There, probably for coolness, Lord Wolseley took up his quarters on board of a dahabeeyeh, or native boat, which is usually fitted up with every luxury in the way of sleeping cabins, saloon cabins, and baths; it is essentially *the* boat of the Nile, with its huge and picturesque lateen sail, the yard hooked

some sparks from a pipe, was raging for about a mile along the bank of the stream. It set fire to her sails, but prompt measures averted a greater catastrophe. The mast was cut away and the ammunition thrown overboard, so no lives were lost, and the detachment reached Dongola in safety.



SUAKIM, FROM THE SEA.

to the bow, and tapering far away skyward, aft.

On the preceding day, Brigadier Grenfell, of the Egyptian army, who was appointed in a similar capacity in the Queen's service, took command of Assouan and the line of communication.

About this time a new kind of mishap was encountered by a boat on the river, having on board an officer and 40 soldiers with 47 cases of arms and ammunition. A conflagration of palm grass and mimosa scrub, caused by

Four lady nurses were now selected for service with the Medical Department in the Nile Expedition. They were the nursing sisters, E. M. Crump, S. F. Hart, C. Fergusson, and I. M. C. Barker, who left Woolwich in the ship *Cameo*. At Wady Halfa a hospital containing 250 beds was formed, but on the 4th October there were only 47 sick of dysentery and enteric fever.

"The departure of the staff for the front," wrote a correspondent, "was the first important exodus of officers

from Cairo for the Nile Expedition, and consequently the station, on the morning of our departure, was crowded with friends who came to see us off. There were ladies on the platform clad in bright tropical toilettes that were in strong contrast to the warlike accoutrements of the departing officers, and whose sweet, bright English faces and sympathies, as we steamed away, formed our last reminiscences of civilisation. So, with the mysterious Nile rolling down to the sea on one hand, and the everlasting Pyramids standing silent on the other, we sped on our way to Assiout, the first stage of our long journey. And, as we passed by the different stations, the crowds of sulky-looking Egyptians wondered at the lightheartedness of us Britons, bound as we were for that terrible Soudan, from whence, according to Egyptian experience, few ever return."

Meanwhile, during all September and the early part of October, our little garrison at Suakim was kept on the alert by the vicinity of the Mahdi's people. On the 11th September his adherents, the Amarars, were attacked at Arbat by a tribe of the Hadendawas, who were friendly to us. The attack was repulsed, eighty-four men were killed and wounded, and nineteen camels killed, but the Amarars were compelled to keep on the defensive, and Mahmoud Ali's eldest son was slain in the conflict. On the 14th he came to Suakim seeking assistance to enable him to avenge this event, but did not receive any encouragement from the Governor.

On the 15th there was another des-

perate scuffle. Twenty of the Suakim police and fifty of the Amarar tribe, armed with forty rifles, were escorting a convoy of supplies and thirty women, when they were attacked at a place called Sheikhs Barghout by 200 Hadendawas, most of whom were on horseback, and messengers came to Suakim for assistance. Major Chermiside sent 100 men to assist the Amarars, who in the meantime had gained a complete victory with the loss of only twenty men, while Osman Digna's nephew and sixty Hadendawas were slain. They captured much booty, and many horses and mules, which, with the women, they brought into Suakim.

Encouraged by this, on the 17th, 2,000 Amarars, under two Sheikhs, attacked the main body of the Hadendawas, and, after four hours' fighting, put them to the rout with slaughter, capturing many camels, rifles, and other arms, which they handed over to the Governor.

By the 20th attacks upon Suakim had ceased, the Amarars having reoccupied the Berber road and driven the Hadendawas as far as Sinkat. They were most anxious to open up the Berber route, but doubted their ability to do so. Thus arms and provisions were given to them, and they sailed on the 29th in a steamer for Sheikhs Barghout. But early in October the two tribes came to terms, made mutual returns of captured cattle, and then Osman Digna issued a proclamation ordering all the adjacent tribes to join him under pain of death, and asserting that nearly all the Amarars were now willing to do so.

## CHAPTER III.

## THE MURDER OF COLONEL STEWART.

Gordon at Shendy and Berber—Narrative of Hassan Ismail—Wreck of the Steamer *Abbas*—Suleiman's Treachery—Murder of Colonel Stewart and his Companions—Sketch of Stewart's Career—Toiling up the Nile—The Mudir of Dongola—Idling in Dongola—Camel Manœuvres—Racing at Dongola.

On the 6th of October there occurred another catastrophe in the Soudan, the wreck and murder of Colonel Stewart and his party near Berber, under circumstances of the foulest treachery, and which seemed to call for such summary vengeance on the guilty parties as was exacted in the case of Professor Palmer and his two companions.

The following would appear to be the circumstances in which Colonel Stewart met his death:—

It would seem, according to a story told to Major Kitchener by the Vakeel of Ambigol, that in September, General Gordon, raising the siege of Khartoum, arrived at Shendy with four armed steamers and a number of barges, and placed placards on the shore stating that he was unwilling to injure any loyal inhabitant of that place, after which he passed on, leaving Shendy unmolested. It is the next town of importance after Berber, with a population of 3,000. It is the terminus of the desert route from Ambigol. The country around it is flat and uninteresting.

He then steamed on to Berber, an unattractive Nubian town, the limit of the southern flight of the quail, and between it and Khartoum, a distance of 404 miles, crocodiles and hippopotami abound. The population is about 3,000. The streets are dirty, unpaved, and surrounded by earthen works.

Gordon bombarded the town and drove the rebels out; Mohammed Dukheid was killed, and—according to the Vakeel—the treasure in the place was taken to Korti, after which General Gordon retired.

Here the narrative is taken up by Hassan Ismail, an Egyptian, who was the stoker of one of Stewart's boats, and who was taken by our cavalry at Berti.

It seemed that, on leaving Khartoum, Colonel Stewart of the 11th Hussars was accompanied by Mr. Power and M. Herbin, twelve Greek and five Egyptian artillerymen, while the crew of the *Abbas* was composed of seven natives. Two other steamers accompanied her, and then returned to Khartoum, after seeing her safely *en route* to Abu Hammed down the Nile.

The latter town is 1,297 miles from Cairo, and not far from Dongola, the capital of Lower Nubia, and residence of that Mudir whose loyalty to the British during the Soudan War was so often questioned.

After passing Abu Hammed the *Abbas* ran upon a rock near Catadieh on the 18th of September, when passing through the country of Suleiman Wad Gamr. At that time the country people could be seen taking flight towards the mountains.

When it was found that the steamer could not be got off, her small boat

was filled with useful articles and sent to a little island that was near. Four trips were made.

After everything valuable had been removed Colonel Stewart returned to the wreck to spike her gun, which was

must be disarmed, or the country people would be afraid of them.

Colonel Stewart, after talking it over, then crossed the river, and with the two Consuls, Power and Nicola, and Hassan Bey, entered the house of a



FIGHT NEAR KHARTOUM BETWEEN EGYPTIAN TROOPS AND ARABS.

then unbolted from her deck and thrown overboard with its ammunition. Several people now appeared on the right bank of the river and shouted, "Give us peace and grace." The interpreter answered, from Colonel Stewart, that peace would be granted. Suleiman Wad Gamr, who was in a small house near the bank, came out and called to Colonel Stewart to land without fear, but added that the soldiers

blind man named Fakri Etman, to arrange with Suleiman about camels, which he had promised to procure, to enable the whole party to proceed to Merawi.

All the party were now unarmed but Colonel Stewart, who retained a small revolver in his belt. After being in the house a short time, the Sheikh Suleiman was seen to come out with a copper water-pot in his hand and make

a sign to Arabs who were standing, making for the rest of Stewart's party, about in expectant groups, and all shouting and brandishing their spears



DERVISHES OF KORDOFAN, FOLLOWERS OF THE MAHDI.

armed with lances. They now divided into two parties, one going to the blind man's house, and the other

"I was with the party who had landed when they charged down," said Hassan Ismail. "We all threw our-

selves into the river. The natives fired, killing some that were in the water; many others were drowned, and the rest were speared as they came to the bank. I swam to the island and hid there till dark, when I was made prisoner, and with some others sent to Berti. I 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, I believe, there, where they were sent by Suleiman. All the money found on board, and in the pockets of the killed, was divided among the men who did the murders. Everything else of value was packed in two boxes and sent under a guard to Berber. The bodies of Colonel Stewart and the others were thrown at once into the river."

But the murder of Colonel Stewart and his brave companions, though speedily carried out, was not achieved until they had made a grand fight for their lives.

The house of Fakri Etman, and every other in the village of Hebeh, was afterwards destroyed by our troops, who found the guns, swords, rifles, and ammunition of the victims on board the stranded steamer. It is conjectured that Colonel Stewart had above £55,000 in his possession.

Soon after the Sussex Regiment was at Debbel, within 50 miles of the spot where this catastrophe occurred.

Colonel John Donald Stewart was,

like his leader, of Scottish race, as his name implies. He was born on the 15th of October, 1845, and was appointed Cornet in the 11th, or Prince Albert's own Hussars, on the 22nd September, 1865, and in 1881 he was Lieutenant-Colonel. Some years before that he had been Vice-Consul in Asia Minor, and in 1882 was in Egypt engaged in reporting on the prisons in Tantah, when he was recommended by Sir Charles Wilson to report on the state of the Soudan.

On receiving this mission he proceeded to Berber in December, and went from thence to Khartoum. In January, 1883, he forwarded a report on the town of Khartoum, its population, position, manufactures, trade, and education. On the 23rd of April, his temporary mission in the Soudan having terminated, the Earl of Dufferin expressed to him on his own behalf, as well as in the name of the Egyptian Government, his high appreciation of the manner in which he had discharged all the difficult duties imposed upon him; and, at the beginning of 1884, he had proceeded to Khartoum with General Gordon.

Only a short time before his death he had written to his mother and sister, announcing his hope to be soon home.

In Gordon's despatch, dated, "Khartoum, July 30, 1884" (Blue Book, Egypt, No. 35), he stated that "Stewart's journal is copious. I only hope it will get down to you when I send it;" and in his letter, dated, "Khartoum, 4—11, 1884" (Blue Book, No.

1, 1885), he said, "Stewart's journal was a gem, illustrated with all the Arabic letters of the Mahdi to me."

"Only four months ago most of us had said good-bye to Tamanieb, at the conclusion of the war against Osman Digna," wrote one, when *en route* to Dongola, "and we are now longing to take part in the third Egyptian Expedition."

At Wady Halfa the real difficulties of the Nile navigation began. Besides two steamers on their way up the rapids to Dongola, there were eight others plying between Assouan and Wady Halfa; and the seven miles of railway at the former place were in fair working order, forwarding men, horses, and stores from Alexandria to Wady Halfa; but from the latter to Sarras, 33 miles, lay a rickety line, on which, more than once, the train broke down, and blocked the way for two days at a time.

From Sarras to Dongola troops and stores were, in September, forwarded by native craft; and if it had not been for the energy of the Mudir, not one soldier could have proceeded from Wady Halfa until the arrival of the boats from Great Britain. He "pressed" all the native craft he could collect, and sent them down to Sarras, where Major Sandwith, acting under Sir Evelyn Wood, soon loaded them with the Royal Sussex Regiment, 250 Mounted Infantry, and three months' provisions. This was before the 25th of September.

"At Wady Halfa," says the writer quoted, "the *régime* of 'bully beef'

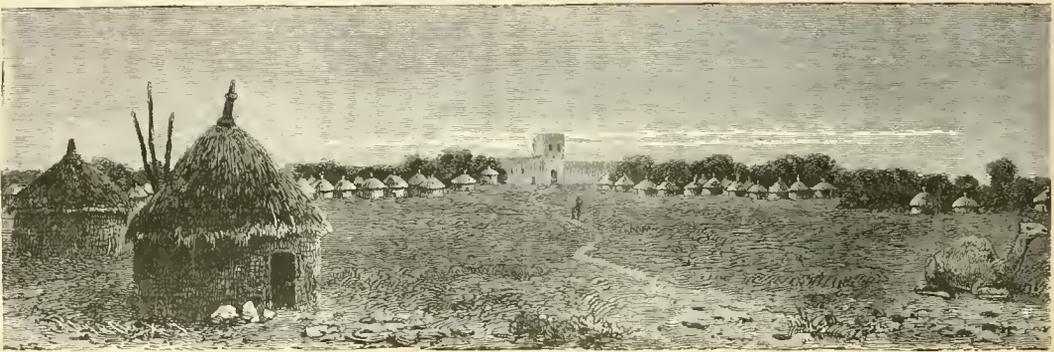
begins in earnest. Hard biscuits and coffee in the morning, bully beef for breakfast, a snack of bully beef for lunch, and bully beef for dinner, will be their daily fare for months to come, except, perhaps, at Dongola, where supplies to a small extent were said to be available. Wady Halfa sounds imposing when pronounced with proper Arabic roll of the tongue, but it is little more than a name. A low, dusty stretch of river beach it is, infested with flies and scorpions, and inhabited chiefly by Sir Evelyn Wood. Two dilapidated railway engines lying, bottom up, on the sand, add to the appearance of hopeless desolation; and the British soldiers, who move listlessly about the dusty camp of the South Staffordshire Regiment, seemed too bored even to be interested in the arrival of H.M.S. *Mahmoudiyeh*, with General Earle and staff in tow."

Sometimes the boats seemed to become immovable against the downward current, leaving the troops to be grilled in the sun and a prey to clouds of greasy Egyptian flies. The Lower Nile, with its fine evening effects, had been left far astern. There the sun sets with ruddy splendour behind the grey hills of the desert; the dingy yellow of the river is touched by the reflections of the afterglow, and its waves ripple in purple sheen upon its shores. Dark feathery palms and fronds sway slowly in the breeze, and cranes and great Dalmatian pelicans may be seen on distant sand banks, while the hideous crocodile dozes amid the ooze.

At Samneh, Ambigol, and Saugor, in

the last days of September, the *Reis* of the native boats insisted on the soldiers landing, as he would not be responsible for their safety in sailing up the rapids. Including these direct obstacles, for at least eighty miles the Nile may be described as a mighty mountain torrent, encumbered by innumerable islets, with seething whirlpools between the banks, on one side being at times precipitous rock, and on the other, fine

the Sussex Regiment and Mounted Infantry show up under the groves of palms, and British soldiers are seen standing on the banks alongside the Remington-armed Blacks, with whom the Mudir has won his recent victories. Just as we tie up for the last time, the sun sinks through the dusty haze that overhangs the town, and we hurry through the lanes of mud-built houses to the hut wherein the representatives



EL OBEID, CAPITAL OF KORDOFAN.

shifting sand, amid which the men toiled on knee-deep at every step.

At El Oordeh the flotilla sailed through an archipelago, the isles of which displayed a wealth of tropical vegetation — tall sugar-canes, cotton trees, dhurra, and innumerable palms; but there were still 630 miles of difficult river to traverse before the troops “could shake hands with Gordon,” as they said.

“At length, by the shores of a circling bay, formed by a bend of the left bank of the Nile, with one or two islands in front, El Oordeh appears,” wrote the *Standard* correspondent on the 5th of October; “the white tents of

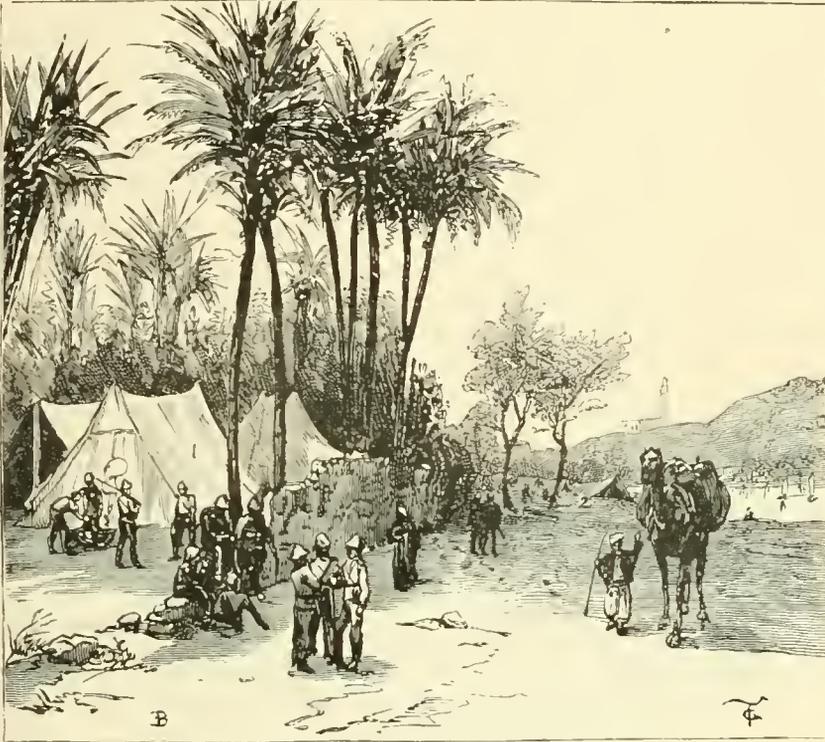
of the British press have, for the present, established themselves in Dongola.”

General Stewart with his Staff had arrived four days before.

“This morning I had an interview with the Mudir,” says the writer before quoted. “Short in stature, and of quiet and confident manner, and something more than independent in bearing, he conveys the impression of a man destined to make his mark in whatever position he may find himself. He is a most earnest Mussulman, and as such does not profess feelings of great cordiality towards us Christians. It is evident that he feels himself our superior,

and later on, when the bulk of our forces arrive, and his position sinks in importance, he will require most careful treatment and much politic tact. In the meantime, his name is a power in these districts, and, in a manner, is one to conjure with as much as that of the

the 20th the main body had arrived at Dal. Meanwhile, Sir Herbert Stewart and his staff, for lack of other work to do, betook them to gardening, in the hope of raising a crop of vegetables before starting for the front, while the troops lolled listlessly in their tents,



CAMPS OF ESSEX AND SUSSEX REGIMENTS AT ASSOUAN.

Madhi or General Gordon. For the Mahdi as a man of genius he entertains the most profound respect; and, as he remarked to me, 'We must not now think we have only Osman Digna to deal with.'

The last days of October came, and found those who formed the advance of our army still lingering in Dongola, encouraged, however, to hear that about

and smoked, in their shirt-sleeves, with helmets worn awry, and the officers invested in donkeys, on which they rode in the cool of the evening.

At Dongola, says Consul Holroyd's *Report*, the prevalence of northerly winds has carried the sand from the adjacent desert towards the river to such an extent that it has surrounded the houses, and in many of them the

inhabitants are obliged to enter through the roof! "The town is in ruins, presenting a melancholy spectacle, and appears to have been nearly abandoned since the trade has been transferred to New Dongola. There is no land capable of cultivation around Old Dongola;" and he adds that all the east bank of the Nile between the two cities is useless for agriculture in consequence of the daily accumulation of sand towards the river.

Poncet, who visited it in 1670, says its king was a hereditary sovereign, but tributary to the King of Sennaar. He had an audience, and found him clad in a green velvet robe that reached to the ground, and surrounded by a numerous guard armed with swords and half-pikes.

Here, then, in this unpromising place, on the 20th of October, Sir Herbert Stewart manœuvred for the first time the Sussex Regiment and the Mounted Infantry on their camels. The latter pushed forward at a trot towards some sandy hills, where an enemy was supposed to be, covering the advance and flanks of the Infantry; they then dismounted and opened fire, one man being left to look after every twelve camels.

When the Infantry formed square, as if the foe was charging, the Camelry dismounted, fixed bayonets, and formed in groups outside their camels, prepared to receive alike Cavalry or spearmen, while the Sussex rattled out volleys with their Martini-Henrys.

In addition to the Sussex Regiment, 600 strong at this time, there were in Dongola 1,000 Black Infantry.

At Cairo much disgust was now

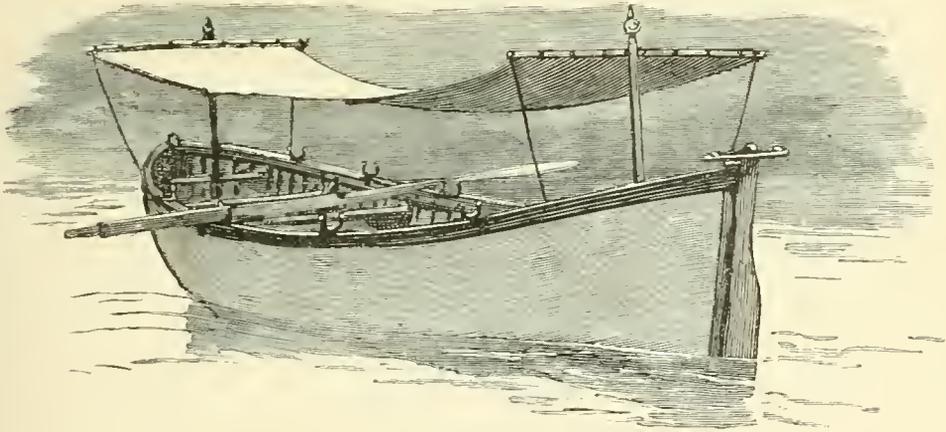
given to the British officials there by the reappointment by the Egyptian Government of Osman Ghaleb as Governor of the city. He had been ejected from office at the request of the British authorities, and was transferred to the higher post of judge of the Court of Appeal. This change of office excited both surprise and indignation, as it seemed to aggravate the many difficulties with which the British officials had already to contend.

Disaffection now began to be shown among the native troops at Dongola, when the Mudir ordered his mounted irregulars to prepare to march, retaining his Infantry in the town in case of an attack from the army of the Mahdi, who was reported to be approaching. The spirit evinced by them was by no means good, and they complained of being sent to meet an enemy without Infantry; and the dragoman of a correspondent overheard some of the Bashi-Bazouks, while discussing the order to advance, assert that the Sultan of Constantinople had sent instructions for the faithful everywhere to oppose the British to the utmost, "just as he did in the insurrection of Arabi. They said that there was no doubt he had also sent the same word to the Mahdi, and that the latter has his full approval and support."

As the British troops were now steadily progressing up the Nile, the Mudir of Dongola despatched 100 men of his army, mounted on dromedaries, to keep open the road in the vicinity of Ambigol, for which he meant to leave soon after in a private steamer.

On the 15th of October the British officers at Dongola held their first races, a relaxation greatly enjoyed by them and their men. The programme comprised races for horses and camels, as well as foot races. When they were half over, the Mudir appeared on the ground, where he was welcomed by General Stewart, and appeared interested and rather amazed at the contests. "There can be no doubt," wrote a correspondent, "that the meeting has had an excellent political effect. The natives were greatly pleased, and they saw the British in a new phase of

their character. Hitherto they have only seen us hard at work, impatient of delays, jaded by heat, and inclined to be irascible at laziness or stupidity. They now saw us enjoying ourselves, excited and enthusiastic over the struggles, and putting out all our strength to attain victory. They expressed themselves astonished at the ardour with which the men entered into the sports, and there is an evident increase in the good feeling with which they regard us. The troops are distinctly popular here; but the people regard them as entirely under the orders of the great man, the Mudir."



NILE BOAT, FITTED WITH AWNING.

## CHAPTER IV.

## LORD WOLSELEY AT DONGOLA.

Departure of Lord Northbrook—Disputes at Cairo—The Scene at Wady Halfa—The Nile Route—Decoration of the Mudir—The Canadians—Difficulties of the Cataracts—Lord Wolseley's General Order.

ON the 24th of October the Earl of Northbrook and his secretary, Captain Beaumont, R.N., left Cairo for Alexandria, his mission having proved somewhat of a failure, and his departure being hurried—according to the *Standard*—by “financial difficulties, the first sign of which was the suspension of Messrs. Sinadino Ralli, a fact which he looked upon as threatening the whole commercial future of Egypt. He considered that the first object should be to arrange in a satisfactory way a prompt settlement of the indemnity claims, and, by the establishment of some firm financial guarantees, to restore national and private credit. He expressed an earnest hope that, in spite of all international complications, a solution of the financial difficulty was now close at hand.”

His departure was the signal for the native party to break loose. The British Commandant of the Cairo police was informed that henceforth all sub-governors of the city districts were to report directly to the Governor, Osman Ghaleb; and that the secret police were to be directly under the orders of the latter, who would carry on all business with the foreign consuls, a state of things which lowered the position of the commandant to that of a non-commissioned officer.

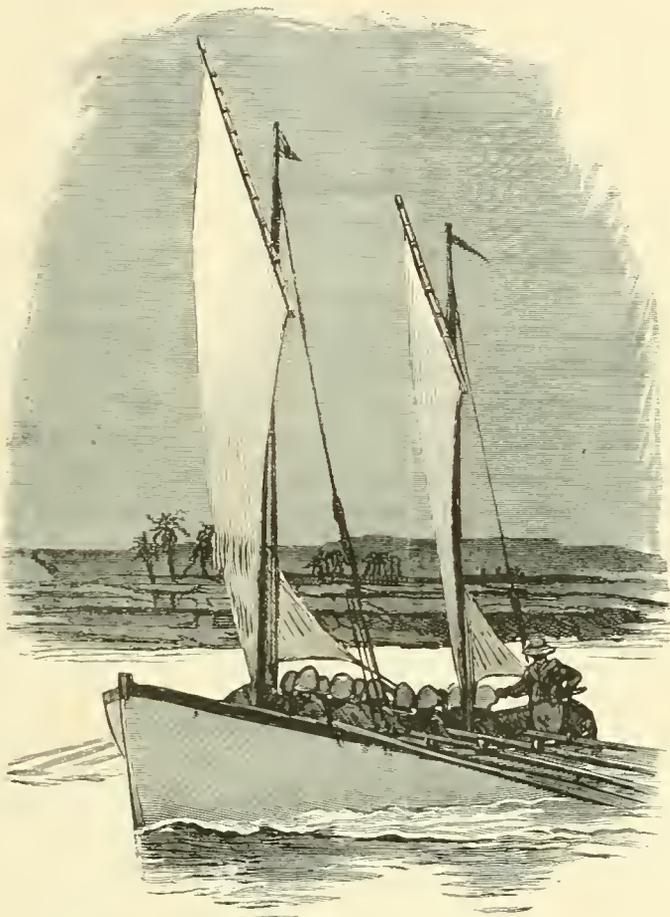
The Mudirs next repudiated all responsibility for the safety of prisoners, and Dr. Cruikshank refused to accept any till the promulgation of a decree which, though promised by Nubar Pasha months before, and insisted on by Sir Evelyn Baring, had never appeared.

After much turmoil the police questions were satisfactorily settled. Baker Pasha went to the Khedive, and pointed out the impossibility of admitting the changes proposed by the reinstated Osman Ghaleb; and his highness agreed with him in all points, so it was arranged that matters should go on as before, and that the secret police and consular department should remain under British supervision. Osman Ghaleb was informed by the Minister of the Interior that he would have “to work in harmony with his British colleagues, and conform to the wishes of Baker Pasha in everything connected with the police.”

But many disorders occurred, which were believed to be secretly planned by those who were desirous of removing British influence from the police department. Thus the village of Abulgar, near the railway station of Kafr Tajut, was utterly sacked on the night of the 17th September. The people resisted the robbers, sword in hand, for

several hours, but were eventually overpowered, while many were killed on both sides, and booty, estimated at 20,000 Egyptian pounds, was carried off. Another village near Korfu-Shlik was

At this time Wady Halfa is said to have presented a strange spectacle. British soldiers and sailors, Somaulis, Egyptians, Indians, Frenchmen and Italians, Kroomen, Canadian boatmen



NILE BOAT, SAILING FREE.

pillaged on the night of the 28th (according to the *Politeche*) by a band of sixty horsemen, and the inhabitants fled, leaving all their possessions behind. Meanwhile, burglaries were of nightly occurrence in Cairo, especially in the consular quarter of Ismailia.

and Bedouins, all mingled in the motley crowds. This was certainly the strangest expedition the world had yet seen; and, remarkably enough, the same canoe, used by Lord Wolseley at the Red River, arrived for his use about the end of October.

On the 28th he started for the front, from Wady Halfa, at 6.15 a.m. by train for Sarras, which he left at nine, by camel, escorted by a detachment of Egyptian cavalry, and guided by certain Sheikhs, *en route* to Dongola, where his advent, without troops, would, it was feared, produce an evil effect on the Mudir, who would rather have seen soldiers than generals. The people knew not the number of our forces creeping up the Nile, and were sceptical of our power to contend with the Mahdi, while the influence of the Mudir was great; he could have turned the whole country against us in a day, and kept up the belief among the people that the infidel British were only acting under his orders.

By the 30th of October no less than 140 boats filled with troops were taken up past the Second Cataract at Wady Halfa, and it was calculated that the remainder of the flotilla would go up at the rate of fifty a day.

This work was greatly aided by the efforts of that gallant and energetic officer Lord Charles Beresford, who constructed a portage of 2,480 yards in length, by which the most serious difficulties of the cataracts were avoided. The boats were passed along by parties of men thirty-five strong, with the aid of rollers and levers to get them across the portage. He had seven of these parties at work, and the average time they occupied in getting a boat across was an hour and a half. The work was heavy, and the heat was great; but the will and energy of our men were found to be equal to the occasion.

Lord Wolseley reached Dongola on the 3rd of November, in the steamer *Nassifkheir*, and was received by Sir Herbert Stewart and the Mudir, and a guard of honour furnished by the Sussex infantry. A few days before, tidings came that the forces of the Mahdi were collecting more closely round Khartoum, and that he had summoned Gordon to surrender; but the latter sent him back the defiant answer—

“Not for ten years!”

On the 4th of November, at sunset, Lord Wolseley, accompanied by his staff and a mounted escort, proceeded to the Mudir's residence. Native-troops were drawn up round the square courtyard of the Mudirieh to receive the British commander. The Mudir met Lord Wolseley on the verandah, and, after salutations, called upon the Imam to offer prayers, to which the assembled crowd made responses in loud tones. When the prayers were over, Lord Wolseley performed the ceremony of investing the Mudir with the insignia of a Knight Commander of the order of St. Michael and St. George. The people evinced great delight. The Mudir himself said that the honour conferred upon him was too exalted, and was unmerited. He promised to render every help to the expedition.

“The most praying country in the world is this Soudan,” wrote a correspondent at this time. “Quite independent of the Mahdi's movement, the people are everywhere filled with religious fervour, which, it is easy to

understand, may with little effort be turned into fanaticism. In his religious observance of the laws of the Koran, lies in great part the secret of the Mahdi's power; and Osman Digna, at Suakim, by dressing like a fakir, in a single dirty cotton cloth, and covering himself with dust and praying continuously, induced the Hadendowas 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 tones of his deep voice, rising and falling in musical cadence, was pronounced interesting in a high degree; later on we deemed it as bellowing and a nuisance of the first order."

The Canadian boatmen averred that the craft built in England for the expedition were not nearly strong enough in their construction for the work they had to do. They were of opinion also that their having keels was a great mistake, and that the navigation of the Nile was not dangerous, though exceptionally laborious and trying. Our soldiers were loud in their praises of the work and skill of these Canadians, and it was thought that without their direction, tact, and coolness, it would have been altogether impossible to get the boats up the Nile. Eventually, the Canadians modified their first views as to the difficulty of navigating the Nile at that season of the year, and readily admitted that the passage at Bahr-el-Hajar was a very serious and arduous undertaking, and harder than anything that they had expected to meet with.

What was called the Pioneer Expedition of Major Dorward with five boats to Ambigol proved an arduous affair. He made only thirty-one miles in seventy-two hours, though all hands were at work with oars or ropes. Three boats were seriously injured by rocks, but their sides were repaired by plates of lead or tin.

Our Royal Engineers all go through a course of rowing at Chatham, while the linesmen can know little or nothing of boating; and it was thought, if the former had—as they asserted—such difficulty in bringing up their boats, how much greater was the task for those who had never handled an oar? "The Engineers say that the work coming up has been terrible! It began every day with dawn, and ended only when it became too dark to see what they were doing, and they were frequently breast-deep in water. A ration of rum at night, when work is over, would go a long way to cheer them after their toil; but at present none is issued, and as the men regard this as the one luxury of their continued toil, it is," says a correspondent, "a mistake that they should be deprived of it. There is, however, little or no grumbling; the men work most cheerfully and zealously, and the one pervading idea is to push forward. There are more jokes than growls over their severe work and privation."

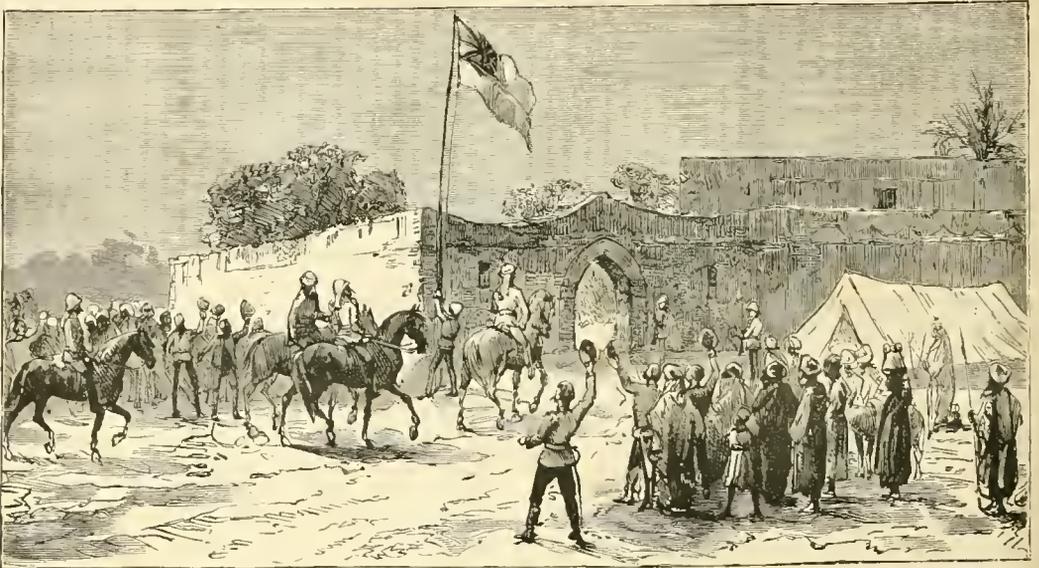
The Canadians were of opinion that the difficulty and danger of the Nile navigation would be best met by the troops advancing in parties of ten boats at a time, as there would then be sufficient

*voyageurs* to man them, and take them through difficult places; but that more than ten at a time might cause the risk of collision, as the stream often caught them and swept them across with dangerous velocity.

In slack water the boats sailed well, but their canvas was insignificant in comparison to that carried by the native

tinuous rapid, now running in foaming breakers over a bed of rock, and elsewhere flowing smoothly, but with terrible rapidity.

The boats passed without accident. They were, however, partially unladen, and taken up separately, each steered by two Canadians, with fifty soldiers laying on the hawser, and hauling them

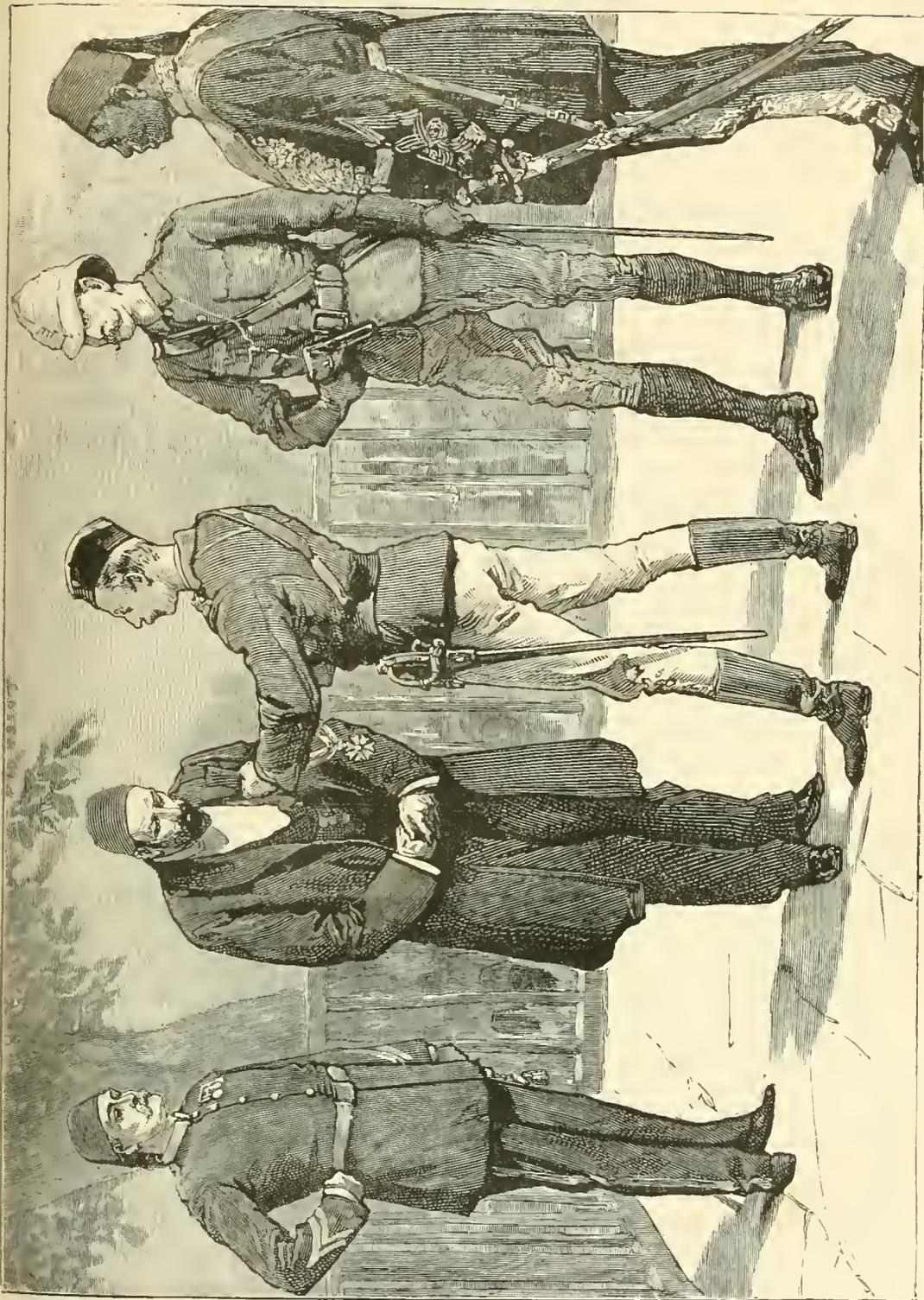


HOISTING THE UNION JACK OVER LORD WOLSELEY'S QUARTERS AT DONGOLA.

craft, and was of but little use when the current ran strong. In short, every way this Nile Expedition was perhaps the most onerous task ever undertaken by British troops.

The Ambigol cataract was deemed a most perilous one, as the height of the river alters there constantly, and a line found comparatively easy one day may be impracticable on the next. Between Ambigol and Mangal, a distance of twelve miles, the Nile presents the appearance of one fierce and con-

up the rapids one by one, where the banks on each side were strewn with the ribs and planks of wrecked boats, thus showing the perils of the navigation at that point. "While the Engineer boats were ascending," says the *Standard* correspondent, "Alleyne's boats came down and shot the rapids with great velocity, to the immense astonishment of the native and Egyptian soldiers. Indeed, the sight of North American Indians thus navigating British troops up the cataracts of the Nile



LORD WOLSELEY INVESTIGATING THE MURDER OF DONGOLA WITH THE ORDER OF K.C.M.G.

is one of the most singular ever witnessed in a campaign. As Alleyne's boats shot past those of the Engineers, the *voyageurs* shouted to the up-going Canadians that the river was extremely difficult above, and that, unless with the aid of a strong wind, they would find it impossible to get up. The boats of their party are more manageable, and make far better progress by the help of the wind than those of the Engineers, still more than the heavily-laden boats which follow, as they carry little more than half the load."

On the 7th of November the boats, though assisted by a favourable breeze, with all their sails set, were five hours in doing three miles, and were an hour and a half in passing one particular point. It was now deemed a great mistake that all the stores had not been sent up to Dongola two months before, when the Nile was practicable for native craft.

In the rapids it was found on an average that the flotilla could sail against the current at the rate of four miles an hour; and that in slack water the soldiers could row over two miles an hour, but it was very hard work.

Several holes were knocked in the boats before they reached Tangur, after toiling through five miles of rapids. While one was being hauled over the worst part of a cataract the hawser slipped, and she was swept down the stream with the most frightful velocity; but so skilfully was she steered by the Canadians that all rocks were escaped, and finally she was brought in shore. But many nuggars were wrecked every

day, and great quantities of stores went to the bottom of the Nile.

More spare oars, rudders, and pushing-poles were required, for the expenditure of these was considerable, and forges were necessary at certain points for the repair of iron work. The poor soldiers did all their hard work upon biscuits, tinned meat, and tinned vegetables, and found their daily rations but scant enough to keep them going. On many occasions they had to take boats completely out of the water, and turn them over for the repair of fractures and leaks.

By the time the boats of the Royal Engineers reached Bahr-el-Hajar, the crews were exhausted by twelve consecutive days of hard and unceasing toil; "and their food," it was reported, "has not been of the kind on which men can best work and thrive in a climate like this. None of the regular Nile stores are to be touched before Dongola is reached, and fifteen or sixteen hours of toil, a considerable part often spent in the water, on rations of tinned food, are trying the men greatly. Dysentery has already made its appearance among them."

The Engineers brought their boats up the terrible Bahr-el-Hajar cataracts without taking them out of the water which was deemed a most creditable feat; but the Canadians suggested that to do this would be impracticable for the more heavily-laden boats, and in order to enable the bulk of the expedition to pass quickly up these cataracts, it would be necessary to station parties of men with camels to portage the car-

goes overland, while the empty boats were dragged up by the troops.

In addition to the known cataracts at Samneh, Ambigol, Tangur, Akashah, Dal, and elsewhere, our flotilla had to encounter twelve others which are not marked in any map, and the aggregate length of which was ten miles. So, adding ten for the known cataracts, there was a total of twenty miles, up which the boats had to be dragged by sheer manual strength, at a time when the weather was getting hotter and the north wind diminishing in power.

The Canadians frequently complained of the boats being insufficient in strength. The water being thick and muddy made the rocks invisible—a contrast to that of their own clear lakes and rivers, where rocks and stones can be clearly seen at twelve feet of depth; so they stigmatised the Nile work as a “dirty job.”

By establishing fixed hawsers at the most difficult point, Colonel Maurice, commanding at Dal, greatly diminished the difficulties of the cataract there.

By the time the cataracts at Bahr-el-Hajar had been passed, it was possible to form an estimate of the task Lord Wolseley had set his army to do. The first boats were there on the 13th November.

After surmounting the Samneh cataract, says an eye-witness, Major Dorward's five whale-boats (with fifty of the Engineers on board), “spreading their lugs like wings, one on each side of each boat, started in the evening for an hour's sail, ere darkness or a rapid stopped their progress. Only at

sunrise or sunset does this terrible country at all wear an interesting appearance. At these periods the landscapes are ablaze with that profusion of colour only to be seen where rocky hills, desert sands, and verdant vegetation mingle as they do along the upper reaches of the Great Nile. On the illuminated waters of the flowing river the white sails of the little squadron showed up in the twilight pleasantly. When almost dark they closed to the shore; the sails were furled, and the lines made fast to the bank, on which the soldiers, under the feather-like branches of a cluster of date palms, prepared to bivouac for the night. Fires were lighted, and the frugal meal of bully beef, onions, and potatoes, was cooked and eaten, while the men cracked jokes on the nature of their food, and made use of nautical phrases, as indicative of the amphibious character of their work.”

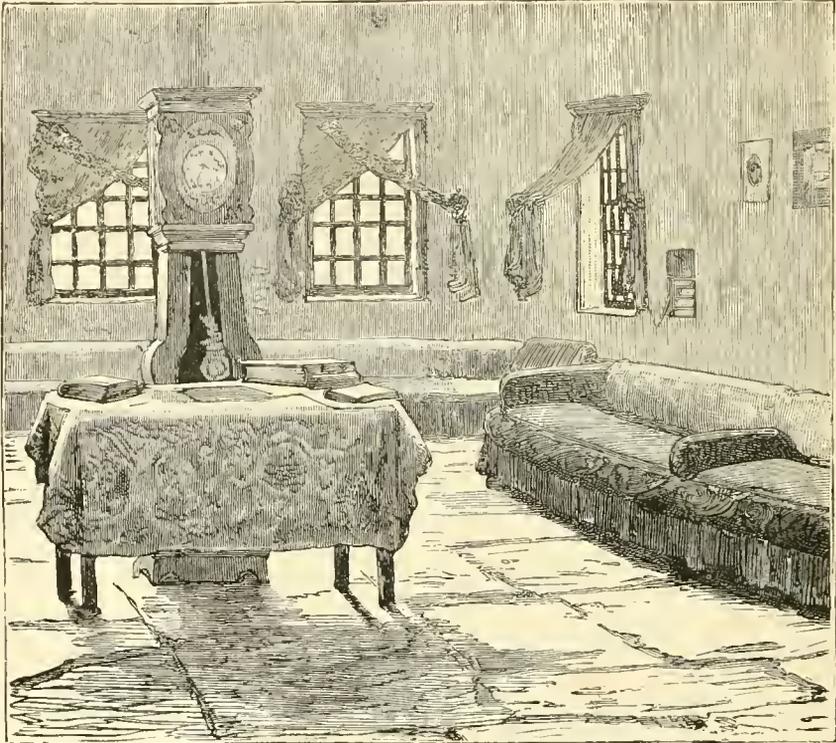
The adjectives and expressions of the Canadians with Dorward's five boats savoured of the backwoods. “Yet here are the names of our five Canadians,” adds the writer quoted: “James Graham, foreman, as complete a Scotsman in type, although not in tongue, as the Land of Cakes itself produced; Anthony Milks, a handsome Angle-Saxon, with soft blue eyes and brown hair, of the true old Viking stock; Robert Simpson, another Scotsman in descent; and William McNair and James Elliot.”

The Canadians complained that the soldiers when towing were slow in hauling in the slack of the ropes; but the latter found it hard work to “tally on” with

both hands to a hawser while the horrible gadflies were crawling over their faces, a hot sun blazing overhead, and whiffs of sharp sand coming ever and anon into their eyes and throats.

At Tangur it took two days of hard

fell at Assouan, Sir Evelyn Wood at Wady Halfa, and Major Sandwith at Sarras, could testify with what labour the rush of stores and other munition of war were passed along the tremendous distances these names indicate.



RECEPTION-ROOM OF THE MURDER OF DONGOLA.

pulling and tugging to surmount the obstacles, and a portage of 210 yards was necessary. There the Nile rushes down amid enormous masses of black trap, that, worn by the water smooth, shine in the sun like polished coal or blocks of congealed tar.

As the Nile continued to fall, new and unexpected rapids were developed in unexpected places. Colonel Maurice commanding at Assiout, General Gren-

The seven miles below Dal alone occupied two days and a half in passing, and at one spot they had to unload the boats, construct a special channel, and push them along, using the oars as rollers.

Boat No. 156, which, during the entire voyage, was under the sole command of Corporal Lyons, was one of the few that had not, at one time or another, required to be repaired.

On the 11th November a boat was upset at Ambigol, a sergeant was

ropes is incessant and most toilsome; but, hard as it is, the men prefer it to



STAFF OFFICER IN FULL SOUDAN UNIFORM.

drowned, and the arms and provisions were lost in the river.

“The Canadians, Indians, and soldiers work well together,” it was reported. “The labour at the tow-

the harassing work of constantly loading and unloading the boats and carrying the baggage across difficult places. It is doubtful, indeed, whether any time is saved by these portages, al-

though the empty boats are, of course, towed up much more rapidly than those that are laden, often requiring little aid beyond their sails, which are far too small to assist them greatly when loaded."

When the Staffordshire Regiment passed Tangur there were barely three feet of water in the gates of the rapid.

The first who succumbed to toil and suffering at this time was Sergeant Galbraith of the Scots Greys, who was buried at Wady Halfa, and concerning whom the captain of his troop wrote to his brother on the 26th of November a long and kind letter.

"The little troop," he said, "which consisted, when we left, of only 45 of the Scots Greys, including Lieutenant Wolfe and myself, is so small, that its members have constituted more of a family than a body of soldiers, and the loss of one is felt very strongly, so I hope you will allow me to say how deeply both officers and men of the detachment sympathise with you in your present trouble."

At the end of November the following General Order was issued by Lord Wolseley, and ordered to be read at the head of every regiment, battalion, battery, and detached body of troops, and to appear in all orders for three consecutive days:—

"The relief of General Gordon, and of the garrison which has been so long besieged in Khartoum, is the glorious mission which the Queen has entrusted to us, an enterprise which stirs the heart of every soldier and sailor fortunate enough to be selected to share in it, and the very magnitude of the difficulties only stimulates us to increased exertion.

"We are all proud of General Gordon's gallant and self-sacrificing defence of Khartoum, which has added, if possible, to his already high reputation. He cannot hold out for many months longer, and now calls us to save the garrison. His heroism and patriotism are household words wherever the English tongue is spoken, and not only has his safety become a matter of national importance, but the knowledge that a comrade is in danger urges us to push forward with redoubled energy.

"Neither he nor the garrison can be allowed to meet the sad fate of the gallant Colonel Stewart, who, carrying out an enterprise of unusual danger, was cruelly murdered by his captors. We can, and, with God's help, we 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 soldierly qualities and that contempt for danger and determination to overcome difficulties which in previous campaigns has always distinguished all ranks throughout the Army and Navy.

"The physical objects which impede rapid progress are considerable; but who cares for them when we remember General Gordon and his garrison are in danger? Under God, their safety is now in your hands. Come what may, we must save them.

"British soldiers and sailors, it is needless to say more.

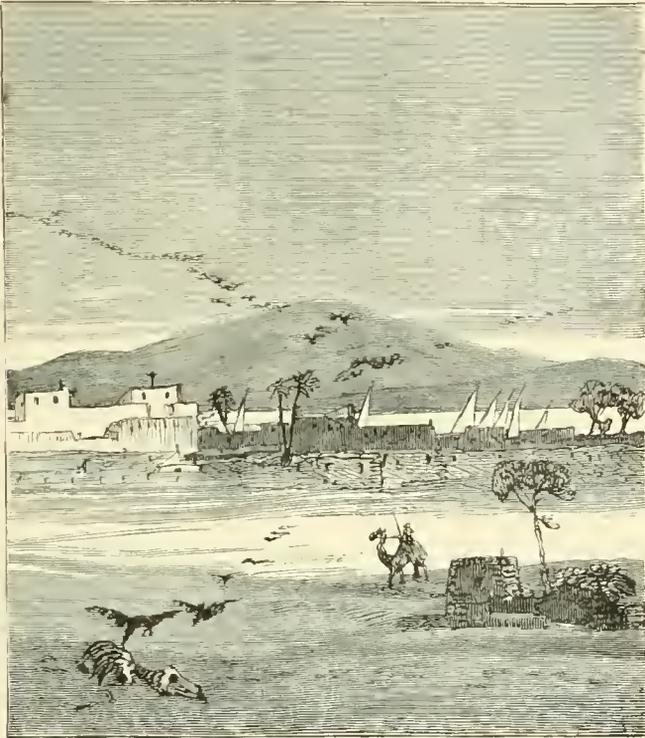
"The General Commanding will give a hundred pounds to the battalion of the Nile force which makes the quickest time with the fewest accidents between Sarras and Debbeh, and will do all he can to give the place of honour to the battalion which wins the prize. The hundred pounds will be distributed on their return to Egypt amongst the non-commissioned officers and privates of the winning battalion."

By the 3rd of December the Dal Cataracts were found by Lord Avonmore, who had charge of them, very dangerous. At four points the water was rolling over ledges of rock, and each dropping from three to four feet, while the roar of its fall was like surf on the shore. Three boats were smashed and all their contents lost.

On the first of the month the last boat with troops quitted Wady Halfa,

an event which marked the conclusion of the first or preparatory stage of this most arduous expedition, which displayed a succession of strange difficulties as even British soldiers had never experienced before, but they faced these cheerfully, and the song and the jest were of hourly occur-

rence. In 74 miles of the Nile there is a rise of 450 feet, and in dragging the boats the men had frequently to toil over polished granite rocks, sometimes barely advancing a mile in a day, with a temperature of 90° in the shade, which never sank below 80° at night.



AT BERBER.

## CHAPTER V.

## THE START FOR KHARTOUM.

Selimah Attacked—Daring of Major Wortley—A Message from Gordon—Departure of the Mounted Infantry for the Front—Affairs at Suakim—The Camp at Korti—Plan of the British Advance.

IN tracing the progress of the troops up the Nile during the last months of 1884 we have somewhat anticipated the current of events elsewhere.

On the 8th of November Lord Wolseley inspected the field hospital at Dongola, and specially praised the cool straw huts in which the sick, then 56 in number, were lodged.

A post at Selimah in the desert, 80 miles north-west of Dal, had been established in August by Major Stuart Wortley, and on the 5th of November it was attacked by a party of Arab marauders, supposed to belong to the Awazit tribe. A detachment of the Kabbabish tribe, who held the post for us, fired away all their ammunition; and, after surrendering their rifles and camels to the enemy, made the best of their way to Dal. As the Kabbabish are not a warlike race, the Major was convinced they would be of little use if it came to fighting; thus he had recommended in October that the post be abandoned, or held by regular Egyptian troops.

In the progress of a survey, this adventurous officer, with only four attendants, penetrated from Selimah southward 150 miles to Laghen, which is in the desert, and 180 miles from the nearest point of the Nile. Across the desert he started eastward for

Dongola, steering himself by the compass alone. For some distance his little party was followed by wild Bedouins. At fifty miles from the Nile he struck the great Wady El Kab, a broad and fertile district covered with mimosa, and having Kabbabish villages from ten to thirty miles apart. The population of this province now threw in their lot with us, and rendered all the assistance in their power. "If," said a writer, "when the present campaign is over, they are abandoned to reprisals from the Mahdi's followers, their lot will be a grievous one. As yet, however, they are unconscious of the fate that is in store for them, and help us willingly enough, being ignorant of our intention to make Wady Halfa the frontier of Egypt."

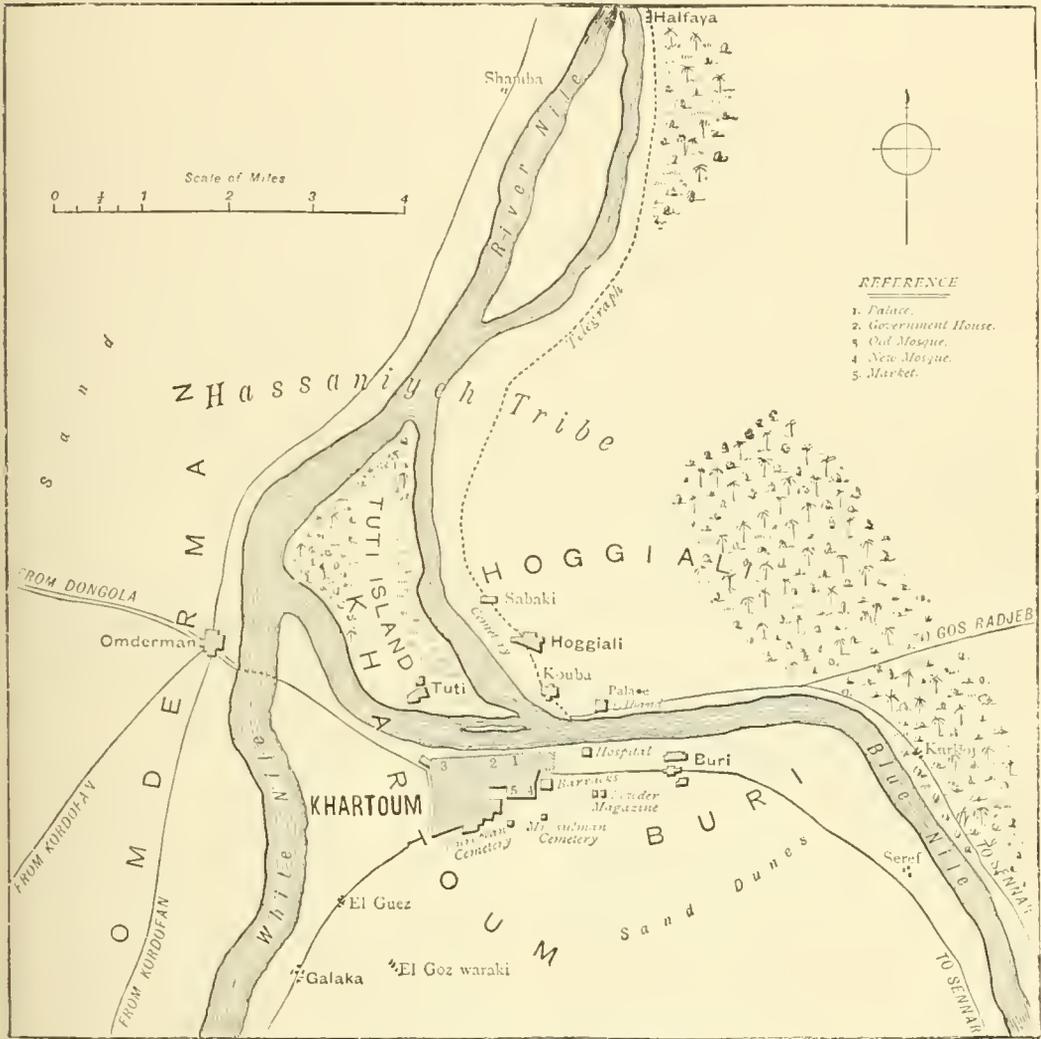
It was supposed that Sheikh Salah, the chief of the Kabbabish tribe, would have joined the Mahdi had the latter not killed his brother; but Major Wortley found their villages everywhere deserted by the fighting men, who had definitely cast their lot with the Mahdi and refused to obey the orders of Salah.

At Debbah a letter from Gordon, dated 4th November, arrived for Lord Wolseley on the 15th, and was hailed with relief and satisfaction, as rumours were rife that he had fallen. "Only it must be distinctly remembered," wrote

one at this period, "that the present safety of Gordon is no guarantee whatever of our being in time to relieve

Expedition was now stated to be from ten to twelve millions.

"Seeing that the Expedition must



MAP OF KHARTOUM AND VICINITY.

him. It adds an element of hope, but nothing more; it lends new excitement to our neck-and-neck race with time, but leaves the result as doubtful as before."

have been so long anticipated," wrote the *Times* correspondent, "it is regrettable that it should not start fully equipped. I am credibly informed that no single life-buoy accompanied the 500 boats, and officers endeavoured to

The official estimate of the Khartoum

buy some at Alexandria, with the result that twenty-six have been found there. It was the same with regard to the copper nails for the repair of the boats, which had been telegraphed for to Malta."

About the middle of the month the Mudir of Dongola telegraphed to Cairo that he had received a message from General Gordon conferring upon him the high rank of Mushir, and promoting several of his officials and *employés* a step in rank, and looking anxiously for the arrival of the Relieving column.

Thirty-one boatloads of grain had reached Khartoum, and been sold at the rate of thirty francs a bushel, before the departure of the messenger, who brought tidings that the Mahdi did not intend to attack the city during that month, as to do so during Moharram would be contrary to the law of the Prophet.

On the 25th of November the people of Dongola turned out to witness the departure of the Mounted Infantry to the front; and the sight was a singular and striking one when the 394 riflemen, mounted on stately camels, all under perfect control, filed past Lord Wolseley, while the band played "The Camels are Coming," the old Clan Campbell march having been jocularly adopted as the quickstep of this new and remarkable corps.

In spite of the mocking crowd and the uncouth animals ridden by our soldiers, there was something solemn—almost weird—about the procession as it glided away in regular order into the silent desert, and disappeared in clouds

of the dust that rolled up, dense and gloomily, in the light of the blood-red setting sun—the advanced guard of an Expedition that all knew would be arduous, exhausting, and dangerous, and the end of which none could then foresee.

On the 28th of November a Naval Brigade was formed at Dongola, under Lord Charles Beresford of H.M.S. *Condor*.

Two days after, tidings came there that the Mahdi was continually summoning General Gordon to surrender, but the latter replied with his guns. He was reported to have taunted the Mahdi by telling him to dry up the Nile and come, if he were a real Prophet, and that he would then surrender.

On the 2nd of December the Second Division of the Guards' Camel Corps started for the front, after inspection by Lord Wolseley, first on foot, and then, as they passed him, mounted. Two hundred such tall and stalwart men had never before been seen in Dongola. They wore their scarlet tunics, the colour of all others most impressive to the eye and mind of Orientals.

The Mudir was present and preserved an air of sullen indifference; but the Turkish officers of his staff were loud in commendation of the stature and physique, the apparent silent power and discipline, of the corps, as it moved off in excellent order into the desert in the steps of the Mounted Infantry.

Meanwhile, Suakim garrison was not without its disturbances. On the 10th

of November an attack was made upon the town, but was repulsed by the Egyptian Cavalry, who actually pursued the enemy for several miles; and six days after, the friendly Beni Amers inflicted a severe defeat upon the Haden-dowas, capturing a convoy of provisions and corn destined for the camp of Osman Digna, together with no less than 3,000 camels.

On the 8th of December letters from Suakim stated that Osman Digna's fanatical influence over the tribes was great, and that he had collected about 3,000 men, who, however, were continually slipping away, and seemed tired of fighting. Also, that he only kept any of them together by his extreme severity, as he killed offenders and deserters without mercy. It was now thought that if he was crushed, and the country half-way between Suakim and Berber opened up, the railway to the latter place could easily be pushed forward. It was reported also that any number of camels could then be bought between Suakim and Kassala, the people being only too glad to dispose of them; that there was plenty of water between Suakim and Berber, and that travellers did not draw it from the wells, but from the rain pools. On the 15th the Mahdi wrote Osman Digna urgently for reinforcements, to which the latter replied that it was impossible to send any, as he expected daily to be attacked by the British.

On the 3rd of December Colonel Frederick Burnaby was appointed Inspecting Staff Officer between Ambigol and Dal; but there was no concealing

the fact, that in spite of the courage and energy of our men, and the skill of the Commander-in-chief, the Nile Expedition made very slow progress; and it seemed probable that, at that time, Lord Wolseley did not know how he could attempt the rescue of the garrison of Khartoum, in the sense of bringing the men and Gordon away, safe and sound, from that place.

The following was the position occupied by the component parts of the Expedition, on the night of the 7th December, 1884:—

At Debbeh there were three companies of the Sussex Regiment, where they erected a redoubt 40 yards square; at Handak, 40 miles in advance of Dongola, were the Mounted Infantry, the Guards' Camel Corps, and a squadron of Hussars—in all 800 men. At Dongola were the five other companies of the Sussex.

On the line between Dongola and Sarras were six sections of the Heavy Camel Corps and six of the Light Corps, with a battery of Artillery, and two squadrons of Hussars.

At Wady Halfa there were three sections of Light and four of the Heavy Camel Corps, with the Camel Corps of the Royal Marines.

Below Dongola were the Cameron Highlanders at Korosko; the West Kent and Royal Irish Regiment at Wady Halfa; while the Black Watch, the Essex Regiment, the Gordon Highlanders, and the Cornwall Regiment, were still toiling up the long reaches and cataracts between Sarras and Dal; and in boats between the latter place

and Dongola were seven companies of the South Staffordshire.

“There is not a human creature along these hundreds of miles of shores and islands who has not heard that the British have come to take away the taxes,” wrote the *Daily Chronicle* corre-

Of the people, a Scottish private soldier in the Engineers wrote thus:—

“The number of blind, and partly blind, is something remarkable; but it is not to be wondered at, seeing how filthily they live. Washing does not seem to be one of their strong points,



SUAKIM, FROM THE LAND.

spondent; “that is the one idea which possesses them, and that is why we are so popular. But the people are an amiable lot, and would do no harm to a living soul. They do not even kill noxious vermin; they only keep slaves. Altogether, we have between Dal and Dongola an interesting, quiet, and pastoral people, of no force of character, of mixed race, and of no warlike habits—indeed, they have no arms,—who will go down, at the first summons, before the hordes of such men as the Mahdi and Osman Digna.”

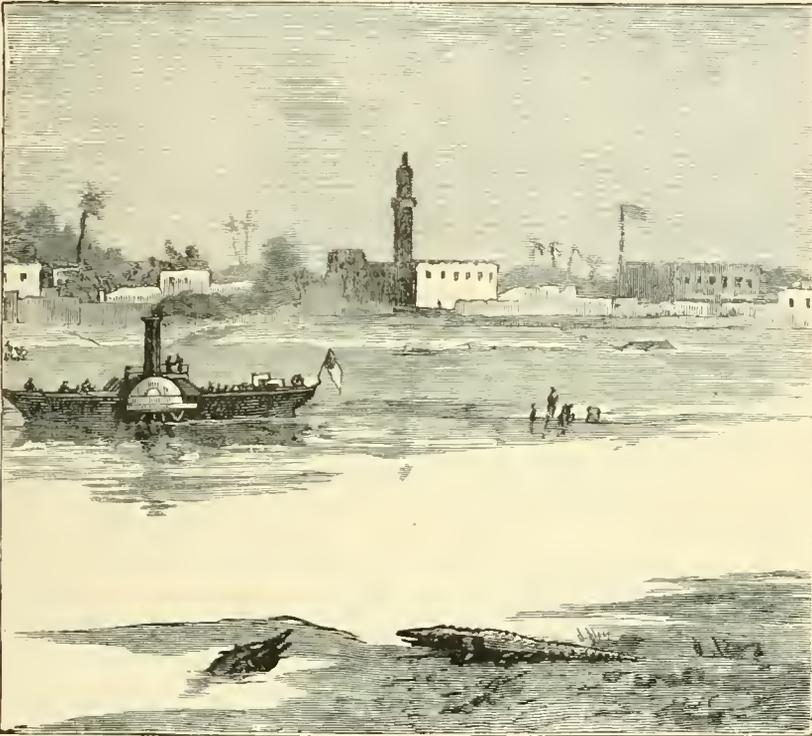
and soap is a rarity. The usual dress of the men is a long blue cotton robe, with loose sleeves, open at the neck, with sometimes a shirt below, but oftener not; a pair of red slippers curled up at the toes, and the whole topped off by a turban, made of a long narrow strip of cotton rolled round the head in a haphazard way. This is the place for a lazy fellow to live in; the women do all the work; he can marry three or four wives, and live at his ease.” (*Edinburgh Courant*.)

On the 15th of December, after

leaving Dongola, Lord Wolseley and Colonel Sir Charles Wilson, with the Staff, arrived at Debbeh in the Mudir's dahabeeyeh, which was towed by a steamer, and then he might be said to enter upon the new theatre of war, as

across the desert of Bayuda. They found the route from Dongola easy for marching, and the land on both banks of the river rich and fertile.

The advanced guard of the Expedition was now assembling fast at Korti,



THE NILE AT BERBER.

was evident from the numerous dead bodies of the Mahdi's followers which lay about the ground in the neighbourhood.

On the same day Sir Herbert Stewart and Staff, with the Guards' Camel Corps and the Mounted Infantry, arrived at Korti, and encamped on the west bank of the Nile, a mile from that place where the caravans from Egypt to Sennaar quit the river and proceed

where, in the days of Thothmes III., there stood a temple of Isis, of which some remains were found by Lepsius. The tents of the Camel Corps were pitched under some wide-spreading trees along the bank of the Nile. The scene was picturesque; the heat was tempered by the leafy shade, and after their long toil in the boats, and over burning sand and glistening rocks, the soldiers were delighted with the spot.

It was now discovered at headquarters that a correspondence had been in progress between a French journalist in the camp of the Mahdi and a French clique in Cairo, through whom the former was supplied with the fullest information as to our proceedings, with hints as to the best method of baffling them.

Though there was good reason to believe that the enemy were then some distance off, every usual precaution was taken to prevent a surprise. *Vedettes* were thrown out beyond the camp during the day-time, and at night strong outlying pickets were posted. Meanwhile supplies, far beyond the hope of the troops, came in steadily.

On the 21st of December the Camel Corps went through some exercises, which proved their efficiency to be greater than was supposed, and that even if unsupported by Infantry they might resist an attack of the enemy. In the space of ninety seconds the whole corps changed from the formation of a column on the line of march into a square ready to fight, the camels lying down, and the men in their ranks. Our Cavalry then charged furiously to frighten the former, but without avail, for the animals remained quietly kneeling, and there was no confusion in the square.

The Field Telegraph was now in working order; and, under the personal supervision of Lord Wolseley, the Engineers made experiments about Korti in felling trees with gun-cotton, as the quickest method of obtaining fuel for steamers.

As Christmas Day drew near, considerable anxiety was felt in the camp

by Korti at the cessation of all news from Khartoum; and even making every allowance for the difficulty of messengers getting through, the long silence seemed to confirm the persistent rumours that the enemy had closed round the city, and the investment had become more stringent.

On Christmas Day double rations were issued to the troops; large bonfires were lighted, and round them as the night closed in our soldiers assembled to sing and make merry—to speak of home and those that were far away; and on that night the 2nd Battalion of the South Staffordshire at Manchester telegraphed, “A happy Christmas and a brilliant campaign,” to their comrades of the 1st Battalion at Korti.

On the 28th of December the start for Khartoum was made by that regiment, 550 strong, in fifty boats. The sight was alike effective and impressive. Their band was playing merrily in the leading boat, and the whole battalion rowed steadily up stream cheering joyously, and exhibiting a regularity of power and stroke as they feathered their oars, which showed how much recent practice had done to convert them into expert boatmen.

At this date the total force at Korti numbered only 2,400 men—900 Infantry, 1,500 of the Mounted Brigade, with six screw guns. The means of transport for the front were 1,800 camels and 400 horses, 2 steamers, 2 pinnaces, and 64 whale-boats; while the 19th Hussars were to ride by the west bank of the Nile and act as the scouts of the Expedition.

On the 29th of December the following was the plan at Korti of the British advance :—

“ General Earle will collect the Infantry Brigade at Handak, above the Fourth Cataract, from which point he will take measures to punish the Monassir tribe for the murder of Colonel Stewart.

“ General Earle will then push on to Abu Hammed, and open the desert road between that place and Korosko, whence stores will be forwarded.

“ The Mounted Infantry and Guards' Camel Corps, under the command of Brigadier-General Stewart, will leave here to-morrow with a large convoy of camels laden with stores for Gakdul, a distance of ninety miles.

“ A detachment of the Guards' Camel Corps will remain behind in garrison here to guard the stores.

“ The Mounted Infantry will bring back the convoy of camels from Gakdul after they have been unloaded, and then the Headquarters, the rest of the Camel Corps, the Artillery, and the 19th Hussars will move forward, *via* Gakdul and Shendy to Khar-toum. A garrison will be left at Korti, which will constitute the advanced base.”

The marching orders of the force under Sir Herbert Stewart were, that it was to advance in column of companies, with an interval of thirty paces between each, in the following detail :—Guards' Camel Corps, Royal Engineers, Field Hospital, half a Bearer Company, water convoy, baggage, Heavy and Light Sections of the Camel Corps, the Artillery, Transport and Mounted Infantry, the Hussars forming the advance and rear guard.

As the time appointed for the assembly of the columns approached, the noises in the camp gradually subsided, and the camels, overladen, ceased their gruntings and protestations, and stalked off to the ground marked out for them. The baggage camels were arranged in column, from twenty to thirty abreast, with fifty paces interval between each

troop; Guards in front, Mounted Infantry in rear, and all ready to form square at a moment's notice.

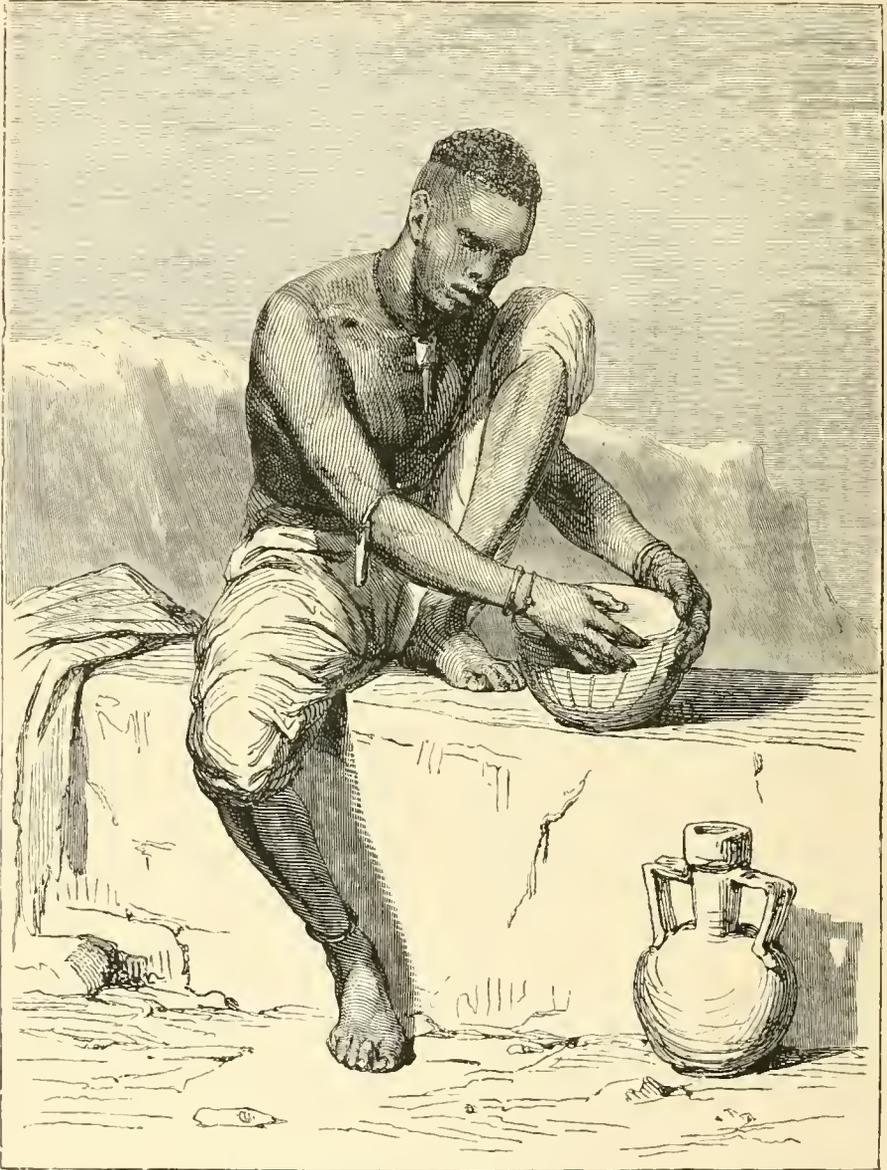
At a quarter past three o'clock in the afternoon the Cavalry scouts under Major Kitchener, with six Arab guides, moved off in front; fifteen minutes later Lord Wolseley gave his orders, and the column got in motion, striking straight off across the undulating and pebbly plain towards the distant horizon on its march across the Desert.

The correspondent of the *Standard*, the ill-fated Cameron, says :—

“ It was a strange sight to see the two thousand camels, with their necks stretching out like ostriches, and their four thousand pairs of long legs moving along in military array, until the rising dust first blended desert, men, and camels in one uniform grey hue, and finally hid them from the sight of those who remained in camp. Broad as was the face on which this strange column marched, it extended fully a mile in length, and would be an unwieldy body in case of an attack by the enemy. The Camel Corps and Mounted Infantry could form up quickly enough, but confusion would be likely to prevail among the baggage animals, for camels are the most obstinate of creatures, and object particularly to sudden and hurried movements. Their Somali drivers, too, could scarcely be expected to be very cool or steady if suddenly assailed by a large body of yelling tribesmen.

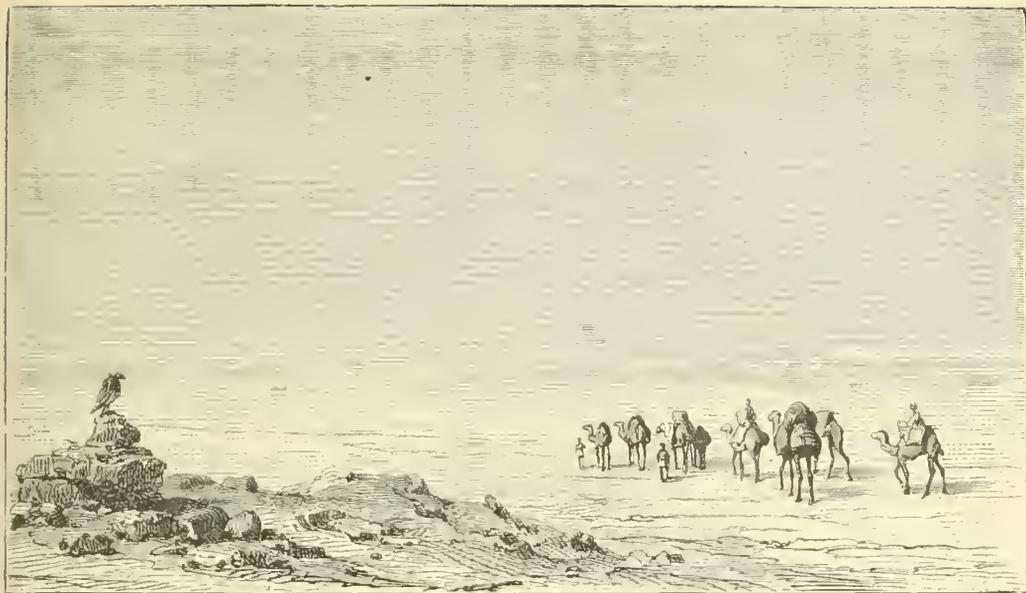
“ In case of an attack the Guards will form square echeloned on the left front of the column; the Mounted Infantry will do the same on the right

rear. The column is, however, so long that their fire would hardly cover the body. As, however, there is very little likelihood of any opposition being offered



DINRA MENDING A DRUM.

entire line, unless the enemy were perceived approaching long enough before their attack to give time for the baggage camels to close up into a compact at present, if at all, the column will have time on the road for a little drill to accustom the drivers to their duties in case of the appearance of the enemy."



THE SEA OF SAND.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE MARCH ACROSS THE DESERT.

Formation on the March—Message from Gordon—In the Desert—The Halt at Gakdul—Return of Stewart's Column—The Bluejackets at Korti—Death of Major Brophy—Advance of the Black Watch—More Fighting at Snakim.

THE troops had now travelled eleven hundred and fifty miles from Cairo, before the Expedition had been formed, and many stories were current of jokes with which the men had lightened their labour. "You have the best of this job," said a Scot of the Black Watch to one of the Camel Corps; "look at our hands, blistered by the oars!" The Guardsman retorted by saying that camels could not be ridden with impunity, especially by lads in the kilt.

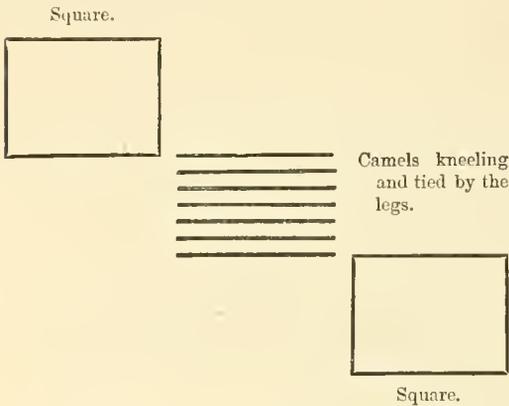
In most of the regiments by this time there was not a single sound garment—the result of fifty days of river navigation from Sarras. Tunies and

trousers were patched, the mud-stained helmets battered, officers and men had beards of a month's growth, and from their faces the skin was peeled off in strange patches, the result of hard work in the sun from dawn till darkness.

Several of the Mounted Infantry officers taught their camels to trot, canter, and even jump at will; and the Cavalry were pleased that they had no grooming to go through, and that, beyond shaking in front of them five or six times daily some dhurra straw, their camels required little attention.

On the march the column halted frequently, dismounted, and—for practice

—prepared to meet an enemy, and the formation adopted was this:—



Thus, an enemy charging could not have got among the camels without being enfiladed by two faces of the two squares. "Of course, when acting as infantry, the men cannot move any great distance from their camels without leaving a strong guard behind," wrote one who was present; "but so expert have all become in dismounting and mounting, in moving off and halting again, that the entire mounted body may now be manœuvred even when in face of the enemy. Of course, cavalry are employed for scouting duties. Striding across the desert, with rifles ready poised on the thigh, a Camel Brigade Column one thousand strong looks imposing enough."

The first halt was made in the evening, at the distance of nine miles from Korti. It lasted one hour and a half. General Stewart then gave orders for the column to close up, and the camels to advance with a broader front, when the march began again under a peculiarly brilliant moonlight.

The length of the column was thus

reduced to half a mile; it was under better control, and more able to repel any sudden attack. The march continued till four in the morning, when a long halt was sounded, and the camels were unloaded for rest.

Major Barrow, with some of the 19th Hussars, had preceded the column by several miles, with orders to collect food and light fires at the first halting-place, in order that the men might get some tea and food; but the Arab guides led the Hussars astray, and they did not rejoin the column till midnight. On discovering that they had gone wrong, Barrow and his troopers searched long in vain for the track of the column in the sandy waste; for the latter, being intersected by paths made by herds of wild gazelles and other animals, was by no means easily to be discovered in the moonlight.

At a point in the desert fifteen miles distant from Korti, Major Barrow and the Hussars came upon a large herd of female camels grazing in a fairly fertile spot, attended by a number of Arabs, who, singular to say, evinced neither alarm nor hostility at the sight of the European troopers. On the following day there came to Korti a messenger from General Gordon. He was the bearer of a tiny scrap of paper, with the words—

"Khartoum all right.

"C. G. GORDON, 14th December."

The fact that the General considered it necessary to send a missive so tiny, no larger, indeed, than a postage stamp, and which could be rolled up and swal-

lowed in case of necessity by its bearer, was a proof of how closely the city was invested.

The messenger said that General Gordon had two palaces at Khartoum, and that he had a gun in position on the flat roof of each of them. "At sunrise he daily mounted to the roof and made a careful survey of the whole country with his telescope, and marked any changes that might have taken place in the enemy's position. If nothing unusual had happened, and there were no signs of any movement on the part of the Mahdi's men, he retired into his quarters and slept the greater part of the day. He rose before sunset, and after darkness set in started for the ramparts, which he perambulated all night, seeing that the sentries were all properly posted and on the alert, and cheering the troops by his conversation and example."

There was no doubt as to the genuineness of the tiny missive, which bore Gordon's seal on the back.

The march of the Guards and Mounted Infantry sections of the Camel Corps, escorting a convoy of 1,000 camels for Gakdul, 100 miles out in the desert, beyond the wells of Hambok, El Howeyyat, and Abu Halfa, constituted an altogether novel operation in war. A halt of the column is thus described by a correspondent:—

"In front, a dreary, waterless waste; behind, the friendly streak of green that marked the course of the Nile, never before, during our long journey from Cairo, forsaken for one day's march, but now to be abandoned for a

lengthened period. At the head of the column was Major Kitchener with his guides, a half dozen Bedouins belonging to the nearest village, and under the leadership of the son of the old King of Ambukol, dispossessed when the Turks first occupied the country. This party was surrounded by an escort of Mounted Infantry, with their rifles unslung and ready for instant use, silently, but grimly hinting, that any attempt to abandon the column in the desert, or play false, would meet with immediate retribution."

If, says this writer, the Camel Corps alone was, from the first, deemed sufficient for the relief of Khartoum, then why at enormous expense and tremendous exertion and toil, were 5,000 Infantry brought up the Nile? Then, if they were not sufficient, there was infinite danger in exposing them unsupported to the contingency of attack by the united strength of the Mahdi.

Ever and anon, in the Desert, there was grazing for the camels, but no water and no sleep for the men. Many of the places called wells proved mere holes in a dry river bed, and supplied only enough to give each of the thirsty horses of the 19th Hussars about a quart apiece.

When close on Gakdul the scouts of the latter came upon a man with his wife and some boys, endeavouring to make off with their donkeys, but they were surrounded. The man was pronounced by the Arab guides to be Abu Loola, a famous robber, on whose head the Mudir of Dongola had set

the price of a thousand dollars, so he was at once annexed by the Intelligence Department as one from whom useful information might be gleaned or wrung.

He stated that the troops of the

Camel Corps made very little noise, but when halting, or starting, the grunting of 2,000 camels was like the rumbling of thunder.

The column reached Gakdul after a



FELLAHEEN AT A MEAL

Mahdi were in force at Metemneh in front, barring the way to Khartoum.

Colonel Vandeleur, commanding the Royal Sussex Regiment at Korti, was ordered to select 400 of his men, to march across the desert to Metemneh. The best shots were chosen, with kits for two months only.

In moving over the desert the

march of ninety-seven miles in sixty-five hours, the men being almost without sleep from the time they left the camp at Korti. At Gakdul an unlimited supply of good water was found, but as little or none was to be had *en route*, the camels were now watered for the first time.

Ten prisoners were taken, some in

the uniform of the Mahdi. They had the hardihood to fire a few shots with their Remingtons, but surrendered when surrounded.

Both men and animals were greatly refreshed by the halt at Gakdul.

The Mahdi was now, like Osman Digna, urging his people to trust to

sword was worn between the leg and the saddle." The wearer of this garb was the Sheikh Mohammed of the Baggara Arabs, in whose family it had been for 310 years. "I may add, his horse's head was eased in steel, and its body covered by a quilt thick enough to turn a spear. It was shaped like



VIEW IN THE DESERT OF KOROSKO.

their swords and spears rather than firearms, and many relinquished even their Darfour shirts of steel.

"It was in the Soudan," says Colonel Colborne, "that I first, to my amazement, saw the mail armour of the Middle Ages actually in use. Whether original, or a copy of it, it was undoubtedly the dress of the Crusaders. The hauberk of mail was fastened round the body by the belt, and formed a complete covering from head to foot. The long two-handed and double-edged

the armour one reads of in Froissart."

As there was now no doubt, so far as water was concerned, of the practicability of the desert route to Metemneh—for at Gakdul the whole force would be able to procure a supply—Sir Herbert Stewart, after his magnificent march, retraced his steps to Korti, after a few hours' halt at Gakdul. Close to the wells a strong natural position was found, and the Guards and Marines who were to remain there in front, were at once set to fortify it.

A day or two afterwards, those in camp at Korti, about one o'clock, saw a cloud of dust rising in the distance, and presently the huge camels of Sir Herbert Stewart's returning column loomed darkly out of the mirage of the desert in strange and distorted forms. By two o'clock all were safe in camp; only twenty camels had been abandoned on the march; but the remainder required a long rest, after the toil they had undergone. Lord Wolseley rode out six miles to meet the returning column, and complimented General Stewart on the success of his experiment.

Under Captain Featherstone, a detachment of Mounted Infantry was left at the Wells of Hambok, near Bir-el-Magaga, to prevent their destruction by any hostile natives; but, as these wells were mere holes in which the water gathered, his soldiers had orders to enlarge them, that a good supply might accumulate by the time the main column advanced that way. Fortunately, however, there were camels enough to carry a supply for the Sussex Regiment.

On the following day the Naval Brigade arrived at Korti. Their boats all came up in magnificent order with the crews in high spirits, having made their journey from Sarras in twenty-one days, and they at once prepared for their march across the desert. The sailors were greatly delighted to find themselves mounted on camels, and everything was conducted in nautical fashion. "Mind your helm, Jack, or you will run me aboard," was one of

the phrases heard, as the camels got in motion, seemingly puzzled by the noise and vivacity of their new riders, whose energy contrasted so greatly with that of the stolid natives by whom they were used to be guided.

The Black Watch under Colonel Green now started in five boats to join the South Staffordshire Regiment at Handak. Much gloom had been thrown over the Highlanders by the loss of a favourite officer, Major Nicholas Brophy. A few days before their arrival at Korti a heavy sea had swamped one of their boats; four soldiers clung to her, and four swam ashore, but Major Brophy, who had been in the corps since the war in Ashanti, was drowned. "Poor Brophy!" wrote one. "I heard him after El Teb complain in jocular strain that it was the 29th of February and Leap Year; then they could only have an anniversary of the battle every four years. But not even one short year has passed since then, and he has found a grave in the Nile."

When the regiment arrived off Korti their pipers struck up; "and notwithstanding the scoffing of some pitiful individuals," says the writer we quote, "the whole force—at dinner at the time—broke out into a cheer. All round Africa the pipes of the Black Watch have sounded, but never so far in the interior of the dark continent."

On Christmas night a sharp attack was made on the garrison at Suakim, making the one hundred-and-twenty-fifth night alarm since General Graham left; besides these, there had been upwards of forty skirmishes in the day-time. This

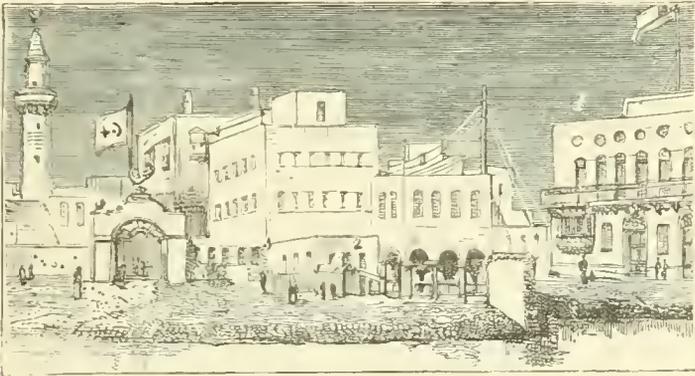
will give an idea of the harassing nature of the garrison duty there at that time.

On the 3rd of February, a force, consisting of a troop of our Hussars and another of Egyptian Cavalry, advancing from that place, reconnoitred in the direction of Handoub. Only a few rebels were visible, and they fled.

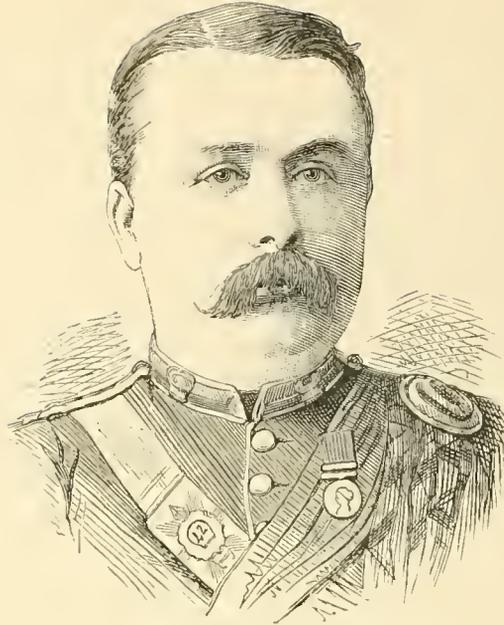
On the return of the force, scouts reported that the enemy were in strength a little distance from Handoub, and posted in line a mile in length across

the plain, under cover of the thick bush; and soon after the scouts were driven in. The Cavalry then tried to turn the enemy's flank, under a heavy fire and a most determined advance, a manœuvre not accomplished without the greatest difficulty, owing to the nature of the ground.

Our Hussars lost eight men and eleven horses killed and missing; the Egyptians lost three killed and six horses missing.



THE BRITISH CONSULATE (1) AND CUSTOM-HOUSE (2), SUAKIM.



MAJOR BROPHY.

(From a Photograph by Heath and Eullingham, Plymouth.)

## CHAPTER VII.

### SECOND ADVANCE THROUGH THE DESERT.

*En route to Khartoum—The Wells of Gakdul—Capturing Camels—The Bashi Bazouks—Fighting for Water—Scene at the Wells of Abu Halfa—The March to Metemneh—In Contact with the Enemy—The Eve of Battle.*

On Thursday the 8th January, 1885, the camp at Korti presented again a scene of bustle and activity, as General Stewart and the rest of the Camel Corps prepared once more for the perilous and fatiguing march to Gakdul. After joining the troops left at that place, he had orders to push on to Metemneh.

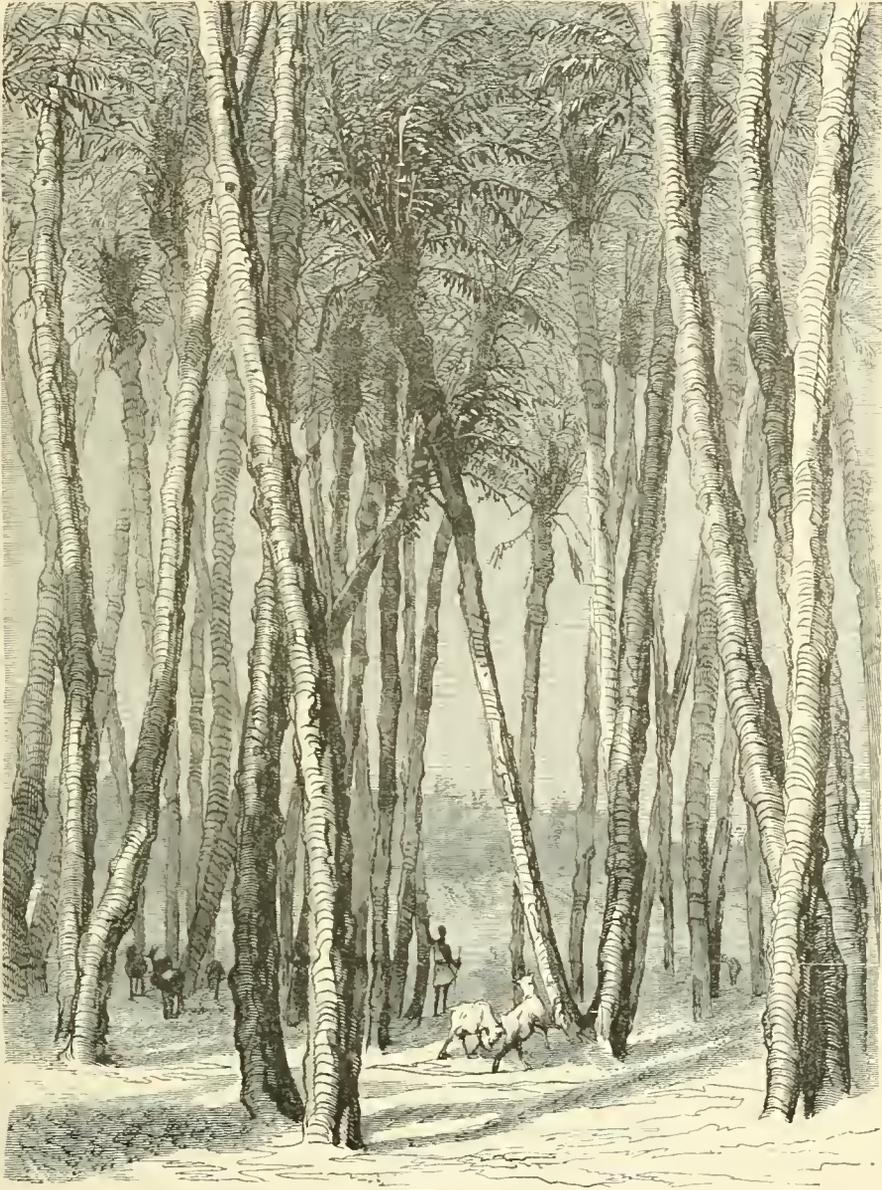
The column consisted of a squadron of the 19th Hussars, a half battery of Artillery, the Heavy Camel Corps, the Mounted Infantry, half the Naval Brigade, the Headquarters of the Sussex Regiment, a detachment of the Essex Regiment, and the Field Hospital.

The Wells at Gakdul were three in number, and situated at the northern end of a stony basin, encircled by ranges of hills that stretch far into the Bayuda Desert.

There, as we have stated, the Guards, the Marines, and a few Engineers and Hussars, under Colonel the Hon. E. Boscawen of the Coldstreams, formed a garrison. Major Dorward and a party of the Guards under Captain Crabb erected pumps and hose, by which they brought water from the upper reservoirs to the basin, and in a short time collected about 600,000 gallons for the camels. Two redoubts, planned by the

Major, were constructed, one by the Marines under Captain Goe, to com-

One morning Major Kitchener despatched a native guide and a female



BANKS OF THE NILE AT ABU HAMMED.

mand the entrance to the wells, and the other by the Guards, for the purpose of securing the provisions and stores.

prisoner to treat for produce with a party of natives who had been seen waiting, for water apparently, near the

wells. They took a camel and some money with them, but returned in the evening without anything, saying they had been roughly handled by the Arabs; and soon after our cavalry scouts captured a convoy of camels and donkeys on the way from Metemneh to Merawi.

On the following day, when the Major, with three other officers and two corporals of Hussars, were reconnoitring near the Wells of Abu Halfa, he captured some more camels and asses; and when returning to camp, suddenly the party sighted a string of seventy laden camels with fifty natives, and instantly galloped after them.

On coming to close quarters with the Arabs, half of the latter cut away the loads from their camels and cast them loose, while the other half halted, and forming in front of their camels prepared to resist, but, scared by the rush of the six European horsemen, they fled; so nine more camels, laden with grain and flour, were secured, and brought into the temporary camp at Gakdul.

The Arabian paper, *Mubashir*, now announced that the Mahdi had a strong force on the rocky hills of Halfiyeh near Khartoum, had sent all his women back to Kordofan, and had ordered the people of Metemneh to evacuate that town and send all the women, children, and cattle across the Nile, prior to his doing battle with the British.

On the 11th of January, a messenger whom Lord Wolseley sent to Khartoum on the 18th of December arrived back at Korti. He got through the Mahdi's lines without misadventure,

but on his return was stopped, robbed, and beaten by some tribesmen. He reported that all was well, as yet, at Khartoum, and that Gordon's steamers plied, without serious interruption, down the river to Metemneh, bringing in supplies of cattle and grain.

The Mudir of Dongola arrived at Korti on the 10th of January in his steamer, and was received by a guard of honour, with one piper, furnished by the Black Watch. "It was a curious contrast," says the *Standard*, "the pale, thin, shifty-eyed Mudir, followed by his rabble of gaudily-dressed Bashi-Bazouks, shuffling past the stalwart figures of the bronzed Highlanders. These same Bashi-Bazouks are the curse of the country, and there is no barbarity or outrage of which they are not capable if they get the chance. Since the arrival of the British troops, however, they have had to restrain their lawless proclivities. I witnessed an instance of the reckless indifference with which they treat the natives. A few days ago, within a short distance of the camp, I saw a Bashi-Bazouk hailing a native boat drifting down stream. The man in the boat did not come in quickly enough to please him, so he dropped on one knee, took deliberate aim, and fired. The bullet passed close to the head of the oarsman, who lay down in the boat, too frightened to move. The Bashi-Bazouk reloaded his rifle and marched serenely down the bank as if nothing had happened. They also have a playful habit of raiding on the neighbouring villages, and carrying off the women. Having kept them in

their camp for a week or two, they then sell them back to their husbands or relations. Is it to be wondered at that the unfortunate inhabitants execrate the rule under which they live?"

When our troops began their advance from the camp at Korti, the natives looked upon them as men doomed to destruction, for three armies, larger and as well equipped, had gone on the same road and errand to fight the Mahdi, and been cut off to a man.

When the column, after a halt, marched off at half-past two in the morning, the pebble-strewn ground was glistening in the moonlight, "as if covered with a coat of yellow shining varnish," says a correspondent. Frequently the bugle sounded the "Halt!" in rear for stragglers to close up, as the officer commanding the rearguard had the usual order to allow no man to remain behind, and the silent column continued to glide across the desert like one long moving shadow.

At half-past five, a flash, like a lurid conflagration shooting across the horizon, heralded the approach of day; then the bugles struck up a march; the men shouted to each other, and began to talk cheerily. "A peculiarity of the deserts that border the Nile is, that the mouths of men and beasts that traverse them are always parched. Those who have experience know that it is no use to drink continuously. That only increases the torture, but it is difficult to resist the temptation; and so the men of the Sussex Regiment, unlike their comrades of the Heavies and Mounted Infantry who had marched

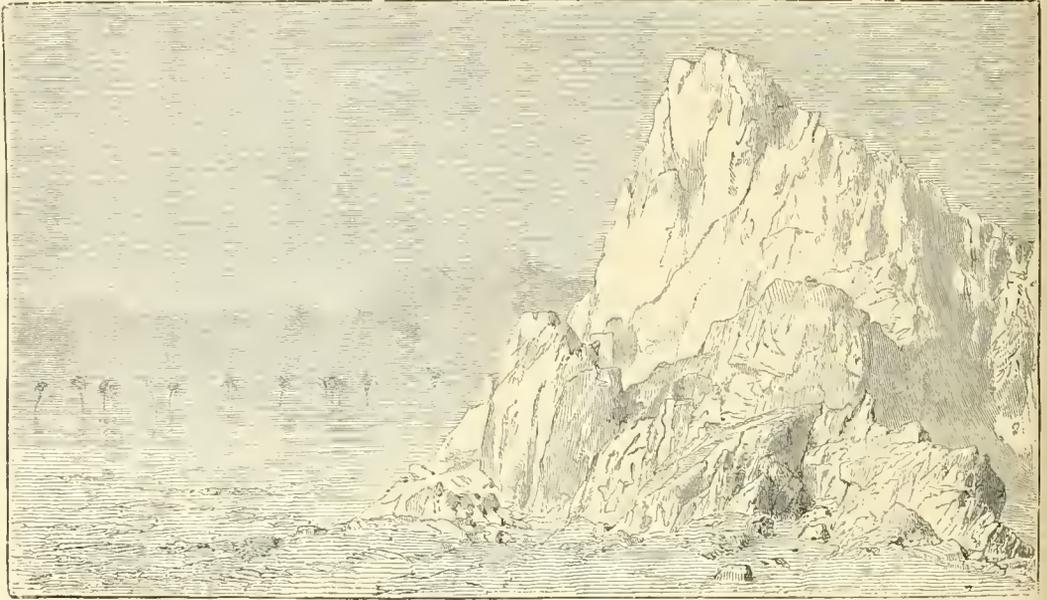
up from Wady Halfa, drank on unceasingly and surreptitiously at their water bottles. In vain the officers restrained them, and when the march at last came to an end for the day, it was discovered also that so had the water, while seventy miles had to be traversed before a sufficient supply could be obtained."

The Wells of Hambok, 47 miles from Korti, were found empty and dried up. At El Howeiyat, eight miles farther, a convoy that passed on the preceding day had exhausted the little that was there. A halt was made till evening that some might accumulate, and so maddened were some of the soldiers with thirst, that it seemed as if a wild tumult would ensue, but discipline prevailed; Major Wardrop, of the 2nd Sussex, ordered all to fall in as they stood, and so, one by one and in order, they obtained a small share of some pea-soup like fluid; and again, in the dark, the weary march was resumed.

The scene at the Well of Abu Halfa was exciting in the extreme. Barred back by the bayonet from the main pool till the fighting men were supplied, the luckless camp-followers grabbed frantically in the sand, tearing up with their hands holes in which a little water collected, and was instantly lapped up. "The soldiers, too, could scarcely be restrained from throwing discipline aside and thronging in on all hands, while in the background were plunging horses and camels broken loose and fighting desperately with their human masters for a place."

On the 12th of January Gakdul was reached, when all procured a plentiful supply of water, and preparations were made for the march to Metemneh, where it was unknown how many thousands were ready to bar the way to Khartoum. But we have somewhat anticipated the various details of the route.

Naval Brigade, 58; 19th Hussars, 130; Heavies, 400; Royal Artillery, 11; Southern Division of Artillery, 43; Royal Sussex, 417; 2nd Battalion Essex Regiment, 58; Commissariat and Transport Corps, 77; Mounted Field Hospital, 11; Bearer Company, 42. There were in addition 304 in-



MIRAGE EFFECT IN THE SOUDAN.

On the march, the men of the Naval Brigade seemed far from comfortable. Possibly they disliked the short lurches and swinging trot of the camels, and would have preferred the arm of a top-sail yard, even in a storm. The camels did not appear to respond promptly to the tugs the seamen gave to the guiding head-rope, so the animals often blundered against each other, colliding and throwing the line into confusion.

The following was the actual force that marched, rank and file included :—

terpreters, camel drivers, and others. With the force were 2,228 camels, 150 horses, and two mules.

Even in close order, all these made a line of a mile in length; but the troops marched in open column of companies, each regiment or detachment having its own baggage animals in rear of their line. One driver led four baggage animals, riding the leading camel, the other three walking behind. The head of the second was fastened to the leading camel's tail by a stout rope, and

so were those of the others in succession.

During the halts on the march at night, with their arms piled in front of them, and their camels in the rear, the soldiers lay down in their fighting kits, taking off only their belts and straps. Wrapped in their blankets, all were soon asleep; and, notwithstanding the presence of 2,000 and more camels, the most perfect silence reigned over the

east. We passed under the telegraph wire stretching to Merawi, which was torn down by the rebels, but restored on improvised poles cut from dwarf mimosa trees. At sundown the troops were halted on a plain covered with bunch grass and mimosa. Indeed, our route for most part of the way led through a country little differing from the scene of our first night's bivouac, and it was only at rare intervals that



WAD EL KEIM BEY, CHIEF OF THE SHUKOORIEH ARABS, MADE GOVERNOR OF KHARTOUM BY GENERAL GORDON.

bivouac. Sentries were posted round the force, which halted in order of march, and no zeriba or trench was constructed, as neither was necessary.

There was much trouble in getting natives to accompany the column, as they were in dread of falling into the hands of the wild Arabs of the desert. "It was with great difficulty, such as nearly every one experienced who had servants, that I got mine out of Korti," wrote a correspondent; "the column went slowly off, marching, after getting quite clear of Korti village, nearly due

the column had to scramble over the small black stones which cover the rocky ridges and slopes of the Soudan. Firewood was plentiful, and the rough dry saba grass gave light and heat enough to cook the evening meal."

At 1.30 a.m., on the 9th of January, the *reveille* was sounded, and orders given to get breakfast, re-pack the camels, and start. The moon was in her last quarter, and her light was dim and feeble. By 3.30 the column was on the move at the rate of three miles an hour only, for accidents—such as camel loads be-

coming undone, and having to be re-packed—delayed the advance, while halts were frequent to let the rear close up.

The Gardner gun of the Naval Brigade, which was borne by a camel, also gave trouble to get it securely fastened. "The 'smiling morn' was hailed by the buglers who played it in, and the men cheered the rising sun as if they had been fire worshippers. The day was hot, and although there was an Arab guide mounted on a camel directing the route of the column, the men evidently preferred to see the way for themselves rather than go on in the dark. The route was plainly marked, there being scores of little paths trodden smooth by the hoofs of countless camels."

By six o'clock p.m., when the troops bivouacked again, they were nearly forty miles from Korti. A deal of water had been drunk on that day's march, and it was found that the commissariat water skins were useless, as either they leaked very much, or else the natives had tapped them; while the water that was borne in iron tanks or indiarubber bags, all of which were locked, was undiminished in quantity.

The Arabs and Egyptians, who, it might be thought, could withstand the pangs of thirst better than Europeans, either yielded more readily to their longing for water or were unable to go without drink so well as the latter, and consumed their share too soon.

At the Wells of El Howeiyat, Colonel Barrow of the 19th Hussars, asked and obtained permission—as his Egyptian horses were beginning to suffer from want of water, the three

quart gallon allowance a day being too little—to ride on at once towards the Wells of Abu Halfa, and, to rest their chargers, many of the men dismounted and marched for miles on foot, leading them by the bridle.

At Gakdul they found the pumps referred to had turned the water into a puddled trough, at which a hundred camels could drink at a time, thus preventing them from fouling the reservoir. "The 700,000 gallons of water, or more, stored by the hand of Nature," says the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, "were comparatively little diminished, and neither men nor animals were restricted for water."

The column, though now reinforced by the Guards, was weakened by the absence of 150 men of the Sussex Regiment left at the Wells of El Howeiyat.

Upon the march, the parched and thirsty soldiers, at the end of each exhausting day's journey, had been unable to eat their tinned rations, while they had scarcely a drop of liquid to wash them down; but the fresh meat served out to them at Gakdul, and the ample supply of beautifully clear water, was a priceless boon. Thus a two days' halt did wonders on both men and animals, and this was easily noticeable when they paraded at 2.30 p.m. on the 14th of January, to begin the march to Metemneh.

A large quantity of food was provided; thus if, on reaching Metemneh, the roads should be found to be closed in the rear, or should the force—which was certainly small—be blockaded in

entrenchments, it could hold out for a considerable time before having to fall back on the camels for food; but the chief difficulty was to get grain for them and the horses on the line of march.

The leaders were still without any trustworthy information of the movements of the Mahdi. The routes in front and rear were infested by bands of prowling robbers. These kept out of sight in the day-time, but each morning scoured the camping-ground, as soon as the troops marched, in hope of finding something of use or value left behind.

Colonels Wilson and Burnaby accompanied the column.

Without reference to our maps and plans, the straggling movements of Lord Wolseley's force, as described by the different correspondents, will be apt to bewilder the reader. From Korti to Shendy, across the Bayuda Desert, is a distance of 150 miles. Neither Shendy nor Metemneh was held by General Gordon, but it was evident that he frequently sent his steamers to both places; thus, if he could run these vessels up and down the Nile at discretion, it was also beginning to seem evident that the investment of Khartoum was a somewhat desultory and languid operation; and it was hoped that he would take measures for facilitating intercourse with the column advancing to his relief.

On the 16th of January General Stewart's column had arrived within a few miles of the Wells at Abu Klea, having almost accomplished the long

and waterless march of forty-three miles from the Wells at El Faar, and the troops were looking forward to a halt and rest at the former place, after which they would have but two short marches to Metemneh.

"On the 14th instant the force left Gakdul at 2 p.m.," says Sir Herbert Stewart, in his despatch to the Chief of the Staff, "and, marching until dark, bivouacked for the night some ten miles on the road to Metemneh.

"On the 15th instant a distance of twenty-four miles was accomplished, and a bivouac formed among the hills marked Gebel Es Sergain on the map.

"On the 16th instant the force left the camp at 5 a.m., and halted for breakfast at 11.30 a.m., at a spot marked in the map by the 840th kilometre."

The rate of marching had been about two and a quarter miles an hour, the pace having become somewhat slower than at first, in consequence of the reduced state of the camels, which were dropping fast, sometimes no less than thirty in one march; and the troops reached the foot of a line of black sandstone hills, which lie westward of the Wells of Abu Klea, at the hour stated in the General's despatch, and a squadron of Hussars, whose horses were suffering severely from want of water, rode forward to reconnoitre.

At one o'clock they found the enemy occupying a wady, or valley, full of long reedy grass with some acacias or camel thorn trees, their centre being on a long and gentle slope, which had

all the effect of the glacis of an entrenchment.

About 200 mounted men advanced in very good order, and opened a fire on the Hussars, who fell back.

This operation was viewed by General Stewart and his staff, who had taken post on the summit of a high black shining hill of rock, from whence the whole country could be seen for miles, and he ordered a general advance.

The troops crossed the range by a series of difficult defiles in splendid order, but not without serious distress, owing to the want of water; and to Major Wardrop, Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, and to Brigade-Major David Earl of Airlie, great credit was due for the manner in which they conducted the advance, and brought the troops well into the valley by half-past two o'clock.

Having fully examined the enemy's position, and ascertained that the Wells of Abu Klea were too far in rear of it to be accessible that night, even in case of victory, General Stewart resolved to fortify himself where he stood.

He chose the ground with great discretion. A ridge rising gently from the valley, but broken before it reached the hills, offered every advantage, and close in rear of it was a grassy hollow, wherein the baggage animals were picketed.

Walls of stone from the ground on which the troops lay were soon constructed, if roughly, along the front of the position, the flanks of which were protected by an *abattis* of thorny mimosa bushes, cut in the adjacent wady.

The great hill from which the Brigadier made his survey, and which rose on the left front, was occupied by a party of signallers, who constructed there a small redoubt.

About a mile in rear of this, and on the brow of a precipice, another fort was formed to serve as a rallying point, in case of a reverse. A small hill to the right rear was occupied by half a company; and when these works were in progress, General Stewart rode to the front with a few Hussars under Lieutenant Young.

He found the enemy in much the same position as before; but when they saw him and his escort, they began an advance, which, however, they did not pursue, as the sun was then setting. However, with great judgment, they took possession of a lofty hill about one thousand six hundred yards distant on our extreme right, a position from which they could completely enfilade our lines.

They commenced firing, and secured the exact range before the darkness fell, and after that no one could reckon on undisturbed slumbers.

A little prior to that, two shells were fired at the enemy on the hill. As the missiles exploded the Arabs dropped out of sight, but left two white banners floating out boldly against the skyline. Their sharpshooters having crept to within 1,200 yards of our right flank, their fire soon proved so annoying, that half a company of Mounted Infantry rode out to drive them back.

At the same time the Arabs were potting at us from their front, but at a



WARRIORS OF THE MAHDI.

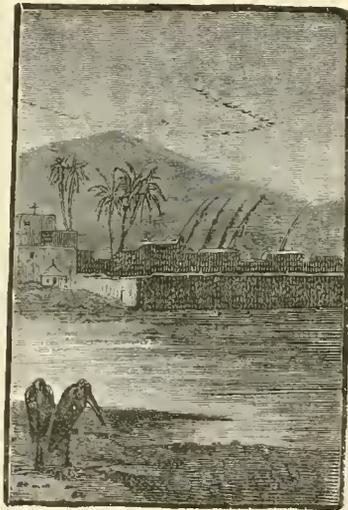
long range, which subjected the troops, now bivouacked in square, to a transverse fire. The long range and trajectory of their Remington rifles placed every point in danger from their bullets, many of which fell down perpendicularly upon the sleepers.

Consequently, the first wounded had to be attended to already, and many of the camels were struck. After night-fall, the out-pickets and advanced sentries were withdrawn to a distance of seventy-five yards from our lines.

As the hours of the dark and moonless night wore on, the fire of the Arabs increased, and bands of them marched

from point to point, banging their battle-drums, and making the time hideous by a horrible din.

“If anything deserves future punishment and abolition, then surely it is the constant performance before a battle of a full orchestra of ‘one-ended drums,’ such as the Mahdi’s force possessed,” wrote the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*. “The savage sounds rose and swelled all through the night, forming a fitting accompaniment to the wail of their bullets. Our crack shots were permitted to reply occasionally to the Arab fire whenever it became too inquisitively searching.”



“HIT” AT BERBER.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## THE BATTLE OF ABU KLEA.

The Zeriba—Colonel Burnaby—Alarms—An unavailing Ruse—Order of the British March—Advance of the Square—"Do or Die!"—Onrush of the Arabs—The Gardner Gun—Burnaby Slain—The Square Broken—Jamming of the Cartridges—Flight of the Foe—British Casualties.

A NIGHT of intense discomfort and incessant alarm was before the troops. The officers were strictly enjoined to see that every man was in his fighting-place, with bayonet fixed, and ready to start to his feet at a moment's notice; so, with greatcoats on and blankets spread over them, the men lay close in rear of the low earthen parapets and *abattis*, or line of cut bushes, with their heads to the front.

Great quantities of scrub mimosa had been cut, and a line of these prickly shrubs with wire entanglements had been formed along the rear, right, and left of the position. In front, a rough stone wall, if such it could be called, as it was only eighteen inches high, was cast up in two sections, between which there was an opening of thirty yards long; and, as an additional safeguard, three small forts were improvised of cut mimosa scrub and commissariat boxes, on the right, left, and rear of the zeriba.

The Mounted Infantry, under Captains Paine and Pigott, held the two last positions, which were comparatively strong ones.

On a peak which the Hussars had held—seven hundred yards on the left front—a work of rough stones was formed, and occupied by a company of the Sussex Regiment, which was thus

in an excellent position to afford timely warning of any general advance of the enemy. A strong picket was sent to take possession of a ledge of rocks about the same distance in the left rear, while the camels in the centre of the square, as usual, were tied down by the heads and knees, to prevent any stampede, however galling the fire. All lights were put out after darkness fell; and all talking and smoking were strictly forbidden; but ever and anon the stillness of the night was roughly broken by the whizzing of the enemy's bullets over the square.

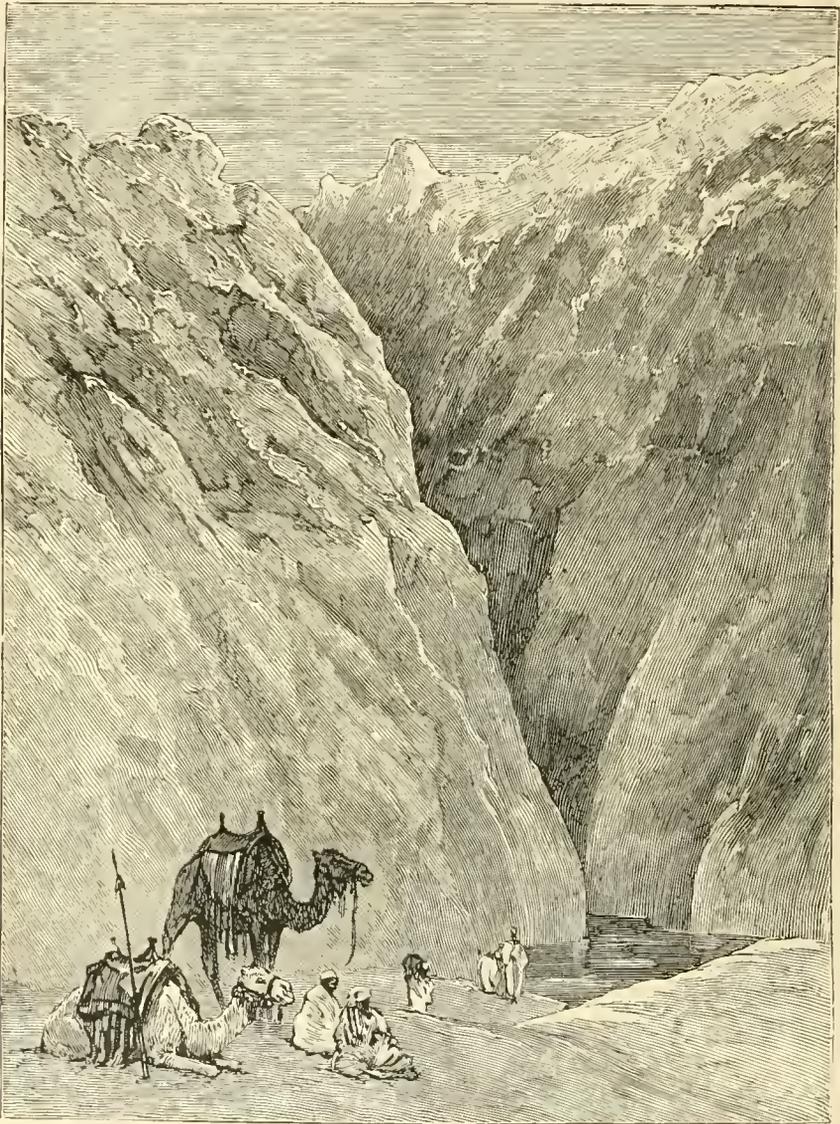
The correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* has recorded a conversation he had that night with Colonel Fred Burnaby of the Guards, which, he said, were "destined to be the last words of a noble and fearless gentleman."

The latter expressed his delight at having arrived in time to enjoy the excitement of an action, and had been appointed, he said, by Sir Herbert Stewart to act as Brigadier, by commanding the left and rear faces of the square, adding that he had now reached that time of life when the only things that would interest him were war and politics.

During the night, as stated, many shots were fired over and into the zeriba by the Arabs, whose expected

attacks thrice called the troops to arms before daybreak; but all remained tolerably quiet till breakfast time,

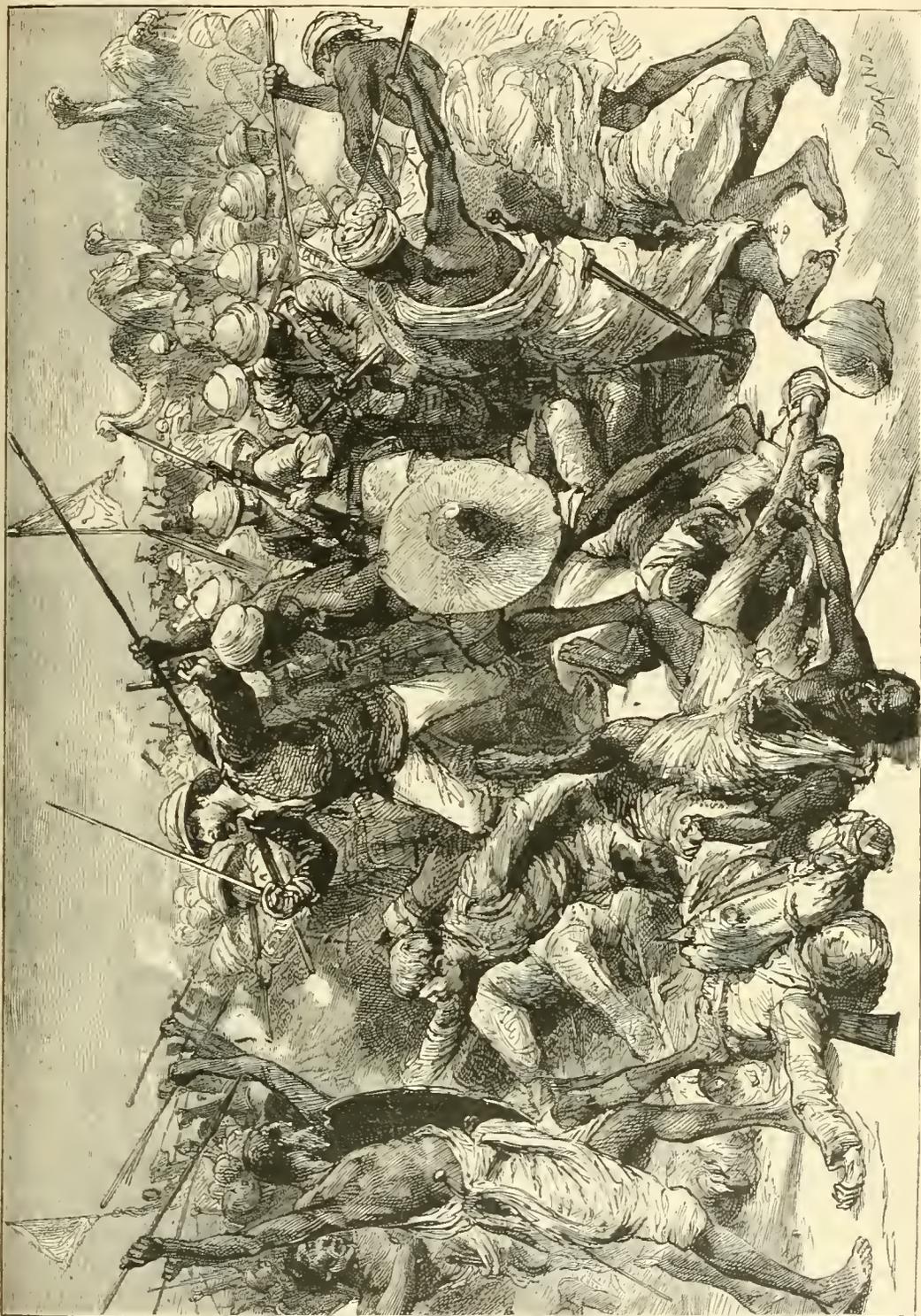
Several men and animals were wounded; among the latter, Colonel Burnaby's favourite grey horse. "I



THE GARDUL WELLS.

when the enemy opened a sharp fire from some breastworks of boulders, which they had erected on the right flank of the position during the night.

am not in luck to-day, evidently," said he, with a grim smile, as he led the poor bleeding and limping creature away and procured another charger.



S. DICKINSON

DEATH OF COL. BURNABY AT THE BATTLE OF ABU KLEA.

The troops were now all under arms, and the morning air was so chill that they relinquished the bivouac for their ranks without reluctance.

When there was sufficient light, Captain Norton, of the Royal Artillery, from his three screw guns fired three rounds of shrapnell at some Arab sharpshooters, who had been annoying the zeriba all night by their fire from the rude work, which crowned a hill on our right flank, at 1,500 yards' distance. There was a brief lull after this, only a few shots dropping among our men. During the night our total loss was little comparatively, not more than five or six wounded, but many camels were killed.

Without beat of drum, an early breakfast—the last that many would have on earth—was hastily prepared, and hot tea and coffee, with biscuits and cold beef, were served round; but before the simple meal was over some 200 of the enemy had again come over the low hills on the right flank, and poured in a well-delivered fire from their Remingtons, at 1,100 yards' range.

This was more than could be endured, so a troop of Hussars and some of the Mounted Infantry were let slip against them, and drove them eastward and back upon their main body; but a little later 500 spearmen, with a few Baggara cavalry, came swooping down upon our right, till a round of Norton's shrapnell burst over their heads, with a succession of terrible crashes, killing several and putting the rest to flight. Still, their rifle-fire was well sustained, and several horses and camels were hit.

It was determined now to try a ruse to draw on the Arabs, as they manifested a desire to assail us, and bands of them were continually appearing and disappearing on our left front, where their many-coloured banners were seen streaming on the northern breeze, and their sword blades and spear heads flashing in the rosy morning light, while they thundered fiercely on their tom-toms, and loaded the air with savage cries.

Close to a hollow, or valley, on the right of the square, there were some 4,000 of them deployed in rather irregular lines four or five ranks deep. Their leaders, all Sheikhs and Dervishes, clad in finely-embroidered Mahdi shirts, or camises, and mounted on small horses, were posted along these lines (which were at least half a mile long) at intervals of twenty-five yards apart.

Our front—the leading face of the square—extended to only 150 yards. A considerable force, composed of Guards and Mounted Infantry, was now despatched as skirmishers, by Sir Herbert Stewart, and these engaged the enemy at 1,200 yards, a range gradually reduced to 1,000 as they advanced.

At a preconcerted signal, they started to their feet, and ran rearward, as if in a panic upon the zeriba, but were not pursued by the enemy for more than 200 yards. Again the stratagem was repeated unsuccessfully. They seemed to have become wary, so as Sir Herbert began to despair of inducing them to charge, he turned the screw-guns upon

them again, and soon cleared the front of the position, by sending them yelling to cover.

At 7 a.m. he began his preparations for sending forward an attacking column, which was to march in square on foot, with orders to drive the enemy from the wells of Abu Klea, which were about five miles in front. The enemy were posted to the westward of these wells on strong ground, but they might have selected stronger on the crest of some hills, two miles in rear of the zeriba, where the descent that led to the wells begins; but they were destitute of all tactical knowledge.

There, under shelter, they might have fired on our troops, till the latter came within thirty yards of them.

As the camels were to be left in rear, their packs were taken off, and with the saddles and stores used to strengthen the detached fortlets about the zeriba, while the docile animals were herded more densely together in the centre of it, and again securely knee-haltered and tied down. Thus, soon after seven the troops were marched to a position in rear of a ridge on our front, surmounted by a low stone dyke. As each detachment came up, it was ordered to lie down and await the order to advance. In this fighting square were about one hundred animals, fifty-two for carrying the litters for the wounded, the rest for hospital stores, water, and spare ammunition.

"I was glad," wrote the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, "there were so few camels going, and sorry there were not fewer, for although by

his size he is a great breastwork against bullets, the camel obstructs vision, impedes mobility, destroys symmetry, and is an unsettling element in a square of men. Precisely at 7.35 a.m., the troops marched forward in the following order:—Front face (left to right) Mounted Infantry, Royal Artillery, with three guns, Guards. Right face (front to rear), Guards, Royal Sussex. Left face (front to rear), Mounted Infantry, Heavy Cavalry Regiment. Rear (left to right), Heavy Cavalry Regiment, Naval Brigade (with Gardner), Heavy Cavalry Regiment, and part of the Royal Sussex. The 19th Hussars, under Colonel Barrow, numbering 90 sabres, were sent to our left flank, to advance along the spur of land on the north of the Wady, and in front of the stonework held by the company of the Royal Sussex."

The zeriba, with its contents, was left in charge of 150 men of the Royal Sussex, with a few Mounted Infantry; all under Major Gem. They had twenty wounded and over fifty sick men in their care.

The orders to the Hussars were to move forward on a line parallel with the front face of the square, and prevent the enemy attacking our left from the high ground above the hollow. A detachment of the 19th, numbering only thirty sabres, followed the square, marching by its right front, to assist the skirmishers, consisting of Mounted Infantry and Guards, who were sent out seventy-five yards from the square to keep the Arab sharpshooters in check.

On this day the Heavies were commanded by Colonel Talbot; the Guards by Colonel Boscawen; the Mounted Infantry by Major Barrow; the Naval Brigade by Lord Charles Beresford; the Royal Sussex by Major Sunderland; the Royal Artillery by Captain

near thought he was killed. In a few minutes, nevertheless, he recovered consciousness, and it was seen that he had received only a severe contusion. Several others were struck at the same time; one of the gunners lost a finger, and owed his life to carrying an iron



LIEUT. ALFRED PIGOTT, R.N., H.M.S. "ALEXANDRA."

(From a Photograph by W. G. Lewis, Seymour St., Bath.)

Norton; and the Royal Engineers by Major Dorward. The command of the Mounted Infantry devolved upon Major Barrow, brother of Colonel Barrow.

"At the last moment Major Gough, the commanding officer of the Mounted Infantry, had been lying down behind the ridge, on the crest of which was the stone wall protecting our front, awaiting the order to march, when a spent ball struck him on the back of the head. The 'crack' was audible for yards around, and those who were

key in his hand at the moment a bullet struck him."

Men were now dropping off right and left, and Captain Lord St. Vincent, of the 17th Lancers, who had previously seen service in Afghanistan, received a severe wound, of which he died a few days subsequently.

The Mounted Infantry, meanwhile, continued skirmishing, and the enemy fell back before them, vanishing into the long green grass, until nothing could be seen of them but their parti-

coloured flags moving across the wady at right angles with our own line of advance. Nearly an hour had passed since the zeriba had been left behind, and only one or two miles of ground had been covered, all the while under a fire from a number of black riflemen on the hills.

difficult to estimate their numbers with any exactness."

With frequent halts to pick up the wounded—the dead were left where they fell—the square advanced, the men all steady as if upon parade, parallel to the hollow, which lay 800 yards on its left.



CAPTAIN LORD ST. VINCENT.

(From a Photograph by Samuel A. Walker, 230, Regent Street, W.)

The bugles now sounded a halt, and the faces of the square were dressed anew, while the General selected a good position on a slope, which the rebels would have to ascend in open ground.

"The strength of the enemy," wrote Sir Herbert Stewart in his despatch, "is variously estimated from 8,000 to 14,000 men. My opinion is, that not less than 2,000 operated on our right flank, 3,000 in the main attack, and 5,000 in various positions; but it is

One minute the route lay along stony crests or upland slopes; next, there would be an abrupt descent into some nullah or dry watercourse; then the opposite bank would be to climb. "Our progress," wrote one, "was like that of some huge machine, slow, regular and compact, despite the hail of bullets pouring in from front, right, and left, and ultimately from the rear."

When a certain point was reached, the square halted to pour a few volleys at the 2,000 Arabs described as

operating on the right flank, which it was thought best to clear at once, as it was anticipated that the force of their main attack would fall upon our front or left.

They swarmed in dark masses along the former now, and for two or three miles on either flank groups of their horsemen and spearmen could be seen watching the square from rocky peaks. There was no avenue of retreat now, and no one thought of such a thing. "Let us do or die!" was the emotion in the hearts of all. Colonel Barrow, C.B., and C.M.G., with his "handful" of Hussars became engaged about the same time as the square.

Taking ground in advance of the outwork held by the detached company of the Sussex, he dismounted most of his men and opened a carbine fire upon 300 Arabs, who were creeping stealthily round our left. With a force so slender he found heavy work cut out for him, for the ground, from its nature, afforded excellent cover to the foe.

The square was still advancing, but more slowly and cautiously than before, passing, however, to the flank of the enemy's outlying position, while the latter appeared more numerous every moment, sometimes showing a menacing front, as if they meant to charge the square, and next moment vanishing behind rocky ridges, or sinking out of sight amid the mimosa scrub and tall wavy grass.

General Stewart had no doubt now, however, that they meant fighting, and with his personal staff, consisting of Major Wardrop, the Earl of Airlie, and

Captain Rhodes, he galloped from point to point to keep all in readiness to repel a sudden onslaught.

There can be no doubt, that with all their indomitable pluck and bravery, it was somewhat of a trial for our dismounted Heavy Dragoons, a much mixed force, drawn from many regiments, to be marching on foot as infantry, and handling the long rifle and bayonet, to the use of which they were unaccustomed.

Onward moved the square again, the enemy closing in as if to charge, but after receiving a volley or two, melting out of sight again.

By 9.30 the left face of the square was abreast of their right, and the soldiers forming it could see before them the stony upland along which they had marched, sloping down into the vast plain that spread away to the Nile, twenty miles distant. The broken ground, rocky and hilly, was being left behind, and soon a low ridge or so, eastward of the Wells; sabas grass covered all the land far to the south eastward.

At ten minutes to 10 a.m., just as the front of the square had gained the summit of a gentle eminence on the other side of a little hollow, a force of the enemy, variously estimated at from 3,000 to 5,000 men, appeared echeloned in two long lines on our left, or opposite the side of the square formed by part of the Mounted Infantry and Heavy Cavalry.

They were only about 400 yards distant, and looked as if about to come on now. They were marshalled by der-

vishes on horseback and on foot, who stood a few paces in front of the first line.

With all their banners waving, their tom-toms thundering, and shrill cries of "Allah!" "Allah!" "Allah!" they began a quick advance towards the square, but not quicker than a fast walk, brandishing their spears and wielding aloft their flashing two-handed swords. On the right of their line they were led by Abu Saleh, Emir of Metemneh; on the left by Mohammed Khuz, Emir of Berber, who soon retired wounded.

The fire of our skirmishers appeared to have little or no effect, singular to say, and the whole left face of the square now halted on high ground, turned its fire obliquely on the Arabs, with equally small results. Very few fell, and the miscarriage of so much of our fusillade must have led them to infer that the spells of Osman, and the promises of the Mahdi, had made their bodies shot-proof at last. "They were soon within 300 yards of the square, and now they commenced to run towards us, coming over the rolling ground like a vast wave of black surf."

They were led by Abu Saleh, of Metemneh, alone now.

Their first intention seemed to have been to pour the volume of their strength against the left front angle of the square, but swerving round they hurled it upon the rear angle of the left face. Closely pursued by a tide of bloodthirsty swordsmen and spearmen, our skirmishers came racing at full speed to the shelter of the square; and

at that moment the Gardner gun, under the orders of Lord Charles Beresford, was dragged to the left face rear angle, and instantly brought into action.

During the advance it had been fired repeatedly at parties of the foe, and performed the best of service in sweeping them off several dominating eminences and strong positions.

When it was now required at a moment pregnant with peril, before three rounds could be fired, the cartridges stuck—the miserable Government ammunition failed to act—and the weapon was rendered useless for the time, and still the waves of Arabs were rolling down upon the square, in undiminished volume, ferocity, and strength, with all their weapons flash in the sunshine.

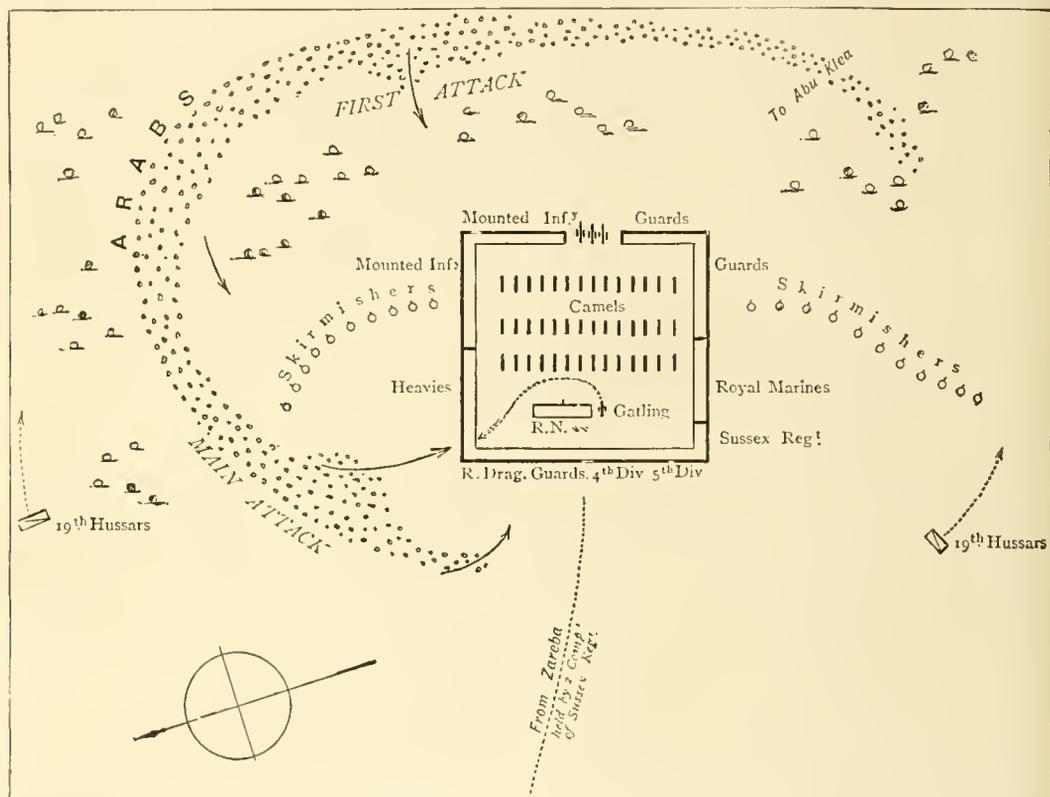
"It was a rush of spearmen and swordsmen," we are told, "scarcely any carrying guns. Their rifle fire had practically ceased; and the other Arab forces surrounding us—the Mahdi's troops, plundering Bedouins, and pillaging villagers from the river side—stood, all eager, on the hills watching the charge upon the British square."

As they rose over the crest of the last eminence between the opposing lines a deadly volley at 150 yards was poured sheer into them. Under the weight of that shower of lead and its awful results, they paused, reeled, wavered, and then leaping over their dead and wounded, with louder yells than ever came charging into our ranks.

"I was at that instant inside that square, not far from the Gardner gun."

wrote a correspondent, "when I saw our men begin to shuffle a little backward. Some say Colonel Burnaby issued an order for the men to 'fall back;' but—I can speak confidently on this point—though near him I never heard it. That, however, is a

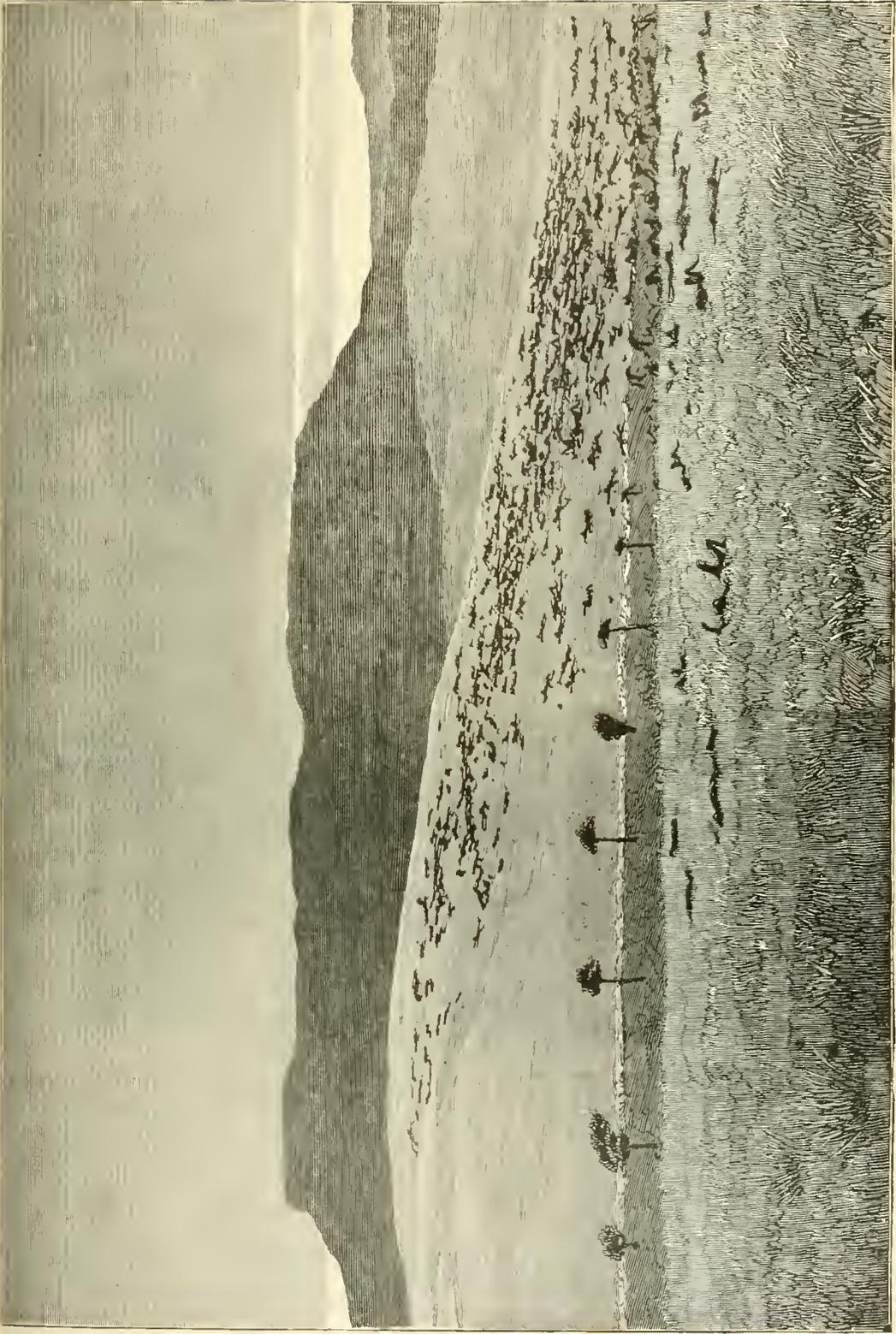
running in hard pressed. I think all but one man succeeded in reaching our lines. Burnaby went forward to the men's assistance sword in hand. He told me that he had given to his servant to carry that double-barrelled gun he had used so well against the Haden-



PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF ABU KLEA.

small matter, and it may have been issued all the same. At any rate, the left face moved somewhat backwards, and slightly towards the zeriba. Colonel Burnaby himself, whose every action at the time I saw from a distance of about thirty yards, rode out in front of the rear of the left face, to assist two or three of our skirmishers who were

dowas at El Teb, in deference to the noise made in England by so-called humanitarians against its use. Had it been in his hands Burnaby would easily have saved other lives as well as his own; but they would have been British lives at the expense of Arabs'. As the dauntless colonel rode forward he put himself in the way of a sheikh charging down



BATTLE-FIELD OF ABU KLEA AFTER THE BRITISH VICTORY.

on horseback. Ere the Arab closed with him, a bullet from some one in our ranks, and not Burnaby's sword-thrust, brought him headlong to the ground. The enemy's spearmen were close behind, and one of them suddenly dashed at Colonel Burnaby, pointing the long blade of his spear at his throat. Checking his horse and pulling it backward, Burnaby parried the Moslem's rapid and ferocious thrusts, but the length of the man's weapon, eight feet, put it out of his power to return with interest the Arab's murderous intent. Once or twice I think the Colonel just touched his man, only to make him more wary and eager. The affray was the work of three or four seconds only, for the savage swarthy negroes from Kordofan, and the straight-haired tawny-complexioned Arabs of the Bayuda Steppe, were closing fast in upon our square. Burnaby fenced smartly, and there was a smile on his features, as he drove off the man's awkward points."

A second Arab now attacked him.

"Turning with a sudden spring," continues Mr. Burleigh, "this second Arab ran his spear-point into the Colonel's right shoulder. It was but a slight wound, though enough to cause Burnaby to twist round in his saddle to defend himself from this unexpected attack. Before the savage could repeat his unlooked-for blow—so near the ranks of the square was the scene enacted—a soldier ran out and drove his sword-bayonet through the second assailant. As the soldier withdrew the steel, the ferocious Arab wriggled round and sought to reach him. The effort was

too much, however, even for his delirium of hatred against the Christian, and he reeled and fell. Brief as was Burnaby's glance backward at this fatal episode, it was long enough to enable the first Arab to deliver his spear point full at the brave officer's throat. The blow drove Burnaby out of his saddle, but it required a second one before he let go his reins and tumbled upon the ground. Half-a-dozen Arabs were now about him. With the blood gushing in streams from his gashed throat the dauntless guardsman leapt to his feet, sword in hand, and slashed at the ferocious group. They were the wild strokes of a proud man dying hard, but he was quickly overborne, and left helpless and dying.

"The heroic soldier who sprang to his rescue was, I fear, also slain in the *mélée*; though I watched for him, I never saw him get back to his place in the ranks."

The square had now fallen back a hundred yards, and the Arabs were charging our men with their spears breast high. When the great rush came, according to the *Daily Chronicle*, the Heavies, instead of remaining steady as infantry would have done, followed their cavalry instincts and sprang out to meet the ghazis, who came on at great speed, brandishing spears, hurling javelins, and wielding huge two-handled swords. All the valour of the Heavies became unavailing, when once they had relinquished their formation, and they were forced back upon the Naval Brigade with the Gardner Gun, and upon the right of the

Sussex, who had naturally closed up towards the gap.

The consequence was, that a breach was made in the angle of the square, and one of the ghazis even got so far in as to try to set fire with a flaming torch to the battery ammunition. Despite the great efforts of Captain Verner (Sir Charles Wilson's staff officer) and others, the Heavies were being massacred, and after the fall of Burnaby, whom Sir William Cumming of the Scots Guards tried in vain to save, Verner was beaten down; but his life was saved by Major Carmichael of the Irish Lancers, whose dead body fell across him, as well as those of three ghazis.

Meanwhile the Guards, whose line was steady as a rock, faced about, delivered a counter attack, rescued the Heavies, and drove the Mahdi's men out of the square, where they were severely handled, though they did terrible execution in return.

General Stewart now moved the square onward about 120 yards, to more level ground, and while three hearty and defiant cheers were given, again the Arab hordes came rushing on, undaunted by their first repulse. This time they did much execution; but not so much as before, and the close fire from the face of the square was enough to drive them back among the tall grass, where the fire of the field guns did havoc among them for a mile and more. "Fully 500 bodies lay on the scene of the first struggle—rider and horse, camel and foot soldier, friend and foe, in one red ruin blent."

Had water been as plentiful as blood the force would not have suffered untold agonies of thirst.

So great had been the peril in the square when it was broken, that the officers of the Guards and Mounted Infantry placed their men back to back, to fight the desperate battle for life; and much wildness of aim was occasioned, it is said, by the excitement of finding that hundreds of the wretched Government cartridges jammed fast after the second or third shot.

The approved method of freeing the breech-block from a jammed cartridge, was to endeavour to throw the lever up and down smartly two or three times. If that plan did not work, there was nothing for it but to hit the lever a sharp blow with a stick or stone; and whilst this was in process the soldier was unarmed and defenceless.

So soon as the Arabs showed signs of wavering, our men, with cheers and exultant shouts redoubled their fire; while a young officer rallied a number of men on the right rear, and these being soon joined by some more, poured a flanking fire into the masses of the enemy.

The tension of the situation now lasted about ten minutes; then the Arabs, by twos and threes, then thirties and forties, began to run off the field, and in five minutes there was scarcely one within 300 yards of the square.

Cheer upon cheer now rose from the latter, hailing the dearly-won victory, and volley after volley was sent after the fast-flying foe. Colonel Barrow, who had been holding the Arabs in check, about three-quarters of a mile on

the left rear, now led his Hussars on the spur in pursuit of the fugitives, who in three long streams, on horse, camel, and donkey back, but mostly on foot, were seen making off in hottest haste in three different directions—for Berber, Metemneh, and Khartoum.

order to get a surer chance of plunging sword or spear into any unwary passer.

More than a thousand bodies lay on the field. The British losses were, nine officers killed and nine wounded; sixty-five non-commissioned officers and rank and file killed, and eighty-five



LIEUT. RUDOLPH E. DELISLE, H.M.S. "ALEXANDRA."

(From a Photograph by Messrs. Elliott and Fry.)

Our skirmishers again darted out to pick them off as long as they were within range, and Norton's screw-guns did terrible execution among them.

Fatigue parties were now sent out to search for our wounded among the heaps of the slain; but, as at El Teb and Tamai, the wounded Arabs refused to be made prisoners, preferring death; and the greatest caution had to be exercised in moving about the field, to avoid secret stabs dealt by the bleeding fanatics, who feigned to be dead in

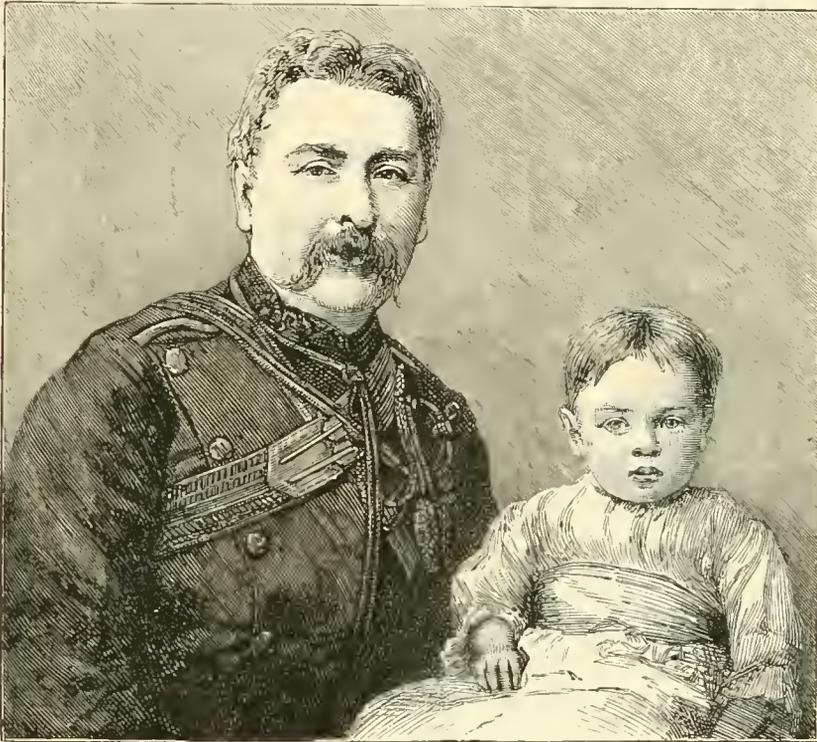
wounded. One half of the loss was borne by the Heavy Camel Corps.

The enemy's loss, although enormous, would have been much heavier than it was, had the square opened fire upon them when they first approached; but this it was unable to do till our skirmishers were within its shelter. Accordingly the troops had to reserve their fire. Had it been otherwise, the enemy, in spite of their really magnificent valour, might never, perhaps, have come to close quarters.

Our officers are said to have fought desperately when their men were pressed back by the weight of the Arab rush. Our Aden camel drivers, many of whom were killed or wounded, and who displayed great courage as contrasted

While all this was taking place, the Hussars were sent forward to take possession of the Wells at Abu Klea, and hasten the evacuation of the enemy's camp.

The Naval Brigade lost Lieutenants



MAJOR CARMICHAEL.

(From a Photograph by Naudin and Co., 13, The Terrace, Kensington High Street.)

with the cowardly Egyptians, scoured the battle-field, and brought in such of the camels as were fit for service. The reserve ammunition—which could not be transported, as over fifty camels had been killed—was blown up; and all the rifles, spears, and other weapons of the enemy, were gleaned up from the scene of conflict and burned, or otherwise destroyed.

Pigott and Delisle, who fell when the Gardner gun was jammed and the enemy rushed upon it.

“The Gardner gun was jammed after firing about thirty rounds,” wrote Lord Charles Beresford in his Report. “The enemy were then about two hundred yards from the muzzle of the gun. The Captain of the gun, Will Rhoads, chief Boatswain-mate, and myself, un-

screwed the plate to clear the band, when the enemy was upon us. Rhoads was killed by a spear. Walter Miller, armourer, I also saw killed with a spear on my left. I was knocked down in the rear of the gun, but uninjured, except a small spear-scratch on the left hand. The crowd and crush of the enemy were very great at this point, and, as I struggled up, I was carried against the face of the square, which was literally pressed back by sheer weight of numbers about twelve paces from the position of the gun. The crush was so great at the moment that few on either side were killed, but fortunately this flank of the square had been forced up a very steep mound, which enabled the rear rank to open a tremendous fire over the heads of the front rank men; this relieved the pressure, and enabled those of the front rank to shoot or bayonet those of the enemy nearest to them. The enemy then, for some reason, turned to their right along the left flank of the square, and streamed away in numbers along the rear face of it. In a very few minutes the terrific fire of the square told on the enemy. There was a momentary waver, and they then walked away. I immediately manned the Gardner, and cleared the jam as soon as I could. This, however, was not done in time to be of much use in firing on the retreating enemy, as they had got back into the nullah and behind a mound before it was ready."

During the action the force had been suffering from agonies of thirst, which there were no means of alleviating.

The moans of the wounded were piteous in the extreme, but there was scarcely a drop of water to give them. However, everything that it was possible to do, was done for them by Dr. Ferguson and his colleagues, and before three o'clock all was ready for the advance, the wounded being carried in camel-litters, or on stretchers, towards the Wells, which were finally occupied by five in the evening.

The precise composition of the force which left Gakdul was as follows:—The Guards and Camel Corps, 380; the Heavy Camel Corps, 360; Mounted Infantry, 400; a squadron of the 19th Hussars, 90; a half-battalion Sussex Regiment, 175; Royal Artillery Camel Battery, 3 guns; Royal Engineers, 30; Naval Brigade, 50, with one Gardner machine gun, making a total effective force of 1,485 men, with four guns. If the Light Camel Corps were engaged the total strength would be 1825.

The death of Colonel Frederick Gustavus Burnaby of the Blues created a profound sensation in London. He entered the Guards in 1859, and became Lieutenant-Colonel in 1881. In the earlier years of his military career he travelled in South America and Central Africa, and in 1875 he started on his famous and adventurous "Ride to Khiva," which was attended with considerable peril and difficulty. His intention to proceed to Bokhara was frustrated by the Russian authorities, at whose instigation the Duke of Cambridge ordered his return to Central Asia. In 1876, Colonel Burnaby went

on horseback through Asia Minor and Persia, and subsequently he was with the army of Don Carlos during the fighting in Spain.

When the Soudan Expedition from Snakin was undertaken in 1884 he served under General Graham, and was attached to the Intelligence Department; and, as we have recorded in its place, he was wounded at El Teb. Returning to London, he had scarcely recovered, when the Expedition for the Relief of Khartoum was undertaken, and he arrived at the front with it on the 13th of January. He had fought a gallant struggle as a candidate for Birmingham at the General Election, when he polled within 4,000 of the votes received by Mr. Chamberlain, and had been again adopted as a candidate for that borough at the next election.

The other officers killed were, Majors L. M. Carmichael of the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, Atherton of the 5th Dragoon Guards, and W. A. Gough, 1st Royal Dragoons, who served at Tel-el-Kebir; Captain Darley of the 4th Dragoon Guards, who served at Kasasin and Tel-el-Kebir; and Lieutenants Law, of the same Regiment, and Wolfe of the Scots Greys.

A little after noon the column received orders to resume the advance. As they descended into the hollow on their left, our troops saw hundreds of Arabs dead or dying, and in the dry water-course a multitude of water skins, water bottles, earthenware pots, bags of dhurra, and tomtoms; and on the northern side, a great number of rifle pits and trenches, lots of Mahdi uniforms and flags, "but

no shields; for the False Prophet had bade his adherents neither to wear their ancient chain armour nor seek the protection of thick rhinoceros-hide bucklers."

At a part of the wady our soldiers came upon six dead and four wounded Arabs, lying under a mimosa tree; and through an interpreter the latter were summoned to surrender and have their wounds dressed.

But they fiercely mocked our men as infidel dogs, so four rifle bullets ended their career at once.

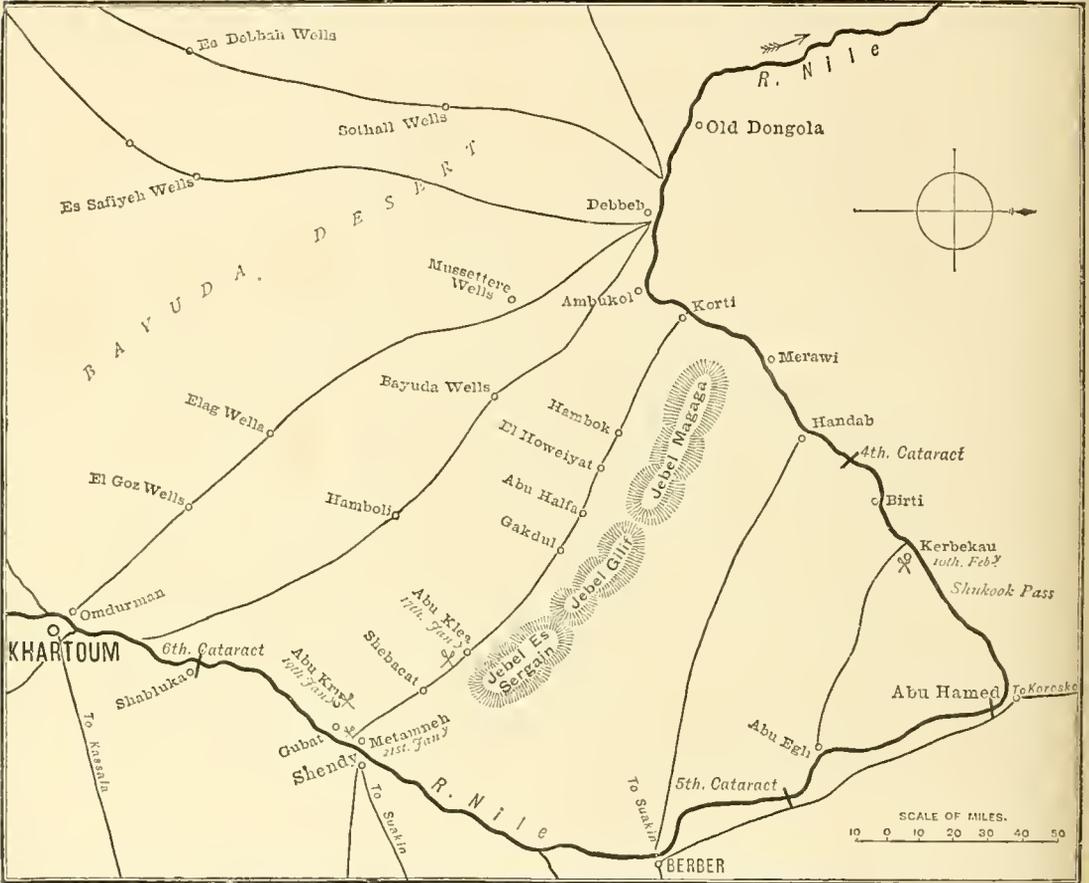
"It was again, as at El Teb and Tamai," wrote the correspondent of the *Telegraph*, "almost impossible to take prisoners, and we secured but two of their wounded alive. The third prisoner I assisted to bring in; but he was hardly a captive, for the man gave himself up. He had a Remington and over 100 rounds of ammunition. His story was, that he had been one of the Berber Egyptian garrison, and since the fall of that place had been forced into the Mahdi's army. He was glad to escape from them, he declared; and the fellow looked cheerful at being taken. A trooper of the 19th conducted him to General Stewart. He was our one unwounded prisoner!"

The extraordinary fanaticism under which the injured Arabs refused to accept of any succour, or to permit their sufferings to be even slightly alleviated, was one of the most painful features of the campaigns in Egypt and the Soudan. It was an experience that our soldiers would not willingly repeat.

Parched and choked with thirst after the fierce toil of the day, the column reached the Wells of Abu Klea in the evening, and all enjoyed the luxury of an inexhaustible supply of pure cold

small zeriba—precautions that were absolutely essential even after our brilliant victory.

A temporary hospital was set in order, and Surgeon-Major Ferguson,



MAP OF THE THEATRE OF WAR IN THE SECOND SOUDAN CAMPAIGN.

water from the fifty springs there. Round one or other, men, horses, and camels were gathered, quenching their agonising thirst by deep draughts; then fires were lit, and a meal was prepared. A party of cavalry was sent to take possession of a hill on our left front, and orders were issued to cut bushes for the construction of a

with Drs. Parke, Briggs, Dick, Maconochie, and other medical officers, worked all night unwearingly among the wounded; a night that proved bitterly cold. At 8 p.m. 150 Mounted Infantry, under Major Phipps, with fifteen pairs of cacolets, rode back to the old zeriba to bring on to the Wells all the wounded, the guard, and stores left

there. As they proceeded they could hear in the dark the groans of wounded Arabs, who had crawled under the scrub and into other secret places to die, preferring the Paradise promised by the Prophet to any prospect of life.

When the square advanced, it would seem that the guard left in the zeriba had fired for more than an hour on parties of Arabs that came along some hills on the right to join in the attack.

By daylight next morning all the stores were packed on camels, and the wounded men were placed in the cacolets and litters. As soon as the sun rose the zeriba was abandoned, and the Major's forces marched for the Wells of Abu Klea, which were reached about 8 a.m. without molestation, though small bodies of the enemy were visible on the hills to the north and south of the route. The severity of the fighting in the battle of Abu Klea, and the enormous losses which the Soudanese had sustained in the conflict, sufficiently

explains why these brave sons of the Desert kept themselves for the present out of harm's way.



SOLDIERS OF THE MAHDI.

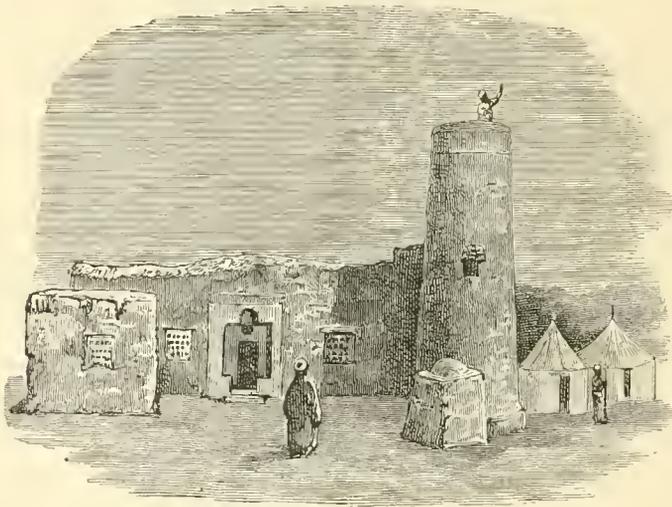
The Victoria Cross was bestowed upon Gunner Albert Smith, whose claim had been submitted for Her Majesty's approval, for conspicuous bravery at the action of Abu Klea, on Jan. 17, 1885. When the enemy charged, the square fell back a short distance, leaving Lieutenant Guthrie, Royal Artillery, with his gun, in a comparatively unprotected position. At this moment a native rushed at the officer with a spear, and would in all probability have killed him, for he had no weapon in his hand at the time (being engaged in superintending the working of his gun), when Gunner Smith, with a gun handspike, warded off the thrust,

thus giving Lieutenant Guthrie time to draw his sword, and with a blow to bring the assailant to his knees. As the latter fell he made a wild thrust at the officer with a long knife,

which Gunner Smith again warded off, not, however, before the native had managed to inflict a wound in Lieutenant Guthrie's thigh. Before the Soudani could repeat the thrust Gunner Smith killed him with the handspike, and thus for the time saved the life of his officer, though the latter unfortunately died some days afterwards of his wound.

The gallantry of our men was a

redeeming feature in this deplorable campaign, and Gunner Smith's bravery was typical of that of many a valiant Briton who found a last resting-place in the burning sands of the Soudan. Nor should it be forgotten that the foe displayed conspicuous courage in every action, their terrific charges especially recalling some of the furious onsets of the Zulus and the Afghan hill-tribes.



MOSQUE AT SENNAAR.

## CHAPTER IX

## WITH GENERAL EARLE'S COLUMN.

The Advance from Handoub—Preliminary Reconnaissance—Order of the March—The Black Watch at Berti—Anxiety about Stewart—The Cataracts—Reconnaissance at Berti—Difficulties of the Cataracts—Lord Wolseley's Award to the Royal Irish.

At this time, the Mahdi, according to recent reports, commanded a force of about 100,000 men, distributed between Khartoum, Shendy, and Berber; and of these 20,000 were posted between Dongola and Khartoum. Several officers of the army of Hicks Pasha were now with the False Prophet, and had formed for him more than one regular regiment; and Lord Wolseley in his despatches at this time also made mention of prisoners whom the Mahdi had recently taken at Omdurman; and this allowed him forces to detach for the purpose of meeting the British columns at Abu Klea and elsewhere.

General Earle was, at this time, at Handoub, where he was forming a dépôt previous to his advance. This place lies at the foot of a series of rapids, six in number, which are known as the Fourth Cataract, and extend nearly to El Kab.

The district is thus described by Dr. R. Lepsius:—"The villages consist of single and small rows of houses, stretching along at a great distance, yet bearing the same name to a certain extent. The plain of Kasingar ends with a beautiful group of palms. Then we enter the district of Kuch, followed by the long tract of Handoub, to which belongs the island of Merawi or Meroë,

more than a quarter of a mile in length. It is very high, sometimes forty feet above the water-level; one among the larger islands is wholly barren and uninhabited, and excepting the black crags periodically washed by the waters, is completely white. This is occasioned by the dazzling sand drifts which cover it; and, strangely enough, the rocks jutting out of the sand are also white, perhaps from the broad veins of quartz, in the same manner as another white rock which I had seen in the province of Robotat, and which was called by the camel-drivers Hager Mérui."

General Earle's force at Handoub consisted of the Black Watch, the Staffordshire Regiment, two companies of the Gordon Highlanders, a squadron of the 19th Hussars, and the Egyptian Camel Corps. Delays in the advance ensued owing to the non-arrival of the stores, the Transport being, as usual, at fault.

Colonel Flood and Major Slade made a preliminary reconnaissance in the direction of the enemy. They pushed forward as far as thirty miles on the road to Berber. They visited the Wells along the line, and reported that the water supply was poor, but that there was good forage for the baggage animals in the valleys. The natives all fled at

their approach, completely scared by the appearance of an armed force.

The mails for the officers and men of General Earle's column were, by order, to be forwarded by the desert road from Korosko to Abu Hammed. It was ar-

course to be pursued in case of any sudden attack by the enemy; but the natives thought that no serious opposition would be made till Abu Hammed was reached. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed among the troops of Earle's



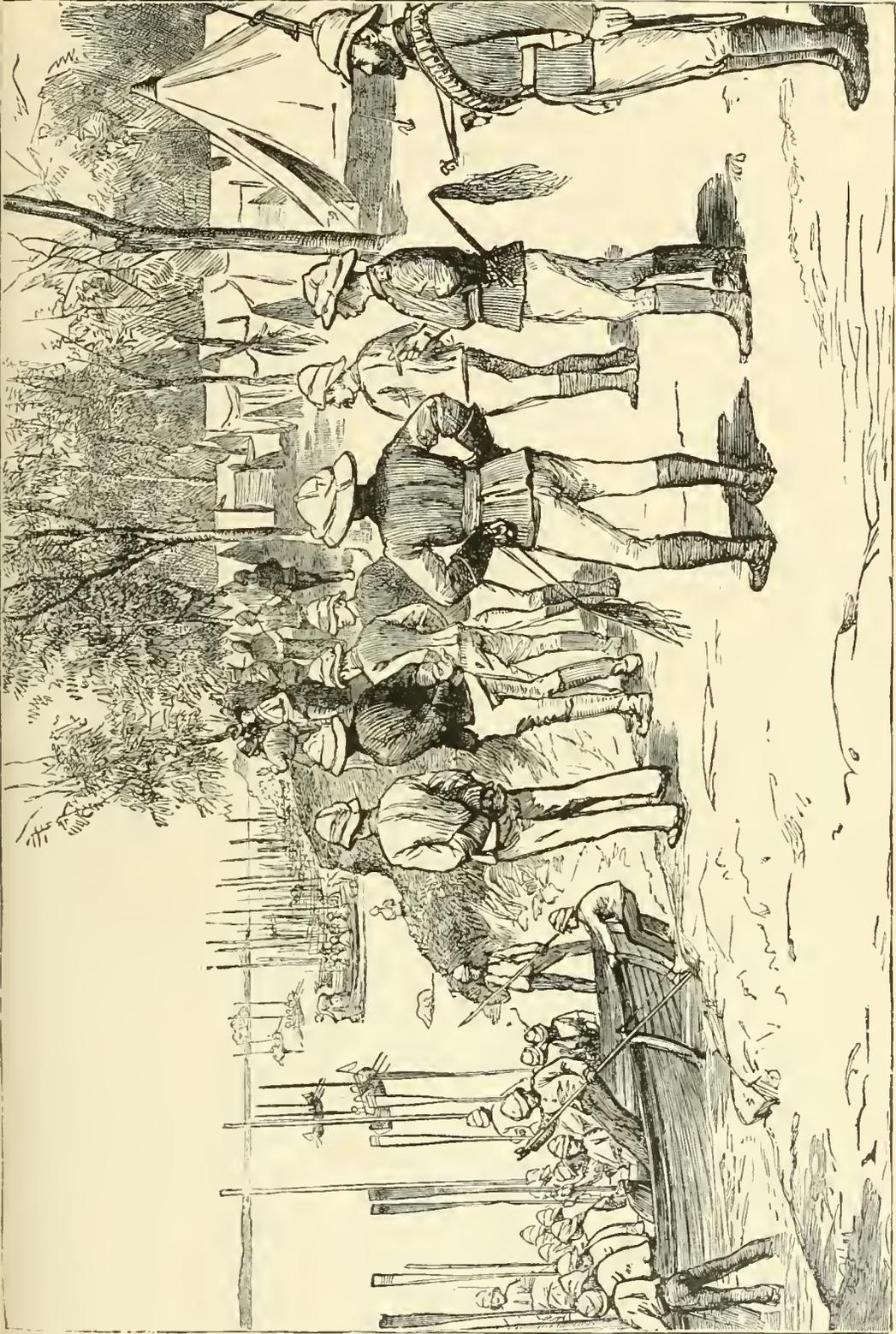
CAMEL CORPS UNDER SHELTER TENTS.

ranged that, in advancing, the Infantry were to proceed in strong bodies in their boats, the cavalry and Egyptian troops, moving along the banks of the Nile, echeloned, as it were, between them.

General Earle issued very strict and precise orders with reference to each day's movements, and every arrangement had been laid down as to the

column—all were eager to press on and try conclusions with the Arabs; all, as yet, were in splendid health, and ready for a fresh bout of toil at the Cataracts, which their past experience and skill rendered them confident of surmounting.

On the 24th January General Earle's Column started, with the guns and cavalry, from Handoub, for Berber, *via*



DEPARTURE OF GENERAL EARLE'S COLUMN—ADVANCE OF THE SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT FROM KORTL.

Abu Hammed. "The enemy," says Lord Wolseley's despatch from Korti, "consisted of the Monassir tribe, under Wad Gamr, the murderer of Colonel Stewart, and under Moussa, have collected at Berti, thirty-five miles above Handoub. They say they mean fighting, but, as reports received say General Stewart's victory [at Abu Klea] has created a great impression everywhere, it is doubtful if Earle will meet with any serious opposition until he reaches Berber."

When the forward movement began, three boats, with skilled officers and Canadian crews, under Colonel Alleyne, left shortly after daybreak on the 24th January, going ahead as scouts for the column. They were followed by two companies of the South Staffordshire Regiment acting as the advanced guard. A boat full of men of the 26th Company of the Royal Engineers, under Captain Blackburn, led the main column of whalers in the following order:—The rest of the Staffordshire Regiment; the Naval Brigade, under Lieutenant Bourk; the Black Watch, under Colonel Green; a section of the Field Hospital, guarded by a company of Gordon Highlanders.

Simultaneously, Colonel Butler advanced on the river bank with forty Hussars and Egyptian Cavalry, with orders to carefully reconnoitre the country as he proceeded, and preclude, if possible, any attack on the boats. General Earle and his staff followed a little later, and another party of Hussars started along the bank, acting as the rear guard of the column, which

halted for the night at Owli Island, where the flotilla arrived in the afternoon, having experienced no great difficulty in the journey.

Sunken rocks were, however, numerous, and the bow-men had to stand, pole in hand, to alter the course suddenly when necessary. The men were quite able to row against the stream, and but little tracking had to be done. Assistant-Commissary-General Boyd accompanied the Column as Commissary-in-charge.

Handoub was ordered to be abandoned, and Colonel Colville followed Earle's column with 300 of the Mudir's infantry along the right bank of the Nile. These Soudanese were armed with Remingtons, and expressed great satisfaction in acting with British troops for the relief of General Gordon.

The boats carried stores for the use of those on board; but the camels carried the grain and tins of water. Cattle were also driven along the bank abreast of the column, but proved somewhat of an impediment.

The Column was followed by the Duke of Cornwall's Regiment, Captain Lea's Transport Company, and the Egyptian Artillery under Major Wodehouse.

On the 25th, the Column advanced six miles, ascending the rapids above Owli Island. Upon the whole, the stream proved neither so swift nor so powerful as was expected; but there were many stretches of very broken water, requiring all the efforts of the troops to get the boats up. At one place, it was necessary to effect a port-

age of the arms, ammunition, and clothing for the distance of a mile, and the efforts of the three boat's crews were required to drag each of the empty whalers up the rapid.

While this was in progress, a wing of the Black Watch marched in the direction of Berti, to check the enemy should they manifest any intention of an attack; but no sign of them was there, and Colonels Butler and Alleyne reconnoitred the country farther in advance with the same result.

Brigadier-General Brackenbury, C.B., had all the work of arranging this flying column through a country of which little or nothing was known, except that it did not boast of much cultivation, and that the population were hostile to our advance, and had orders from the Emir of Berber to oppose us at Berti, which is marked on some maps as the Edernich Cataract, and the limit of the Mudir of Dongola's territory.

At this time considerable anxiety was experienced at headquarters and elsewhere respecting what was termed "the disappearance" of Sir Herbert Stewart, from whom no tidings came for some time after the victory of Abu Klea. On the 26th of January it was unknown to the public whether he was safely entrenched at Metemneh or somewhere on the river bank; and it was supposed, that if he found the enemy too strong to be attacked, he would await a junction with General Earle's Column. The absence of news was easily explainable. A bearer of despatches would require a strong cavalry escort to the rear, and General Stewart

was naturally unwilling to weaken his already slender force; thus it was assumed that if his little column had entrenched itself on the Nile it would be comparatively safe till General Earle came up.

"Lord Wolseley," said the *Globe* at this crisis, "however, evidently feels some little misgiving, if we may believe a telegram which has just come to hand from Alexandria. This states that he is about to cross the Bayuda Desert himself with reinforcements—a step which he would scarcely take unless he was either anxious for the safety of General Stewart's force or believed that the road to Khartoum was open."

On the 26th of January General Earle was able to report to Lord Wolseley at Korti that he was then beyond the Fourth Cataract, and was moving on all right. After this, a large convoy was sent to Gakdul, and Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Cairo that he expected "to receive news of General Stewart to-day or to-morrow, and that there was no reason for anxiety."

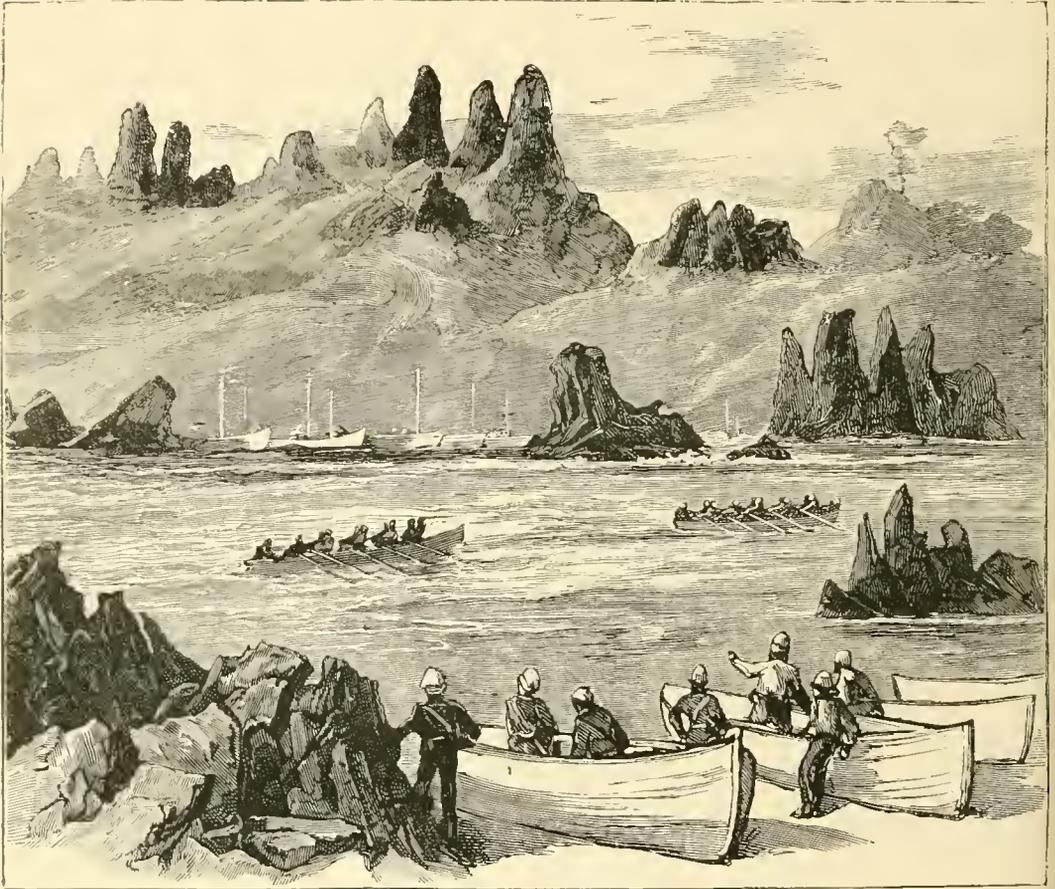
On the 30th of January General Earle's scouts exchanged shots with the enemy near Berti, but the column still made progress.

During the whole of the preceding day the South Staffordshire regiment were occupied in getting their boats up the Bahak Cataract. The work proved extremely hard to them, owing to the numerous rapids and sunken rocks; but ere this the Black Watch were nearly all up. The troops encamped at night in two zeribas, along the line of river occupied by the boats.

Every care was taken against an attack in the dark, and heliograph, or rather selenograph (moonlight), signals were kept up along the line.

At daybreak on the 30th of January

down and open a fire from the steep bank. He added, that they were much mortified in missing an opportunity, which, however, might have not availed them much, as the Black Watch held



PULLING THROUGH THE RAPIDS NEAR OWLI ISLAND.

a deserter from Berti rode into General Earle's camp. He stated that the Arabs meant to attack when we were toiling up the Bahak Cataract, but our advance was sooner than they anticipated. Their plan had been to remain at a distance, until the boats were struggling in the rapids, and then come

the bank while the Staffordshire boats ascended.

This deserter added that the news of Stewart's great success had caused surprise and disappointment in the ranks of the Mahdi, as the column was supposed to be doomed. The natives, he said, were all armed with rifles and

spears, and had also a cannon, taken from Colonel Stewart's steamer, but having been spiked it was unserviceable.

ten miles from the Moshami Cataract. A deserter stated them to be 14,000 strong; but 6,000 was deemed the more probable number.

On the 31st Earle's column reached

In the morning, after these tidings,



GORDON HIGHLANDERS TOWING BOATS UP ONE OF THE CATARACTS.

the Moshami Cataract, a squadron of the 19th Hussars and the Egyptian Camel Corps covering the advance on the left bank of the stream under Colonel Butler, while Colonel Colville with his 300 Soudanese riflemen covered the right. Wad Gamr was now reported to be in command of the Mahdi's men at Berti,

General Earle, with Colonel Butler, a squadron of the 19th Hussars, the Egyptian Camel Corps, and half a battalion of the Black Watch, reconnoitred the enemy's position. Finding all quiet, they pushed into the village of Berti, and found the enemy had evacuated it in the night, and fallen back in

the direction of Berber, leaving behind some women, old men, and their stores of grain and cattle. Berti is situated at a bend of the Nile, and had been strengthened by a stone wall upon the side from which we should naturally approach it.

The General, with the cavalry, rode on for three miles beyond it, and found the country broken and rocky, but with grazing ground for cavalry and camels.

The Rahami Cataract, two miles and a half in length, was the next difficulty to be surmounted.

“So far,” says a correspondent, “the distance which has been made by the boats since the start is twenty-three miles, and this has taken the troops seven days of almost continuous labour. We know nothing for certain as to the cataracts higher up, but if the difficulties are at all equal to those already encountered, the time which the journey up to Metemneh by water will take will be very greatly in excess of the calculations made before starting. The natives who have come in say that the enemy have been greatly puzzled by the enormous number of our boats, and by the occupation of both banks of the river by our troops. They thought that the reports they had received of the strength of the advancing force must have greatly understated the number of men. The mistake on their part is not unnatural, for the flotilla of boats is so numerous that it might well give the impression that a very large force was advancing.”

Two uncles of the murderer, Suleiman Wad Gamr, the leader of the enemy,

came into camp on the 1st February. They had long been engaged in a blood-feud with him, and were anxious to join us, but were afraid to make any movement until he fell back from Berti.

Hussein, the stoker of Colonel Stewart's steamer, who made his escape from the enemy, now reached Earle's column in safety.

It was now that Lord Wolseley issued a special general order with reference to the progress and conduct of the boats in the chief task of ascending the Nile. He stated that the following battalions, in the order named, completed the journey from Sarras to Debbeh in the quickest time:—

First, the Royal Irish; second, the Gordon Highlanders (arriving almost simultaneously); third, the West Kent. “The 2nd division of the Naval Brigade, under Lieutenant Van Koughnet, the Royal Irish, and the West Kent, have particularly distinguished themselves by the excellent order in which they have brought up the boats and supplies. The 2nd Division of the Naval Brigade and Captain Forster's company of the Royal Irish handed over the stores entrusted to them in complete order as received, without either being damaged or missing. Lord Wolseley congratulates the Royal Irish Regiment on having won the small prize offered to them as a mark of his personal appreciation of the toils which all have undergone. He hopes that, as they have been first on the river, so they may be among the first to enter Khartoum.

“The General recognises fully the

gratifying way in which all the battalions under his command have worked, and warmly thanks both officers and men for the untiring spirit they have exhibited in overcoming the serious obstacles they have had to encounter. All have worked cheerfully under severe privations, and continued and arduous toil. Lord Wolseley will have pleasure in bringing their energy and discipline under the notice of Her Majesty."

To the Royal Irish there fell the £100 prize offered for the race from Sarras. "It would have been well," remarked the *Globe* on this, "had the General Order been less effusively com-

plimentary to the Royal Irish. They beat the Highlanders by a neck only, and the excessive praise of one, contrasted with the omission to bestow a single syllable of praise on the other, revives the idea that Lord Wolseley is not quite so impartial as he might be in matters connected with nationality. It has been said of him, that an Irish regiment can do no wrong thing, and a Highland one no right thing, in his eyes."

Having thus traced the progress of General Earle's column as far as the Rahami Cataract, we shall now return to that of Sir Herbert Stewart.



BERTI IN FLAMES.

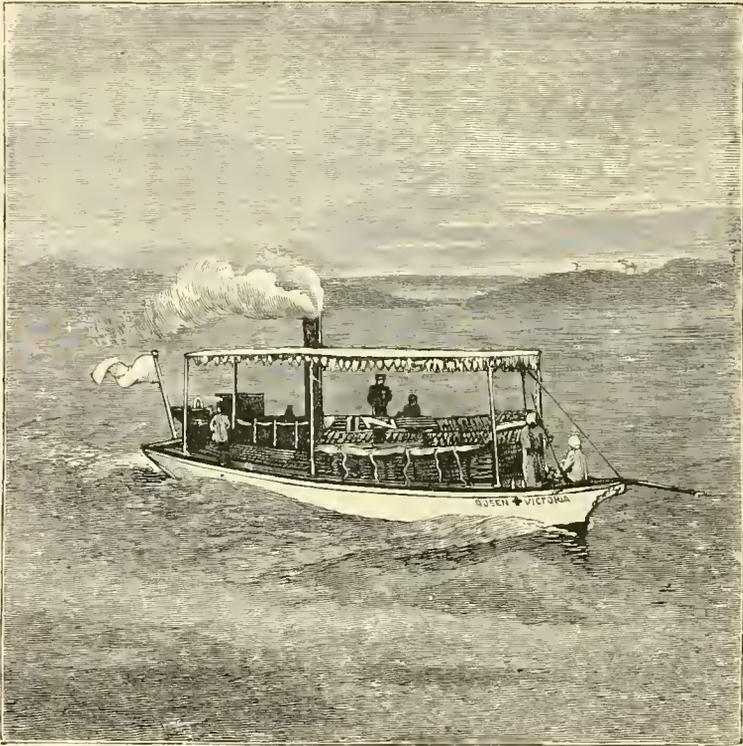
## CHAPTER X.

## THE BATTLE OF ABU KRU (OR GUBAT).

Night March to the Nile—Its Hardships—The Battle of Abu Kru—The Attack on the Square—General Stewart Hit—Correspondent Cameron Killed—Advance of the Square—Final Charge of the Arabs—Utter Rout of the Foe—The Nile reached—Burial of the Dead—Metemneh menaced—Gordon's Steamers—Departure of Sir Charles Wilson.

As we stated in Chapter VIII., the first result of the battle of Abu Klea was the capture of the Wells at

“They were gathered on the desert,  
Like pebbles on the shore,  
And they rushed upon the Christians  
With a shout like ocean's roar;

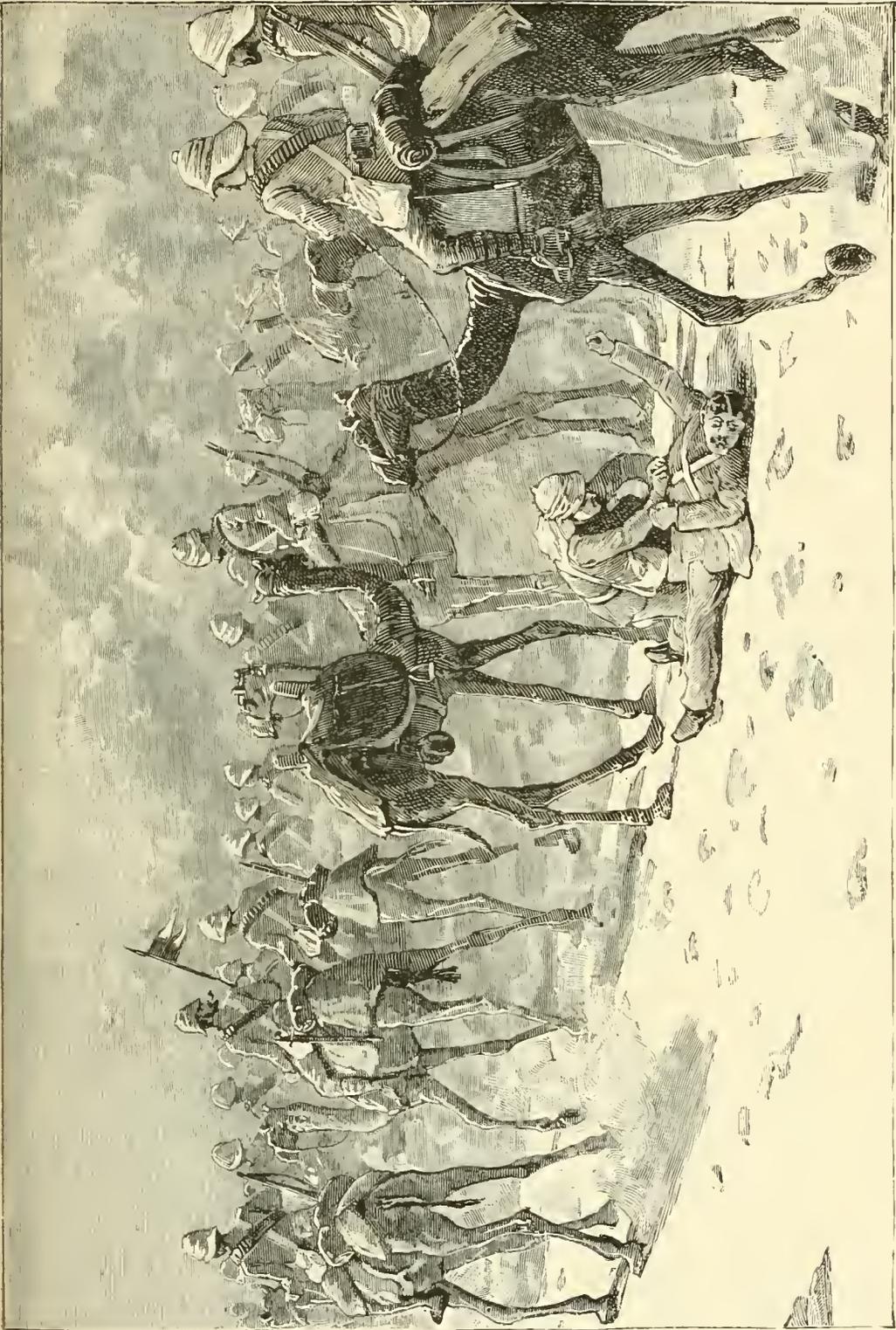


THE STEAM LAUNCH "QUEEN VICTORIA," OF THE NATIONAL SOCIETY FOR AID TO THE SICK AND WOUNDED IN WAR, AT WORK ON THE NILE.

that place, which afforded an abundant supply of fine water for the thirsty troops and their horses and camels.

About Abu Klea there appeared a spirited little anonymous poem in a Scottish newspaper, from which we may take the following lines:—

Like the dashing of the torrent,  
Like the sweeping of the storm,  
Like the raging of the tempest,  
Came down the dusky swarm.  
From the scant and straggling brushwood  
From the waste of burning sand,  
Sped the warriors of the desert,  
Like the locusts of the land;  
They would crush the bold invader,  
Who had dared to cross their path:



THE MARCH THROUGH THE DESERT TO GUBAT.

They were fighting for the Prophet,  
 In the might of Islam's wrath.  
 But the longest day hath ending,  
 The longest course must run,  
 And at length the foe was vanquished,  
 And at length the field was won.  
 Ye smiling plains of Albion!  
 Ye mountains of the North!  
 Now up, and greet your heroes with  
 The honour they are worth.  
 Then pause, and let a nation's tears  
 Fall gently on the sod  
 Where her valliant sons are sleeping,  
 Whose souls are with their God."

After supplies came in from the old zeriba, fortifications were added to the Wells, the dead were buried, and, by dint of hard work, the Column was in readiness to march forward at four in the afternoon on the 18th of January; and, amid the cheering of the poor fellows left behind, Sir Herbert started, his progress being watched by the wounded and their guard (150 of the Sussex under Major Gem) until the rising ground and the gathering shadows hid the Column from sight.

The country, as it proceeded, became undulating, with occasional hills. Of its normal inhabitants nothing was seen, though ever and anon a small body of the enemy's scouts were observed standing out against the clear sky line. The march was necessarily a slow one, as the neglect of any precaution might have involved the whole force in one gigantic ruin. The men, however, for a time, marched cheerfully and steadily, making the most of the occasional halts.

The fighting strength of the Column was now about 1,600 men only. It was officially made known that its route was towards the Nile, at a point

four miles south of Metemneh. The Chief of the Intelligence Department (Sir Charles Wilson), with his Staff, had the duty of guiding the line of march. He had several Arab guides, the principal of whom was Ali Lobah, a big, burly outlaw belonging to Berber, in whose knowledge of the by-ways and tracks of the desert Sir Charles had great confidence, and whose fidelity—if not attachment—to us was ensured by a promise of liberty and reward.

After a halt to rest and await the closing in of the darkness, the Column struck off southward to avoid the Wells of Shebaeat, where bands of hostile Arabs were reported to be watching our advance upon Metemneh in order to warn the inhabitants and give them time to prepare.

"A prisoner, who gave himself up, told me," says the correspondent of the *Telegraph*, "that the men we had been fighting at Abu Klea were from 3,000 to 5,000 of the Mahdi's army, the advanced guard of 10,000 more that had arrived at Metemneh, a portion of the Berber army 4,000 or 5,000 strong, 1,000 of Sheikh Suleiman's men of Monassir, and people from the Nile villages."

A night march is always a matter of difficulty even in a country intersected by good roads, but in the almost trackless desert, with men and animals worn out by toil, it was almost impossible to preserve military order. General Stewart, no doubt, would gladly have halted for a while at the Wells of Abu Klea, to give the force time for rest and

refreshment; but without other forage for the animals than dry and sapless sabas grass, with a knowledge that every hour added to the strength of the enemy, and that Lord Wolseley's orders to push on were imperative, no alternative was left him but to advance at once.

The forward movement was now more slow than it had ever been. Halts were frequent to enable the lagging rear to come up with the Column. The camels dragged wearily along—scores of them broke down under their heavy loads, and were abandoned to the fowl birds of the desert, their packs, as a rule, being generally distributed among the few "re-mount animals."

Times there were, when the weary Column was in such a state of disorganisation that an attack would have been its destruction. Men in entire groups drifted out of their places, while, in spite of all punishment, the camels would not proceed beyond a slow walk; and the Column resembled a herd, more than anything else, when it had to toil over broken ground; and at the shortest halt the soldiers by hundreds threw themselves on the bare earth to snatch a few minutes' sleep—sleep so sound, so dead, that it was with difficulty they could be raised to re-mount.

"Along with others," says the writer before quoted, "I nodded in my saddle, and narrowly escaped two or three bad falls in consequence. 'Go on! go on!' was the cry incessantly uttered; and, heavy-eyed, half-dozing, the force mechanically moved forward. Our route, I saw, was very circuitous;

but we were told it was taken to avoid bad ground. Towards 3 a.m. we were led into a waste of dense scrub and mimosa, where the preservation of a square would have been a trial by day, and an actual impossibility by night."

The men—toiling and blundering—got along somehow, but several lost their way. Among these was a poor fellow of the Heavies, who, with three friendly natives, actually wandered into Meteanneh, where, when dawn came, they were instantly hewn to pieces. A private of the 2nd Coldstreams named Dodd was lost in the bush, but made his way back to the Wells at Abu Klea.

When day broke, nothing could be seen of the Nile, which the Column had fully expected to touch about that time; and some anxiety was felt as to our whereabouts. Captain Verner of the Intelligence Department, who had been with the guides, would seem to have changed the direction to a more easterly course. Sunrise saw the Column traversing a broad belt of pebbly ground that interposed between the low alluvial land bordering the Nile and the flat steppe covered with reedy sabas grass.

This steppe was four miles broad, and beyond it a glimpse of the Nile could be had with the aid of field-glasses. The steppe was thickly covered with pebbles that shone in the sun as if they had been glazed.

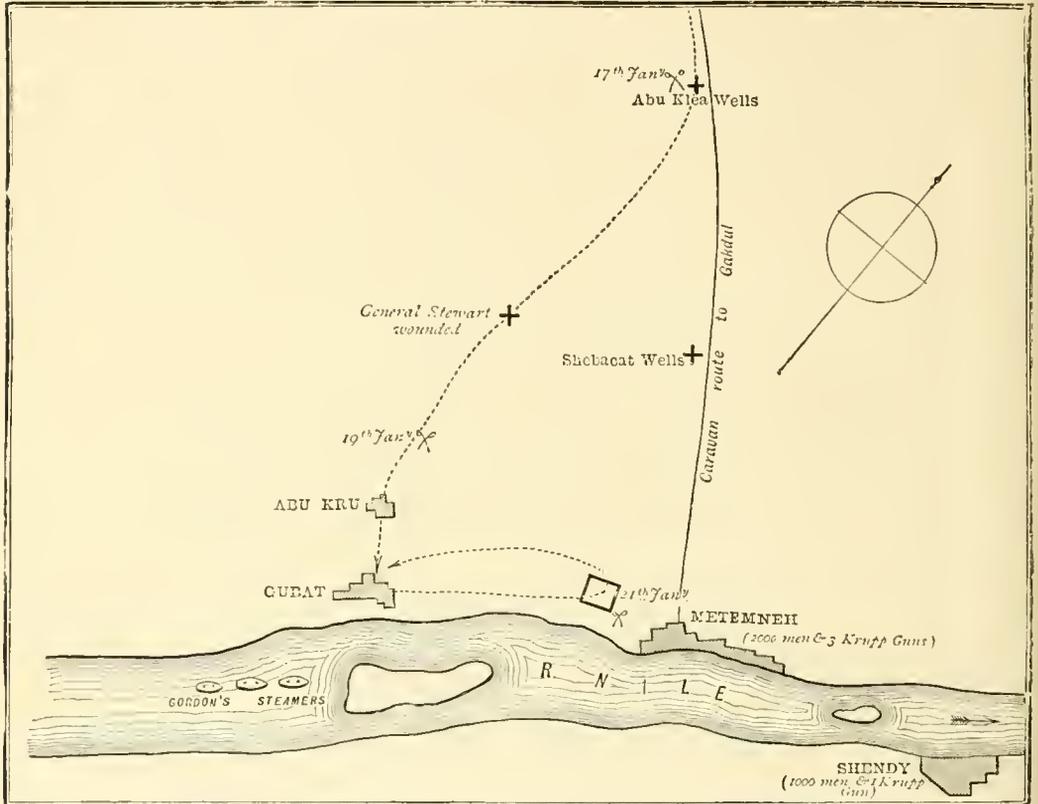
Arabs could now be seen, on horse and foot, issuing in crowds from all the villages along the river, with spears, swords, and brilliantly burnished Re-

mington rifles, hastening to put themselves in battle array between the Column and the river.

Metemneh, out of which armed men were also pouring, was now seen to be a much larger town than any one had

for water, or strike out straight and boldly, then face about, and have but one line to defend?

Closing his field-glass sharply, the General gave orders for the troops to close up and form square, with the



SKETCH-MAP OF MOVEMENTS FROM JANUARY 17-21, 1885.

supposed, and occupying a line of low hills.

Halting the Column, just as the sun rose, upon one of the eminences of a swelling upland, General Stewart took a survey of the scene around him. The question now was: Should he push on and get a mile or two nearer the Nile, before the enemy gathered in greater strength between him and the longed-

camels in the centre; and for the men to have their breakfast.

When the brief meal was over, General Stewart said, cheerily—

“If they mean business, we shall advance and fight them!”

The camels were herded closer together, and the scattered mimosa bushes were cut to form a kind of zeriba on the rear, left, and right faces of the

square; but they grew too sparsely and far apart to make more than a very thin fringe when heaped over each other. Thus biscuit boxes, camel saddles, and stores, were utilised to make a breast-work along the faces of the square.

Before the hasty breakfast was quite over, the numbers of the enemy had

In Stewart's rear there hovered some 300 Baggara Horse and as many infantry. "The rifles of the Mahdi's Kordofan slave-hunters were soon brought into play against the square, and before the sun was half an hour high, or at 7 a.m., bullets were dropping thickly over all the ground we occupied. It



MR. ST. LEGER HERBERT, CORRESPONDENT OF THE "MORNING POST."

(From a Photograph by Messrs. Ewing and Small, 22, Baker Street, W.)

greatly increased along the whole front, and great bands of them were seen running to take up positions on both flanks of the square and in its rear.

The crest it occupied was commanded by high ground, 2,000 yards in front, while on the flanks and in the rear two ledges of rock rose at the distance of 1,700 yards, affording good cover, and every point of vantage was quickly occupied by bodies of dauntless foemen numbering from 300 to 500 men.

was astonishing how quickly they found our range, and how well they fired. Gordon was right when he said the Arabs were better shots than the Egyptians." The desultory fire of the enemy increased in volume, and they evidently began to form in military array, as if about to storm the position, superbly heedless of the terrible lesson taught them at Abu Klea.

A few skirmishers were now sent out on our right front. These ad-

vanced to about 100 yards, and lay flat on their breasts in rear of a little mound covered with pebbles. The horses of the 19th Hussars were tethered at the rear of the square, and to the troopers of that corps, with their carbines, and to the Blue-jackets, with rifle and cutlass, under Lord Charles Beresford, was entrusted the duty of defending the rear and left angle of the formation. Near the latter Lord Charles had placed his Gardner gun, which was soon brought to bear upon the enemy, who pressed against the corner in vast numbers, waving gaudy banners and brandishing their glittering spears.

The firing was fierce and almost general now, and continued for several hours, during which, over all hung a dense cloud of smoke and fine sand-dust, irritating to the nostrils and eyes, and parching to the mouth.

The fire of the Gardner was accurate and efficacious, scattering the Arabs like chaff whenever it was poured upon them; so they shifted their position and menaced our rear, but with no better result to themselves.

"Our three screw-guns," wrote a correspondent, "were on the front right corner of the square, whence they threw several rounds of shrapnell at the Arabs near the river, checking their haste to show their battle array along the sky-line. There were fewer flags than at Abu Klea, but evidently there were many more of the enemy. My estimate is, that at least 20,000 of them now surrounded us."

About 8 a.m. General Stewart was hit in the side by a bullet, and fell bleed-

ing profusely. This circumstance was kept secret for a time, and he was borne as quietly as possible to the centre of the square, where a hospital had been formed by building saddles and boxes to the height of four feet. The enclosure, forty feet square, was soon filled with wounded men, some severely, others seeking a mere temporary dressing, after obtaining which they rejoined the ranks.

Faster and faster whizzed the bullets now, and the thudding of the lead against various substances was incessant.

"Going to the hospital to visit Sir Herbert," says the correspondent before quoted, "I saw poor St. Leger Herbert weeping by the side of his friend the General whilst he tended him. A few minutes later Herbert himself, who was the correspondent of the *Morning Post*, was shot through the throat and instantly killed, within thirty feet of the General. The stretcher-bearers were going backward and forward all the time carrying wounded and dead men. Every hour the fire seemed to grow worse, and we appeared helpless to check it."

The command of the column now devolved upon Sir Charles Wilson, who held a brief council of war, at which Colonels Boscawen, Barrow, Lord Charles Beresford, and others were present, and it was resolved to wait until 2 p.m. the expected attack upon the position, and if it was not delivered by that time to march out with a square of about 1,200 men and fight a passage to the Nile.

As the position was threatened by a direct front attack, the necessity of having advanced works now occurred to the minds of the leaders, and by forty brave fellows, who volunteered for the task, and ran out with saddles, boxes, and their spades, two mounds on the right front were quickly taken possession of.

In rear of this improvised shelter the outlying skirmishers were quickly safe, and could prevent any force from creeping near the square under cover of the high ground. Fortunately not a man was lost in taking these mounds, the work on which was subsequently strengthened by digging the shallow trench deeper behind the barrier, and surmounting it by mimosa scrub, cut down by the bill-hook.

The time wore on, and it became more and more apparent that the Arabs were more and more determined to keep us from the river by maintaining a heavy rifle fire (luckily they were without cannon); and there were but two modes of dislodging them from their position. One of these was to advance in square or to push forward by degrees, building zeribas a mile or less apart, which would mean two days of maddening thirst before the troops could reach the coveted water.

The position was one of great gravity, for even if the Nile were reached it seemed as if the column would become a burden on the plans of Lord Wolseley (then far away at Korti), and that, like Gordon in Khartoum, it might be beleaguered and ultimately cut off.

It was during these anxious moments

that poor Mr. Cameron, the brilliant correspondent of the *Standard*, was killed. Reclining behind his camel, he was in the act of having lunch when a bullet entered his back and slew him instantly. Half an hour later his compatriot of the *Daily Telegraph* received an ugly blow from a half-spent bullet in the throat, but was still able to carry on his duties.

When two o'clock came an order was issued for the men who were to form the fighting square to fall in on the more sheltered piece of ground on their left; and in silence, and with an expression of gravity and responsibility seldom seen on the faces of our troops, each officer and soldier took his place, lying down to escape the storm of lead that swept over them, and now it was the actual battle of Abu Kru began in grim earnest.

The new square was formed thus:—

On the front (left to right) Marines and Guards. On the right face (front to rear) Guards and Heavies. Left face (front to rear) Mounted Infantry. Rear face (left to right) Mounted Infantry, Sussex, and in the angle a party of the Heavies. The Guards were commanded by Colonel Wilson, Colonel Boscawen acting as executive officer; the Heavies by Colonel Talbot; the Mounted Infantry by Major Barrow; and the Sussex Regiment by Major Sunderland.

To Captain Verner was assigned the duty of guiding the square to the Nile, and the direction he chose was south-west, to get away as much as possible from the high ground on which the



THE "SQUARE" AT THE BATTLE OF ABU KIRU.

enemy were massed. The zeriba and the wounded were left in charge of Colonel Barrow and Lord Charles Beresford, who had under their command about 120 Hussars, the sailors, and a few details, in addition to Captain Norton's three screw-guns of the Southern Division of the Royal Artillery.

towards the great historical river. "For them, as each man knew, there was no retreat—it was victory or death, and they resolved to sell their lives dearly. The bull-dog spirit of their country was thoroughly roused in them, and the period of action brought with it a briskness of spirit wonderfully dif-



MR. J. A. CAMERON, CORRESPONDENT OF THE "STANDARD."

(From a Photograph by the London Stereoscopic Company.)

The bugles sounded the advance, and the instant the men forming the square started to their feet and began to march, a fire was poured upon them from more than a thousand rifles. While their comrades in the zeriba and in the tiny detached work did all in their power to reply to the Arab fire, and the screw-guns were brought into action, the new square, with sixty camels in the centre, carrying litters, medicines, and ammunition, marched steadily on

ferent from the grave quietness which pervaded them while they lay being peppered in the zeriba; and there was about all a subdued excitement of eagerness to retaliate upon the Arab foe. They knew the leash had been slipped, and were anxious to quickly close and try issues with their enemy. Held well in check, however, by the officers, the square moved deliberately, selecting its ground with the greatest care, halting and firing by volleys in

companies whenever the enemy appeared within 700 yards of their lines."

Swerving to the right, and then to the left, the square drove the Arab skirmishers back upon their main body; but unlike the Arab swordsmen, the Kordofan riflemen of the Mahdi kept warily beyond reach of the bayonet, though they were not the less troublesome on that account.

In the zeriba (by those who looked back) Colonel Barrow was seen standing fearlessly upon a pile of saddles, directing the fire of his men, so as to prevent the Arabs on the flank uniting their strength to crush the square.

From Norton's screw-guns scores of well-directed and well-timed shrapnell shell went plumping into the masses of the enemy, spreading mutilation, death, and havoc, thus arresting a manifest intention of a force (fully 5,000 strong) upon the right to join in a headlong charge on the square. As his shells crashed and burst, the soldiers in the square and zeriba cheered him and his subaltern, Lieutenant Du Boulay.

Save those cheers, there was no other noise in the square, and not the slightest tumult; for a quiet resolve, with all the splendour of perfect discipline, was shown, and not a shot or chance was thrown away. It was (a correspondent wrote) the combat of a handful of skilled and heroic men against a horde of untrained savages; the few going forth undaunted to engage thousands, and open a way for themselves and others to the river.

Meanwhile, again and again the dense masses of furious Arabs, waving

their flashing weapons, and, as in previous conflicts, wildly thundering on their tomtoms, gathered to rush upon and roll up the square.

As they came on, the latter halted, and the front rank knelt, the rear firing over it, thus double volleys were poured without cessation into the yelling masses, causing them to reel, waver, tumble backward over their own killed and wounded, and then to recoil away beyond the crests of the swelling upland. Fighting every inch of the way, the square had now, within an hour, proceeded about a mile from the zeriba; and out of the many rushes made, no Arab had as yet got nearer the bayonets than 200 yards.

Ever and anon the clear voice of Colonel Boscawen was heard:—

"Halt!—fire a volley at 500 yards. Ready!" and the fire and smoke belched forth.

The direction of the square now led it into tall grass in a long depression of the ground full of Arab sharpshooters, who were promptly killed off or ferreted out; and as another charge was menaced, the square took ground to the right, still keeping its face zoned by fire while leaving the grass cover in the rear.

When it had attained the distance of two miles from the zeriba, the enemy delivered their grand and final charge.

Full in the face of the square the dark human tide swept over the ridge, overlapping and outflanking the small face of the British troops, which was only 600 yards in length. The clatter of the breechloaders was now heard on

three sides of the square as a rushing and seething mass of more than 10,000 Arabs, many on horseback, came yelling on with all their deadly weapons brandished. "The roar of the Martini-Henrys became continuous, and the men left behind in the zeriba and outwork, seeing that this was the critical moment, exerted themselves to scatter the Arab onrush. For fully five minutes the battle raged furiously, till the square was enveloped in a rolling cloud of smoke; then our fire slackened, for the Arabs had beaten a retreat, worsted, utterly broken up by the deadly rifle-blaze. Not a man of them succeeded in getting nearer than twenty-five yards to the square, and the majority of their foremost men in the charge perished at seventy-five or a hundred yards away. It was a complete victory of disciplined and civilised arms, and a complete rout of the enemy, many of whom now made off to Khartoum and Berber."

By this time, the desert in which the square fought, bounded by low hills, seemed the Valley of the Shadow of Death, for the column was carrying with it many helpless wounded, who were struck again and again in their stretchers and cacolets. Bearing the latter, in half an hour after the firing had ceased, the column marched down to the river, which was reached at 5 p.m.

There they bivouacked in a hollow, and once more all had as much water to drink, and for tea, as they wished. The little force left in the rear under Lord Charles and Major Gem was not

molested; and so terrible was the lesson we had taught the Arabs that none of the troops were fired on in the night. Even the eternal tom-toming was no longer heard.

In a portion of the small and straggling village of Abu Kru the wounded were left under a strong guard early next morning, when the column prepared to return to the zeriba. Turning aside towards Metemneh, in which a force of the Mahdi's was shut up, and from whence they fired from the walls of the houses, the column made a *détour*, and passing through Gubat before 8 a.m., gave it to the flames by igniting the roofs of the mud houses or huts.

The natives there seemed to live in comfort; their fields were richly cultivated, and the crops of beans, dhurra, and cotton, were heavy and flourishing, and from their solidly-built dwellings the troops supplied themselves with copper utensils and crockery of British manufacture.

By eight o'clock the column reached the zeriba, where all the men prepared to leave for the Nile. At mid-day the dead were interred in two long trenches—four in one and twelve in another—the victims of the strife at Abu Kru. The four were two officers and St. Leger Herbert and Cameron the correspondents. "A sad scene it was," wrote their *confrère* of the *Daily Telegraph*, "and Prior, who knew Cameron best and longest, was deeply moved by his friend's death."

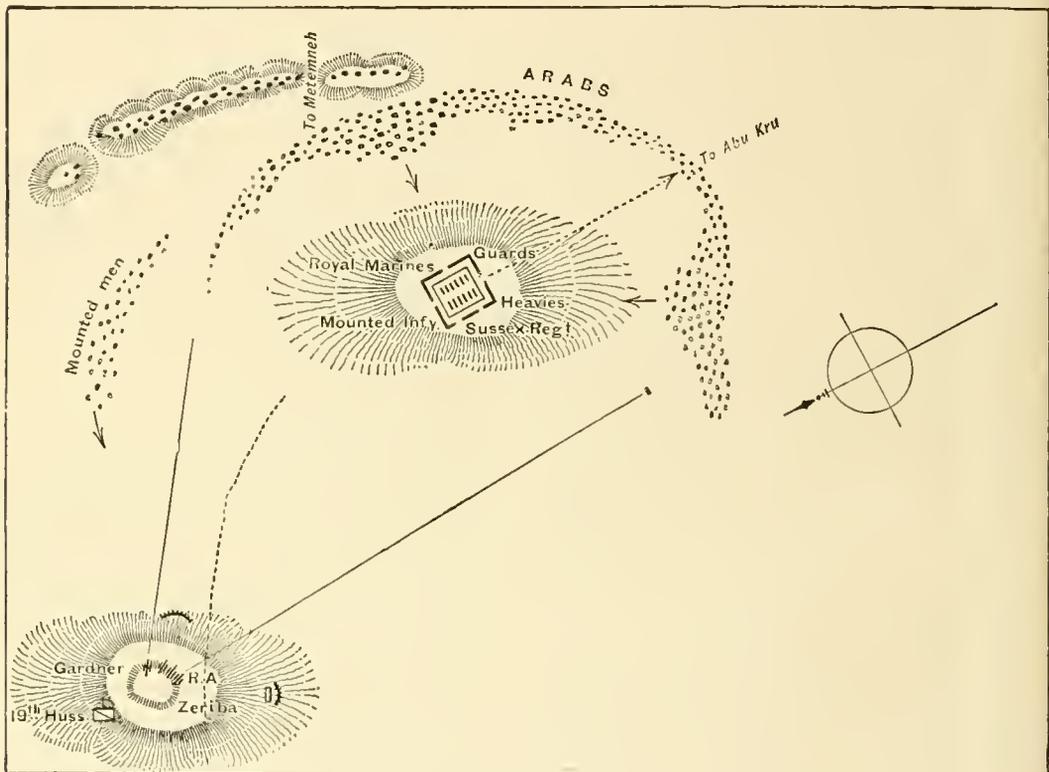
Lord Charles Beresford read impressively the burial service, and then the

dead were consigned to their mother earth, in that desert spot, which is now their last resting-place.

An hour after saw the whole force, in column of regiments, marching back towards the Nile, conveying a large quantity of stores, and leaving more

external walls of which were loopholed for defence, and then the troops settled for the night, lying in the village street with blankets and overcoats, there being only about twenty small edifices in the place.

Next morning, January 21st, another



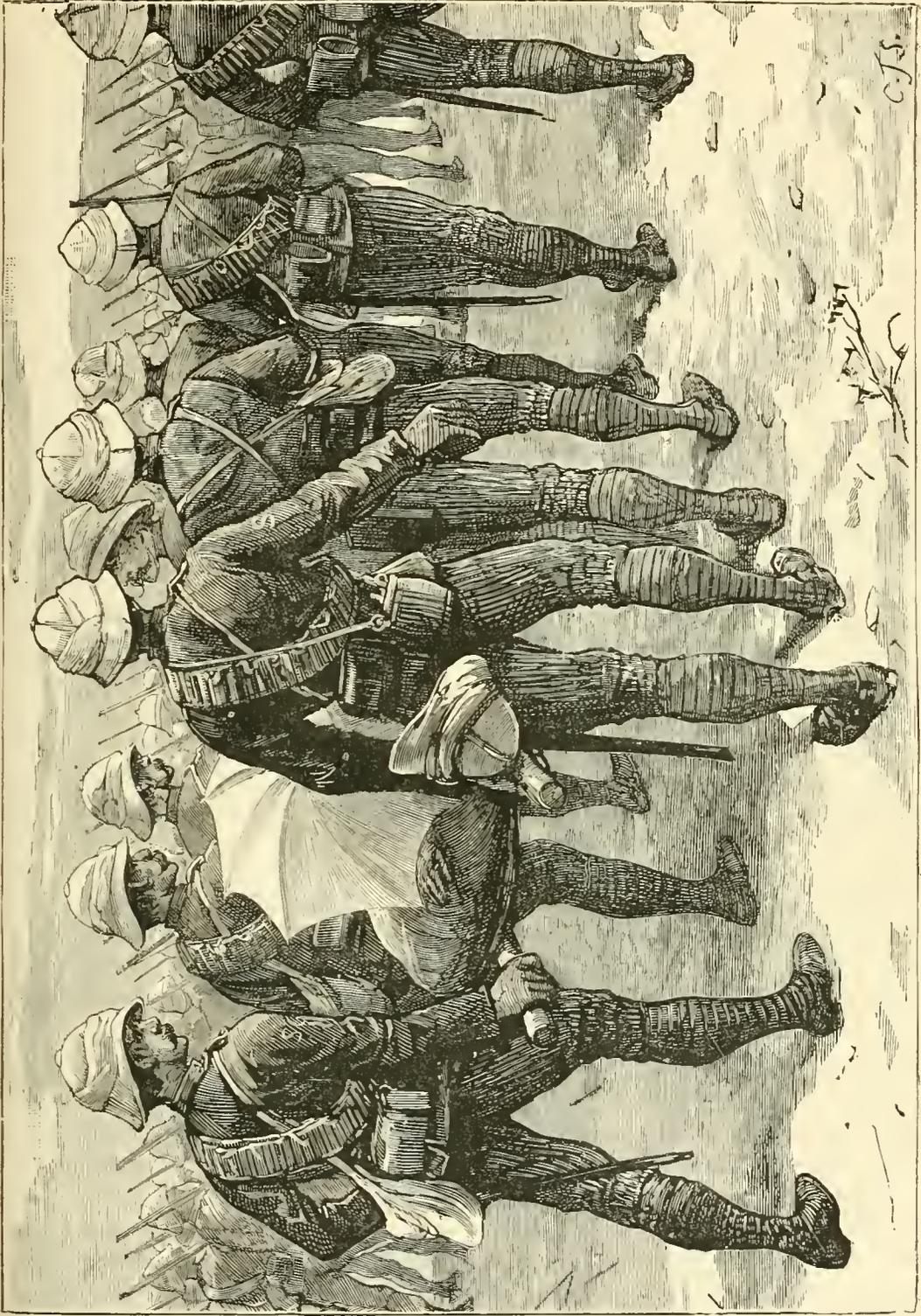
PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF ABU KRU (JANUARY 19, 1885).

behind under a guard of fifty men—a solitary and onerous duty. There were fifty-five wounded men borne in hand-stretchers, for the camels had been killed or lost in hundreds; and, luckily, the enemy did not attack the force, which reached Abu Kru, by the river-side, about nightfall.

Then the wounded were placed with the rest, under cover in the huts, the

square, 1,000 strong, marched out to reconnoitre Metemneh, which, according to native reports, was garrisoned by some of the Mahdi's best-trained soldiers, under an Emir of high military reputation, to whom Sir Charles Wilson made an offer of terms, through a prisoner captured at Abu Klea.

No answer was vouchsafed by the haughty Emir—the only one of his



CARRYING THE WOUNDED GENERAL (SUR H. STEWART) TO THE NILE.

rank who survived recent conflicts. Hence arose the need for a reconnaissance. The Emir allowed the column to get within 100 yards of the town, when he opened fire from a gun placed in battery at the west end of it. Here the Nile runs east and west. The square marched along some low ground, passing the end of Metemneh, which was a thickly-settled cluster of mud houses three miles in length.

Streams of natives on foot, or mounted on donkeys, had been seen all the morning pouring off towards Berber, so the troops were rather surprised to find themselves met by a hot rifle-fire, with solid shot from a Krupp gun.

The fire of the latter passed over the square harmlessly, but several men were hit by bullets—among others, Major Poë, of the Marines—so the square fell back and halted westward of Metemneh.

About 10 a.m. four of General Gordon's steamers, with the Egyptian flag flying, were seen coming down the Nile. Stopping abreast of Abu Kru, they landed four brass field-pieces and 250 Bashi-Bazouks and Egyptians to assist us. These all appeared to be active and hardy fellows, delighted to see our troops, and full of ardour for battle.

With the assistance of their guns, the column pounded Metemneh for more than an hour, but made little impression there beyond punching a few holes in the dense mud walls, so the attack was eventually relinquished, and the troops returned to their camp, which was 3,000 yards distant.

The Egyptian officers commanding the steamers informed ours that they had left Khartoum about a month ago, having since then been stationed at an island a short distance above Metemneh to await the arrival of the Relieving column, and to assist in the transmission of messages to and from Gordon. They said he was well, but that his soldiers despaired of succour now. Thus the sooner that some European went up and showed himself the better, to reassure the people of Khartoum.

Noussa Pasha, the officer commanding, and all the other officers, wore the ordinary Egyptian military uniform; but their men were in tatters that had never been uniform of any kind. All, however, had serviceable rifles and bayonets, with waist- and shoulder-belts full of cartridges; but the steamers were a curious sight.

"Four of them," wrote a correspondent, "were about the size of large river steamers, and the fifth was even smaller than a Thames penny boat. The hulls of all four were of iron. Their sides and the bridge between the paddle-boxes were boarded up like a London bill hoarding. In place of thin pine boards, however, there were heavy sintwood timbers, two or three inches thick, as impervious to rifle-bullets as steel plates. In the forward part of each vessel a raised wooden fort had been built, the inside plated with old boiler-iron. Projecting through a port-hole, closed against rifle-bullets by an iron plate when necessary, was a short brass rifled gun of four inches'

bore, such as is used in the Egyptian army. On the main deck another gun was placed. Gordon must have lavished hours and days of hard labour to get together the material for making these four steamers into iron- or wooden-clads, so strong that they could safely run the gauntlet of the rebel cannon and rifle-fire."

Noussa Pasha stated that this gallant and indefatigable officer had retained but three steamers at Khartoum, two of which were too large to descend the Sixth Cataract with safety.

On the 22nd of January the whole force, with the exception of two companies of the Guards, was moved down to the bank of the Nile, where a zeriba was begun, with strong earthworks to protect it. There the wounded were removed, as the place of greatest safety, Sir Herbert Stewart being put on board the smaller steamer. For several nights now the defiant tom-toming was resumed in Metemneh by the Arabs, who relieved the monotony of the day-time by firing at our pickets; but their fire was returned with interest.

The steamers traversed the river, shelling both Shendy and Metemneh, and sending futile messages to the people to submit. As provisions and other stores were now getting scarce, Sir Charles Wilson resolved to let Lord Wolseley know the state of affairs. Thus a convoy of camels, to bring up what was necessary, was sent out after darkness fell on the 23rd of January, with an escort of 300 men, composed of Guards, Heavies, and Mounted In-

fantry, under the command of Colonel Talbot.

Next day, Saturday, the 24th, Sir Charles Wilson took two of the steamers, and with Captain Trafford and twenty men of the Royal Sussex Regiment started for Khartoum to open direct communication with General Gordon. Several newspaper correspondents asked permission to go, but all were refused by direct orders from Lord Wolseley.

"Sir C. Wilson," wrote the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, "has handed over the command to Lieut.-Colonel the Hon. E. E. T. Boscawen, of the Coldstream Guards, so that we are for the moment under the lead of an officer who, when the expedition started, was only a regimental captain. He is an excellent and most capable man, and we have every confidence he will do well what is required of him. Still, we have no news from our base or from home, and the men are grumbling loudly at Lord Wolseley's most prolonged absence. The position is, beyond doubt, critical."

The expedition of Sir Charles Wilson we shall detail in its place after a brief glance elsewhere.

The total number of casualties in these affairs, between the 17th and 23rd of January, were, of all ranks, 26 killed, including Messrs. Cameron and Herbert, and 105 wounded.

Viseount St. Vincent, who died of his wounds, had served in the Zulu War and in MacGregor's expedition against the Warrees in Southern Afghanistan, and was A.D.C. to Drury Lowe at Tel-el-Kebir.

The untimely death of Mr. Cameron was regretted in all the public prints. He was a native of Inverness, where he left a widowed mother, and where he had been a bank clerk before he began his brilliant journalistic career

bluster, mindful of the interests of his paper without meanly trying to over-reach others, sagacious without cunning. His stern face, deep voice, and vigorous bearing, made him distinguished among his fellow correspond-



REFUGEES FROM THE MAHDI'S ARMY BROUGHT BY THE KASHIF OF MERAWI INTO THE FORT AT ABU DOM.

in India. Thus wrote one of his friends and *confères* in the *Standard* :—

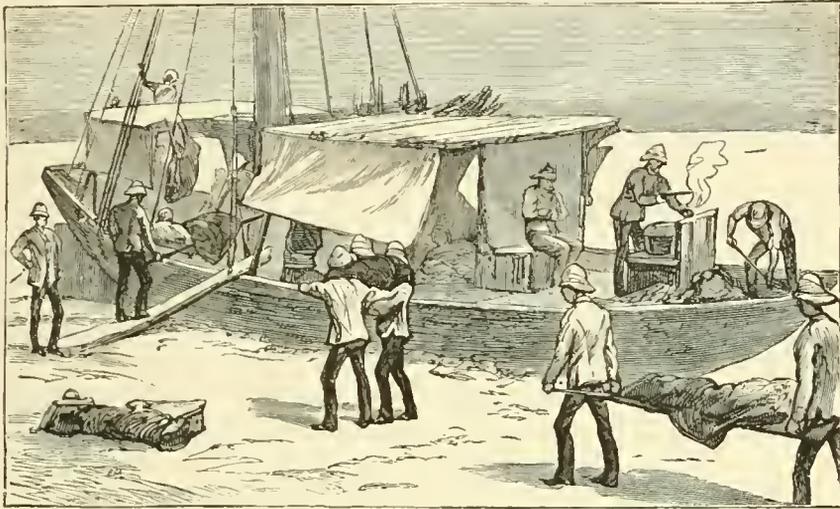
“As one who was his companion both in Afghanistan and Egypt I deplore his early death, not only as that of a good friend lost all too soon, but as of a man destined, in my opinion, to place the position of the War Correspondent upon a footing which it has never yet had. For in camp he was independent in demeanour without any

ents, while his fearless honesty, his frank confession of others' successes, his hatred of swagger and of under-handedness, gained him the respect of all competitors. In times of war the 'special,' let him be never so well recommended individually to the chiefs in command, never so popular personally, finds that he has to assert himself, and often with unmistakable emphasis, if he wishes to see the interests of his

paper properly respected and served; and Cameron was never backward in putting his foot down if occasion required. But the judgment which characterised him made him respected everywhere, and if at any special juncture a selection of Press men had to be made, he was certain to be among the chosen few, while the fact that, as a

camp—industrious in duty, cheery at mess, and always ready for a bit of extra work with a good comrade.”

Between the 24th of January, when Sir Charles Wilson departed on his perilous expedition, and the 1st of February, the days were passed at Abu Kru in the constant interchange of shot between our outposts and the garrison in Me-



TRANSIPPING THE WOUNDED AT DONGOLA FROM THE STEAMER TO A NUGGAR.

rule, he stood upon his rights on points affecting the general welfare rather than his own individual advantage, constituted him after a fashion a champion of the rest. I have myself, at Cameron's request, gone with him to a general or a 'ensor' to ask a favour for the Press in common; and once, I remember, he rode out from Ismailia after a reconnaissance party which Methuen was with, to get an order about hastening the telegraphic service, for want of which all the correspondents were at a standstill. Such was Cameron in

temueh, varied by the tom-toming at night. The small steamer acted as a ferry-boat, and took parties of Egyptians to the island opposite Abu Kru, to cut down the green dhurra and beans for forage, thus clearing the front.

On the mainland a similar course was pursued, near the zeriba; but as the enemy's sharpshooters came within 1,500 yards of our lines the foraging parties could not go out very far. One steamer, which Lord Charles Beresford had taken charge of, went daily up and down the Nile, shelling the rebels and

landing small skirmishing parties. One of these brought off a score of cattle, for fresh meat provisions.

The dharra was brought in and ground by Gordon's soldiers, to add to the bread rations, one-third being mixed with the flour and baked daily.

On the 27th of January there was great rejoicing in Metemneh, about what none in the zeriba could know; but the rifle-firing and tom-toming were incessant, and when evening fell brilliant bombs were exploded. At mid-day, on the 31st of January, the welcome convoy was sighted. The Metemneh garrison made an attempt to intercept it; but the whole column got under arms, and Colonel Talbot brought it into camp without the loss of a man.

He had marched to Gakdul and back, a distance of 160 miles, and waited there two days. Lord Cochrane (son

of the Earl of Dundonald) had performed the part of guide. This convoy brought in not only a supply of food, but the guns of the 1st Battery, 1st Brigade of the Royal Artillery, under Major Hunter, and sixty men of the Naval Brigade, under Lieutenant Poë, R.N. This was a joyous arrival for the camp; but on the morning of Sunday, February 1st, Stuart-Wortley, who came down in a small boat, brought the dreadful news of the fall of Khartoum, and the column now knew the cause of the mysterious rejoicing they had heard in Metemneh.

On the date given the works of the zeriba at Abu Kru were completed, and the Engineer officers were confident that they might be held against any force the Mahdi could bring on for at least twenty or thirty days, the time for which this isolated portion of our troops was provisioned.



TOMB OF A SHEIKH.

## CHAPTER XI.

## ON THE NILE.

Progress of the Boats—A Chaplain's Experience—Waiting on the Nile—River Scenery—Our Fort on the Nile—Lord Charles Beresford's Raids with one of Gordon's Steamers—The Camp Life at Abu Kru—Life under the Mahdi.

THE last boat of the expedition, with its freight of soldiers, arrived on the 31st January, 1885, at Korti, 170 miles from Metemneh, where the head-quarters seemed to linger somewhat passively during this most momentous crisis.

This arrival justified, but by the narrowest margin, the anticipations of those who maintained that the whole of the troops destined for the relief of Gordon would be assembled there by the end of January.

The remainder of the Royal Irish had now orders to march across the desert to Metemneh, taking with them a large convoy of provisions and stores on hired camels.

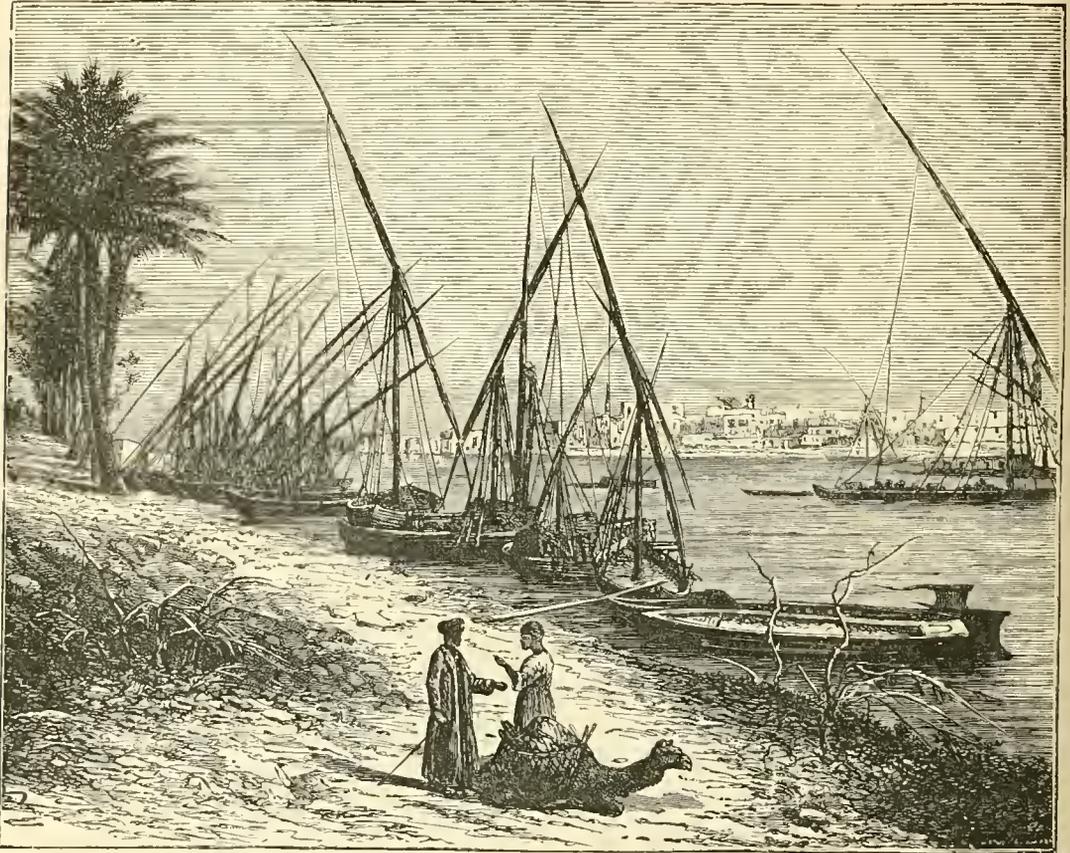
At this time the Hassaniyeh tribe, who occupy all the country to the south of Korti, and had hitherto held aloof, doubtless waiting the issue of events, finding their course decided by recent battles, began to make overtures of friendship. This was of the first importance, as it secured the troops in ample supplies of cattle and camels for transport purposes.

The Rev. Edward Morgan, long a popular Catholic chaplain at Aldershot, and who had now come up the river with the Royal Irish, gave his experiences in a letter, from which we may make some extracts. It is dated from Abu Fatmeh on the 25th of January.

“We have taken thirty-one days to come from Wady Halfa here, about 200 miles, an average of seven or eight miles a day. We were hard at work, from sunrise to sunset, during those eight miles. Some days I never had an oar out of my hand. Others, we were hauling our boats with a rope over the rapids. Our wretched boats were constantly sticking on rocks and sand-banks, and the only way to get them off was to get into the water and lift them. This last cataract (Abu Fatmeh) was an awful one—four miles long. It took three hours to pull through, and that night my joints ached to such an extent that I could not get to sleep for a long time. Never shall I forget that awful pull. It was nearly twelve o'clock, and the sun scorched our backs. We had been rowing hard all the morning, and I had eaten nothing since six, except some biscuit with my coffee. The men were better off, as they could always put away a lump of preserved meat for their breakfast, but I had turned against it. Rapid after rapid was got through, until we reached the worst one of all, about a quarter of a mile long. There the main stream forced itself between two large masses of rock, about a hundred feet apart, from which point the water shot down with tre-

mendous speed. This rapid was full of rocks, some just above the water and some just below; but the latter were easily discovered by the furious way the stream boiled over them. Then there were ugly whirlpools, about which

with perspiration, their teeth set hard, and their breasts panting with the tremendous exertion; but for a time they seemed to make no progress, and might as well have pulled against a rock as against that barrier of water.



THE BANKS OF THE NILE.

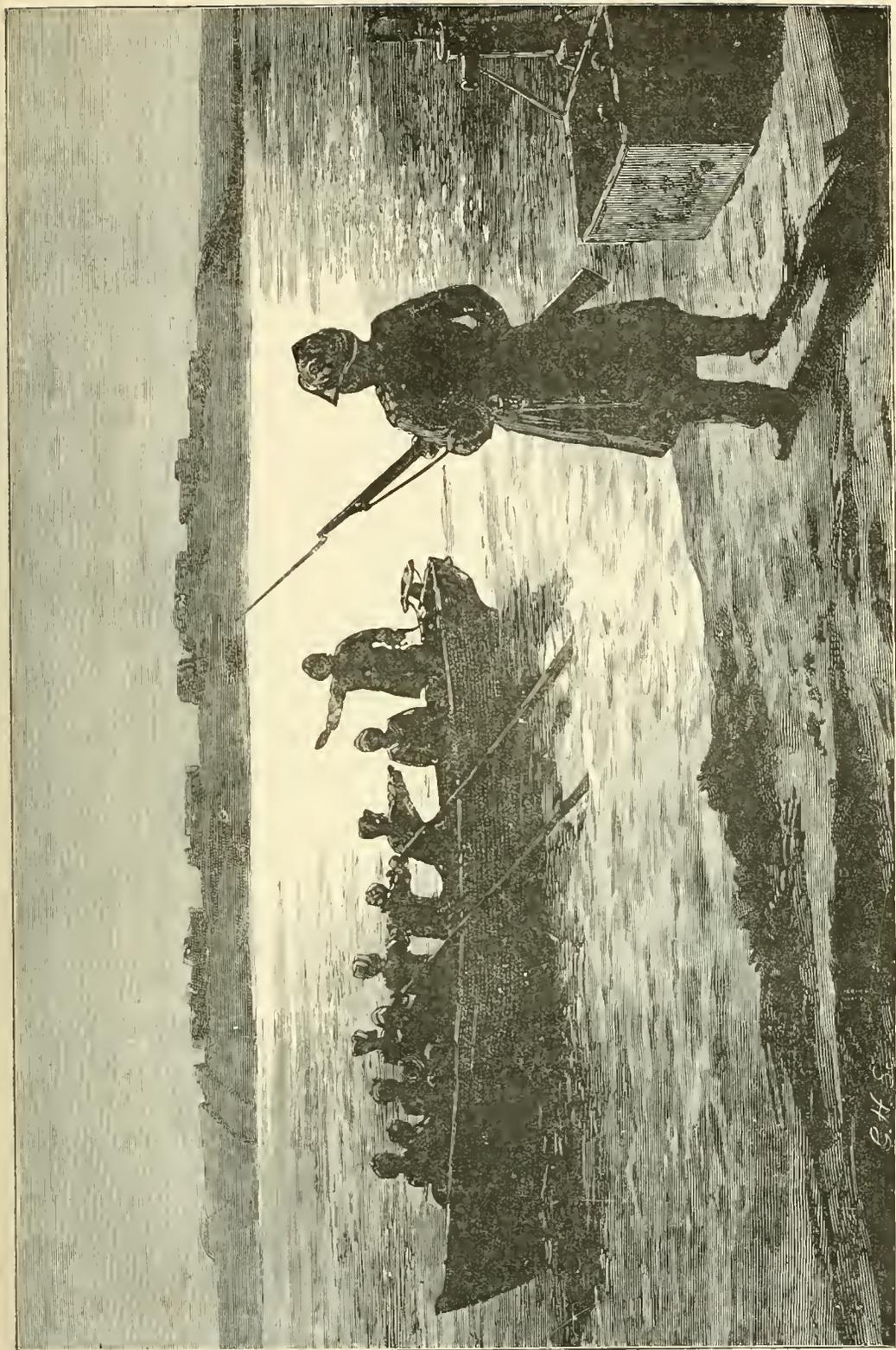
one thing was certain, that if once you got sucked in you would never get out again."

"A cry was now given of 'Pull for your lives, or you'll be down the rapid!'

"Every man had thrown off his helmet, and was bareheaded under the blazing sun. They were streaming

A breeze that came suddenly now caught the sails and carried the boats up.

"That afternoon," he continued, "we reached Abu Fatmeh, the head of the rapid. The next day Father Brindle came in with the H Company of the 18th (Royal Irish). He had a rest here, and a meal, which he greatly



LIEUT. STUART-WORTLEY BRINGING THE NEWS OF THE FALL OF KHAFTOUM TO THE CAMP NEAR METEMNEH.

needed. He had taken his turn with the men at the oar, and put his shoulder to the rope with the best, an occupation hardly in keeping with his white hair and grey beard; but if ever there was a man with a true soldier's spirit it is Father Brindle!"

One day the boat of the latter, with men of the Royal Irish, heard loud cries astern, at a nasty part of the Nile, which was a labyrinth of rocks, sand banks, and swift currents, and on looking back a boat of the Gordon Highlanders was seen, caught by a powerful eddy and swept down on a sunken rock. She had sprung a leak, as the Highlanders were seen throwing out the water in buckets. In going to their assistance the boat of the Royal Irish also grounded on a rock, but got off. A rope was thrown to the Gordons, ten of whom were taken into the Irish boat, which was already too heavily laden for a whaler, so Father Morgan gave the order, "overboard with the boxes and bags!" and in a few minutes he adds, "a hundred days' provisions were floating merrily down the Nile; but we took the crew on board, with their kit-bags and rifles, and made for the shore, which we reached with some trouble. It would take a volume to describe the dangers and the difficulties of this Nile Expedition. It has been very hard on the men, since their soldier training has been of no use to them in the work they have had to do. I suppose very few of them ever had an oar in their hands before. Each company had about ten boats. Of these, three were

in charge of officers; the other seven were in the hands of non-commissioned officers and men, who generally knew as much about the management of boats as they did about astronomy."

These boats were sometimes parted from the regiment for days, the delay being caused by their running on rocks, so that they had to be unloaded and repaired. The people at home believed that every boat was in charge of an experienced Canadian, but this was not the case.

"Most of the companies of the 18th Regiment had two Canadians; ours had three," continues the writer already quoted. "Again, I say, it is nothing short of a miracle that so many of us have reached here in safety. The conduct of the officers, I must say, has been splendid — always the first to shoulder a rope or take a double turn at the oar. Now up to their knees in mud, and now up to their chins in water. Most of them have arrived here in rags and tatters, with their festered hands swathed up in such dirty linen that no right-minded policeman would hesitate to turn them off well-conducted premises. They have suffered a good deal, too, in many matters."

On the Nile, the scenery above Korosko, a place mentioned frequently in despatches at this time, though exhibiting long stretches of sterile country, becomes immeasurably more rugged, varied, and picturesque than lower down, where the monotonous repetition of the same foliage wearied the eye.

Korosko is a Nubian village situated at that point of the Nile where the

river bends westward to Derr. It is the place where the great caravan route, leading directly to Berber, departs, thus cutting off the whole western bend of the Nile.

At one point the river widens out into a sheet of sunlighted water, with a little wooded isle, beyond a sharp headland; on the opposite bank is a grove of feathery palms, and in the distance, northward, rise undulations of yellow desert sand, broken by many conical hills, that are ruddy in sunlight, purple in shadow, and black against the steel-blue sky of night.

The cogwheels of the Sakeyah are heard on the river, pouring an endless stream of fertilising water into the irrigation channels, and round it the Nubian women gather to gossip, as English rustics do round a village well.

As a steamer passed, crowded with redcoats, the dusky natives would troop to the edge of the river, to watch with curious eyes a spectacle so novel, the women with their flowing blue robes thrown modestly across the lower part of the face. Crowds of sable boys and girls followed the course of these steamers, shouting for *backsheesh*, and the soldiers, having nothing else to give, tossed biscuits to them.

Here and there the attention of the soldiers would be excited by huge water-lizards, two or three feet long, or those greater Nile reptiles, the crocodiles, basking in the ooze and sunshine.

In some places acacias of many varieties fringed the banks, some bearing long catkins, some bright with pink

blossoms, and others shedding golden showers upon the stream. Over many of these trailed luxuriant creepers, and about others, especially near Abu Simbel, the purple petunia clustered.

The proceedings of the column under the command of Colonel Boscawen, after Sir Charles Wilson left it on the 23rd of January, were somewhat important.

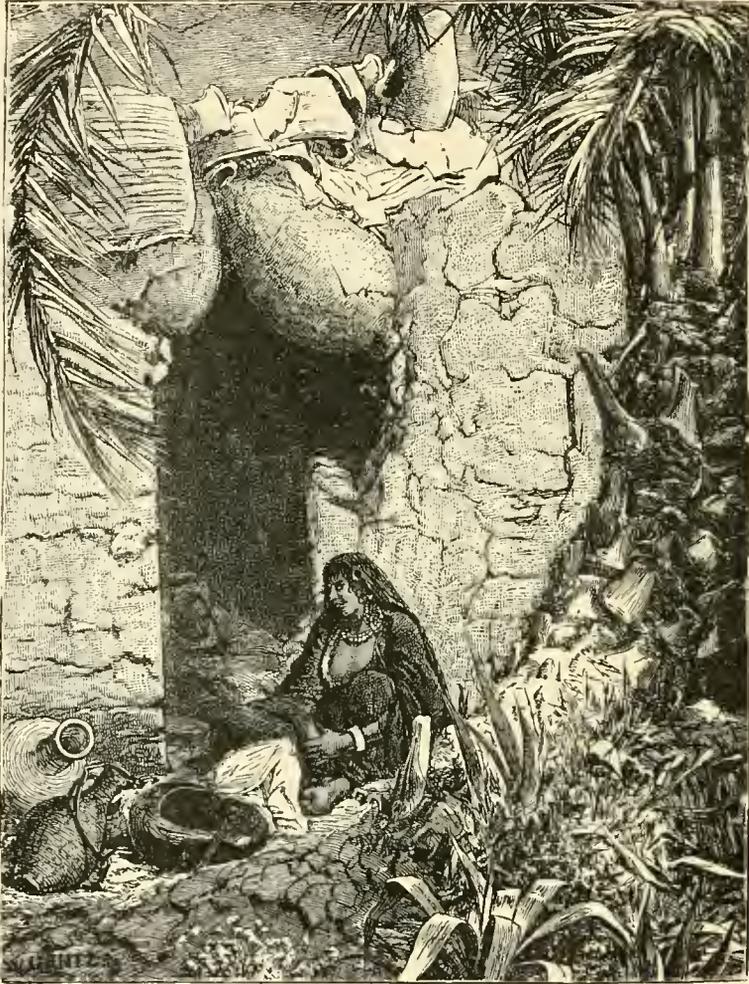
Every morning Lord Charles Beresford, with shot and shell, reminded the inhabitants that as they were more numerous than the men of the Mahdi they had only themselves to blame for any danger or discomfort they might endure, and showed those who prevented the surrender of Metemneh that they could not hold out with perfect impunity while waiting for reinforcements for one side or other.

Not much damage, however, was done by his fire. A few of the grass roofs were set in flames; a few mud huts were demolished, and one of the loopholed houses which served as a fort on the outer face of the town. The Arabs fired every morning, more or less, on the vedettes of the 19th Hussars, who responded with their carbines, and now and then the Emir sent forth a party to reconnoitre; but his daily business was to assemble the people on the maidan, an open space, to have them harangued by a couple of moollahs on the duty of exterminating the infidels.

About midnight the tom-toms were heard all over the place, beaten either under the idea that the sound scared evil spirits or that by playing their

only national instrument they might impress us that they were on the *qui vive*, and under arms all night; but they were clearly waiting for some-

about forty adobe houses, with walls about two feet thick. These were razed to the ground, all save four, which had been loopholed and con-



HUT OF FELLAH WITH ROOF OF POTS.

thing to turn up—succour from Khar-toum, Berber, or elsewhere.

The column, now reduced to not much more than 800 fighting men, was in a position which, humanly speaking, was impregnable to an assault. Half a mile from the river stood a village of

nected by a thick loopholed wall, formed from the blocks of the other houses.

The front of this post, which was held by 180 men of the Guards' Camel Corps and one gun of the Camel Battery, was covered by rifle pits, while the pickets at night had little shelter-

trenches in excellent positions on the gravel hills, which ran north and west. The fort, as it was called, had a complete front and flank fire over at least a range of half a mile, and it was supposed that 200 good men, such as our Household Infantry, could hold it against perhaps 5,000 Arabs.

On the south-east lay the river, on

the day-time, for sanitary reasons, they encamped outside. The ditch was shallower on the flanks than in front; but the western end of this was strengthened by a deep ditch, which used to feed a water-wheel. In addition to all this, the eastern flank, which was towards hostile Metemneh, was protected at night by two of Gordon's steamers,



ON THE NILE.

the sloping bank of which was the hospital, commanded, or protected, by a fire from a regular fortification, which was most skilfully constructed by Major Arthur Dorward, R.E. It had a ditch twenty feet in depth, a broad parapet ten feet in height, an abattis of thorny acacia bushes, with wire entanglements covering the front and flanks. The face of this fortification, which had an excellent profile, afforded room for 500 men, though less than that number might defend it successfully. At night the men slept in the trenches; but in

which were moored in such a position that their rifled brass guns could sweep the bank for any distance required, while two 7-pounder camel screw-guns were always ready for action in the work.

An island opposite, about 600 yards distant, was held by 100 of Gordon's Bashi-Bazouks, who cleared off all its standing crops for forage, and ground the dhurra for flour. Meanwhile one of the steamers daily made excursions up and down the Nile, breaking up and bringing in the woodwork of the water-

wheels, each of which supplied nearly a ton of good fuel; but as the consumption was great, each day the troops had to go farther afield to procure it. There were a number of towns and villages on both sides of the river, which had hitherto been unmolested, but which it was evident we should soon have to pillage for wood and other supplies. It was suggested that it would be a good plan to drive their inhabitants into Metemneh, where the supplies were becoming scarce, but where Lord Wolseley's proclamation, that we were not making war on the people (duly sent in under a flag of truce), had no effect whatever.

It was apparent that the people were afraid to be friendly with us, as they were aware that when the British troops retired they would be left to the tender mercies of the Mahdi. These intentions were as well known in the Nile Valley as in London, and hence more than half the difficulties in the way of obtaining supplies, even for money, in the outlying country.

One day Lord Charles Beresford took one of Gordon's steamers up the river, and brought back a dozen of steers, a welcome addition to the commissariat stores. "The same afternoon," says a correspondent, "there was a great to-do in Metemneh. Remington rifles were let off by the dozen, and one bullet travelled so far that it tumbled over, inert, at my feet, as I stood chatting with some Hussar officers, and the enemy even spent some charges of powder for their smooth-bore guns. Of course speculation was at once afoot,

and the quidnuncs would have it that some great man had arrived, that the enemy had received a reinforcement, or that one of our convoys had been captured. But some people, who have campaigned before, recognised blank cartridge in the guns, and some who had campaigned in the East before, conceived that a Mussulman festival was being celebrated. They were scoffed at by those who were more devoid of experience than conceit; but they turned out, on reference, to be right, and at nightfall we heard that the firing was to do honour to the memory of Hassan, the grandson of Mahomet, and had nothing to do with convoys from Khartoum."

All was quiet at Abu Kru on the 29th of January, save a shell or two sent into Metemneh, and the following day was somewhat uneventful, except that the indefatigable Lord Charles Beresford, though suffering from a great abscess, steamed before sunrise down to Shendy, which he found deserted by the entire population. He then put the steamer up stream, and made a raid upon a water-wheel and some bullocks, while a skirmishing party of the Sussex brought off a negro, who turned almost white with fear. Captain Verner, of the Intelligence Department, sent him off, with a package of tobacco and a copy of Lord Wolseley's proclamation to the tribes; but no sooner was he ashore than his friends from the banks opened a rifle-fire, to which the steamer barely responded, and bore away.

It was becoming evident in this

advanced camp that, pending Lord Wolseley's orders, it would be wise to get away as many of the wounded as could stand the jolting and the fatigues of the route across the desert to Korti.

When the convoy, brought up from that place under Colonel Talbot, returned on the 29th of January it reduced the strength to little over 600 men. A correspondent wrote:—

“If the Mahdi is fairly expeditious he must cut off our communications after this convoy; but it is possible that with the Royal Irish, and the convoy retained, we could give a very good account of him and his. What is needed as much as troops, is a general. Colonel the Hon. E. E. Boscawen has had a touch of the sun, and goes on the sick list; so another captain of the Household Brigade, Colonel Wilson, of the Scots Guards, fills the gap by virtue of brevet seniority. It is most distressing to find that no one has more than his own idea of what Lord Wolseley would wish done under the circumstances, which must have been foreseen, and therefore provided for in some way, as the fall of Khartoum has been possible, if not probable, at any time since the expedition started. But I am stating an absolute fact when I say that we are as much without a plan as without a leader at this moment. If it were not for Colonel Barrow and Major Wardrop I cannot even guess what would become of us from day to day, or even from hour to hour. One of the Aden camel-drivers was caught in the act of deserting this morning, to tell the enemy we were all going to run

away to-night. I do not think it will be this force that will run away first, unless ordered to do so by the supreme authority in Downing Street. Never were troops in better heart. Fit, though very few, the men only want to feel some guiding hand to hold their own, so long as provisions and ammunition last, against the whole Soudan.”

And now, before detailing the expedition of Sir Charles Wilson and the fall of Khartoum, a sketch of what life was under the rule of the Mahdi may not be without interest to the reader.

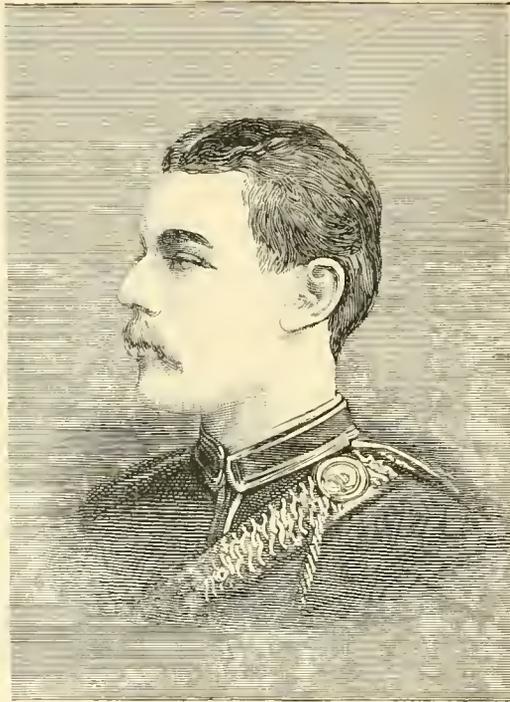
About the time of these details of camp life at Abu Kru, there arrived, on the 3rd February, at Massowah, on the Red Sea, in the northern extremity of Arkiko Bay—the ordinary starting-place for the interior of Abyssinia from Egypt, and the great outlet of the Abyssinian trade in slaves, ivory, musk, and coffee,—three Greeks and a Copt from the valley of the Upper Nile, after a veritable Odyssey of peril and suffering, who gave a graphic account of the Soudan under the iron government of the Mahdi.

These men had been for several years wealthy merchants in the Soudan, and when the war broke out were residing at Ghedarif. Along with that city they fell into the hands of the Mahdi's adherents, who sent them, with other Christian captives, to his camp, where they were forced to become Mussulmans to save their lives, and detained for months, until, at last, they succeeded in making their escape, and reaching the borders of Abyssinia, where by the people of King John they

were furnished with the means of reaching Massowah.

During the first days of bloodshed and horror which followed the capture of Ghedarif, when the town was given over to rapine and slaughter, they succeeded in finding concealment in an

In presence of the Mahdi's Emir they were then denuded of their European costume, and compelled, at the sword's point, to adopt as clothing a long strip of white linen, stitched with red and green—the colours of the Mahdi—to wind about their loins and



CAPT. THE EARL OF AIRLIE, 10TH HUSSARS.

underground grain store. Hunger and thirst compelled them at last to come forth and throw themselves upon the mercy of the fanatical insurgents, who spared their lives on condition that they should recite the Mohammedan confession of faith, "There is no God but God, and Mahomet is his Prophet," and thereafter yield up all they possessed in goods, chattels, and money to the *Beit-ul-Mal*, or public treasury.

shoulders, with leather sandals for their feet, and a grey felt cap, bound with green and red.

Thus equipped in the attire prescribed by the Mahdi, they were forced to recite the Mohammedan confession of faith and kiss the hands of the Emir. Each then received three spears, with which they were ordered to strike the ground, while uttering aloud the holy war cry of the adherents

of the Mahdi: "*Fih zebil Allah!*" ("For the cause of God"). But after this ceremony they were prudently disarmed, and dismissed to their houses, or what was left of them after the severe pillage and destruction to which they had been subjected, and there await the further pleasure of the Emir.

Their annoyances did not end now.

assigned a tent, and an allowance of fifteen dollars per month from the Beit-ul-Mal.

The Mahdi sometimes favoured them with his presence, and made many inquiries about Constantinople, and other places they had seen, and which city he believed to be in Hindostan. Though in his relations with the fair sex the Mahdi followed the precepts of the



MASSOWAH.

Five times in each day they were compelled to appear in a mosque and take part in the public prayers, and if from carelessness or ignorance they failed to imitate closely the genuflections and complicated attitudes of the other worshippers, they were kicked, cuffed, and beaten, while, when at home, any follower of the Mahdi was at liberty to intrude upon their privacy, to see whether they dressed, drank, and slept as became good Mohammedans.

They were afterwards taken to the camp of the Mahdi and compelled to march against Khartoum. They were

Prophet, he set himself above the law, which limits to four the legitimate number of wives; but in other respects he lived with extreme simplicity, observing the same stringent discipline he prescribed to his followers, eschewing the use of snuff, tobacco, and all intoxicants. Even spices, sugar, and sherbet were tabooed.

Sumptuary laws had been made, enacting the shape, colour, and material of every garment his followers were to wear, and any one in whose possession a raiment of European origin was found received a certain number of stripes of

the *kourbash*. The *régime* he inaugurated seemed to savour of State Socialism, with something of Communism. "His paternal influence," said a writer, "asserts itself in every detail of domestic and social life, and if the restrictions he imposes are sometimes slightly irksome, he has provided ample compensation for the multitude, in the prospect of unlimited plunder in this world and felicity in the next which he opened up to his followers. All rents, all taxes, even the Koranic tithes, were abolished. The nationalisation of land has been consummated in the most thoroughgoing fashion."

His greatest institution was the Beit-ul-Mal, or public treasury, revived from the old traditions of the Prophet; into this were swept all pillage taken from the enemy, all spoil captured from infidels, the voluntary offerings of devoted adherents, and the enforced contributions of the suspected.

According to the report of the four fugitives at Massowah, the number of fighting men investing Khartoum seemed to fluctuate greatly, sinking sometimes to 8,000 and sometimes swelling to 50,000, according to the seasons and needs of the agricultural interest, as no opposition was ever made to their quitting the colours, sometimes for weeks together—the Bedouins to graze their camels and flocks, or the fellaheen to look after their harvests.

In camp, all spare time was devoted to prayers, reading the Koran, and sham-fighting. The disciplined black troops were few and mistrusted by the

Mahdi; on the other hand, the fervour of his dervishes was wrought to a burning pitch by his eloquent harangues. "To account, however, for the stubborn resistance which one single Christian opposed to the Prince of the Faith, he was fain to explain that Gordon was no ordinary unbeliever, but that anti-Christ himself, spoken of in the prophetic pages of the Koran, whom the Mahdi is destined to overthrow before the advent of the true Messiah and the establishment of the Islamic millennium."

After enduring many months of anxious and degrading detention, the cupidity of the Mahdi afforded the four captives a chance of escaping. They were pressed to obtain, through their friends, further contributions "for the cause of God," and suggested that if they were permitted to quit the siege of Khartoum and return to Ghedarif they might collect some outstanding debts for the benefit of the Beit-ul-Mal. The Mahdi fell into the snare, and allowed them to depart; but instead of going to Ghedarif they struck off swiftly eastward, and succeeded in reaching the Galabat country, where they put themselves under the protection of Saleh, a powerful sheikh of the Tokruri tribe, who was at enmity with the Mahdi, and who passed them on to some Abyssinian chiefs, by whose aid they reached Massowah, plunged in poverty, though two years before they had been among the richest merchants in the Soudan, and doing a large trade with the most remote regions of the Blue Nile.

## CHAPTER XII.

## THE EXPEDITION OF SIR CHARLES WILSON.

Wilson's Instructions—The Start for Khartoum—Stoppage on the Nile—Wilson's Reasons for Delay—Khartoum in Sight!—The City Lost—The Steamers under Heavy Fire—The Return of Sir Charles Wilson—Treachery in Khartoum.

THE statements made by the Egyptian officers of Gordon's steamers to Sir Charles Wilson were certainly not hopeful. According to their account they had been, as we have stated, stationed with the vessels a short distance above Metemneh, waiting for weeks the arrival of the long-delayed Relieving Column; they said that Gordon was well, but his soldiers despaired of success, and that the appearance of Europeans was necessary to rouse their drooping spirits.

These statements were at variance with Gordon's brief note, under date 29th December, that Khartoum was "all right"—a note which was manifestly a blind, for the private letter of December 14 had announced that the end was coming (Vol. I., p. 13).

Sir Charles Wilson was in possession of the information it contained on Wednesday, the 21st of January, and it is supposed that he should have pushed on to Khartoum without an hour's delay. However, he remained with the column, which, with the exception of two companies of the Guards, moved, as related, to the bank of the Nile on Thursday, the 22nd. Friday, the 23rd, seems to have been unaccountably dawdled away, and as this has been somewhat of a vexed point, it may be as well to print here the

precise instructions given by Lord Wolseley to Sir Charles Wilson before leaving Korti:—

"Camp, Korti, January, 1885.

"1. You will accompany the column under the command of Brigadier-General Sir Herbert Stewart, K.C.B., which will leave Korti to-morrow for Metemneh.

"Your intimate knowledge of Soudan affairs will enable you to be of great use to him during his operations away from these headquarters.

"2. You will endeavour to enter into friendly relations with the Hassaniyeh tribe, and to induce them, if possible, to carry supplies for us across the Desert, and to sell us sheep, cattle, &c.

"3. As soon as Metemneh is in our occupation, Sir H. Stewart will despatch a messenger to Korti with an account of his march, &c., and you will be good enough to send me by same opportunity all political information you may have obtained, all news of General Gordon, the so-called Mahdi, &c.

"4. I am sending Captain Lord Charles Beresford, R.N., with a small party of seamen, to accompany Sir H. Stewart to Metemneh, where, if there are any steamers, Lord Charles Beresford will take possession of one or two of them, as he may think best. Any Egyptian (fellaheen) soldiers on them can be converted into camel-drivers, and come back here with unloaded camels.

"5. As soon as Lord Charles Beresford reports that he is ready to proceed with one or more steamers to Khartoum, you will go to that place with him, and deliver the enclosed letter to General Gordon. I leave it open, so that you may read it.

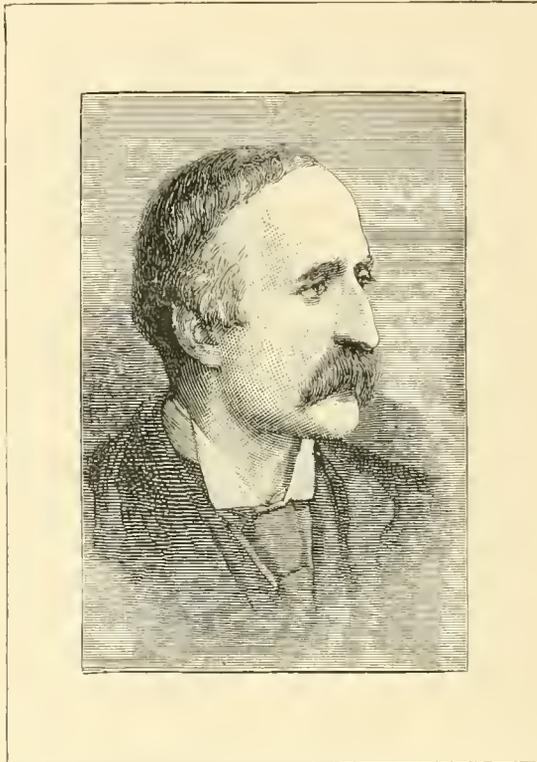
"6. Orders have been given to Sir H. Stewart to send a small detachment of infantry with you to Khartoum. If you like you can upon arriving there march these men through the city to show the people that British troops are near at hand. If there is any epidemic in the town you will not do this. I do not wish them to sleep in the city. They must return with you to Metemneh. You will only stay in Khartoum long enough to confer fully with General Gordon. Having done so, you

will return with Lord Charles Beresford in steamers to Metemneh.

"7. My letter to General Gordon will explain to you the object of your mission. You will confer with him both upon the military and upon the political situation. You are aware of the great difficulty of feeding this army at such a great distance from the sea. You know how we are off in

operations, but Berber would become our military objective. No British troops would be sent to Khartoum beyond a few redcoats in steamers for the purpose of impressing on the inhabitants the fact that it was to the presence of our army they owed their safety.

"The siege of Khartoum being thus raised, all our military arrangements would be made with a



COL. TALBOT, 1ST LIFE GUARDS.

(Commanding the Heavy Cavalry Division of the Camel Corps.)

the matter of supplies, the condition and distribution of the troops under my command, the dates when Major-General Earle will be able to move on Abu Hammed, &c.

"8. I am sending with you the three officers named in the margin, who will accompany you to Khartoum, and will remain there to assist General Gordon until I am able to relieve that place.

"9. It is always possible that when Mohammed Aclmet fully realises that an English army is approaching Khartoum he will retreat, and thus raise the siege. Khartoum would under such circumstances continue to be the political centre of our

view to the immediate occupation of Berber, and to a march across the desert to Ariab, on the Suakim road.

"10. Upon arrival at Metemneh it is very possible you may find papers or letters from General Gordon awaiting us. You will be good enough to send them to me by the first messenger coming here.

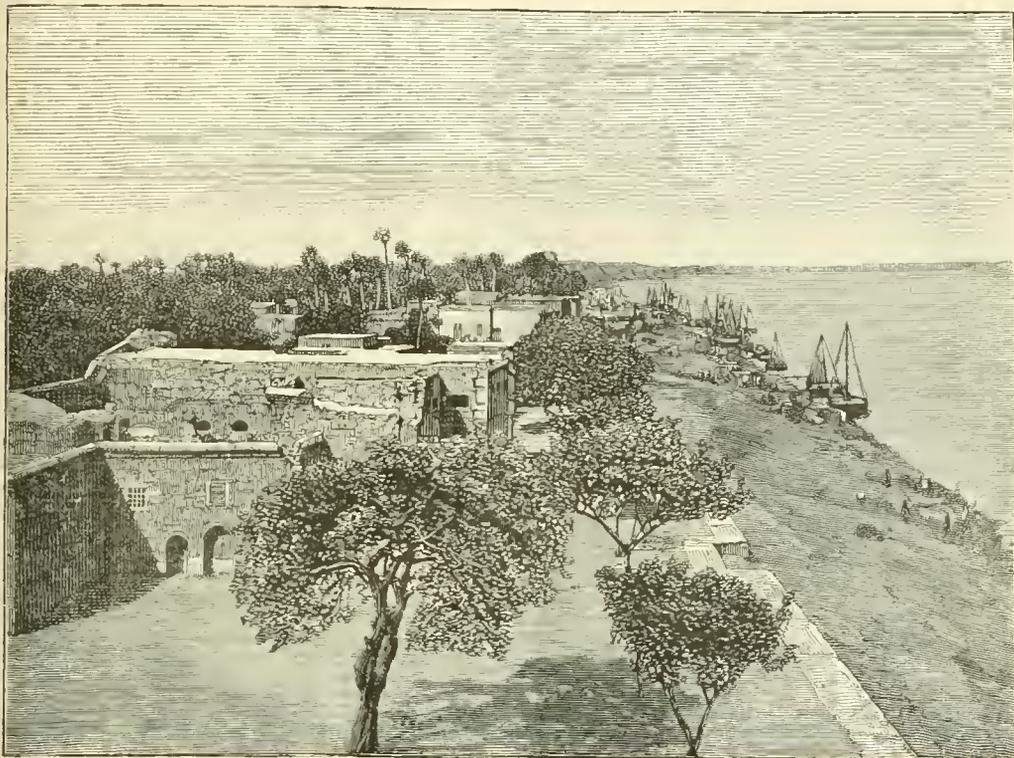
"Upon your return to Metemneh from Khartoum you will rejoin my headquarters at your earliest possible convenience."

Three days after the receipt of General

Gordon's last communication, Sir Charles Wilson started for Khartoum, though he might have done that, so far as is known, on the evening of the 21st, as Lord Charles Beresford had already had the two principal steamers over-

latter was commanded by Abdul Hamed Bey, with Captain L. J. Trafford, of the Royal Sussex, and Lieutenant Francis Stuart-Wortley, formerly of the royal yacht *Osborne*.

Starting from the British camp at



KHARTOUM, LOOKING DOWN THE NILE.

hauled, and all requisite repairs done; but from first to last procrastination seemed to have been the spirit pervading the Relief Expedition.

With twenty men of the Royal Sussex, Sir Charles took 200 of Gordon's Soudanese on board the *Bordein* and *Tellhoweiya*, the most efficient of the five steamers. He was on board the former vessel, with Captain Gascoigne and Khasm-el-Moos Bey, while the

8 p.m. on the 24th of January, the steamers reached the village of Gandatu three hours later, and stopped to take in fuel.

Here, says the *Standard*, a sheikh of the Shagiyeh tribe sent a message on board to say that he and his men were ready to join the British when the power of the latter was established. It was evident that the battles of Abu Klea and Abu Kru were not without their

effect. The steamers stopped for the night near Derrera, and started again at 5.30 on the morning of January the 25th.

In a letter to Lord Wolseley, dated two days before this, Sir Charles Wilson would seem to have given the following reasons for his delay. He remarked:—

“General Gordon, in a most characteristic letter, addressed to the chief of the staff or to the officer commanding the British advanced guard, insisted strongly on our taking actual command of the steamers, and removing from them Pashas, Beys, and all men of Turkish or Egyptian origin. He wrote in strong terms of the uselessness of these men in action, and begged that if the boats were not manned by British sailors they should be sent back with none but Soudanese crews and soldiers. It was originally intended that the steamers should be manned by the Naval Brigade; but Lord Charles Beresford was in hospital, unable to walk, and several of the best petty officers and men had been killed. It was, therefore, necessary to select Soudanese officers, and crews and soldiers from the four ships, and transfer them to the two steamers going to Khartoum.”

Another stoppage was made by them on the 25th, at 9 o'clock, for wood, and then the vessels pursued their way, passing Wad-el-Habeshi, at the foot of the Sixth Cataract, where (says the *Standard*) there were embrasures formed, but no guns in them. A few shots, however, were fired at the steamers

from the left bank. At 3 o'clock they entered the cataract, and at 5 o'clock, when nearing one of the islands of Hassan, the *Bordein* ran upon a sunken rock, which she cleared only on the following morning, while the water was so shallow that all on board had to be landed to lighten her.

When every hour was precious and fraught with death and life, and when the least delay might prove disastrous, she went aground again, and the expedition was delayed for an entire day! Then two Arabs of the Shagiyeh tribe, who came on board, reported that General Gordon had been fighting for fourteen consecutive days, and the expected British were greatly feared, adding that their tribe was only waiting the turn of events to take one side or the other.

On the morning of the 27th a fresh start was made, and the steamers passed the Shabluka Pass, through a very narrow gorge, and at the village of Gos-Nefisa more fuel was brought on board. While this work was in progress an Arab informed Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley that a camel-driver from Omdurman had passed that day, and mentioned that Khartoum had fallen, and General Gordon had been slain—tidings which were disbelieved. Occasional shots were fired all day from the shore. They stopped for that night near a village on the east bank, opposite to Tamaniat, and after 6 o'clock on the following morning were proceeding at all speed towards Khartoum, on the last eighteen miles of their journey.

At an early hour Gebel-seg-et-Taib

was reached. It is a steep place near the river's edge, where guns had once been in position to cannonade Gordon's steamers; but it was found to be now unoccupied. Soon after an Arab of the Shagiyeh tribe shouted from the eastern bank that Khartoum had fallen two days before.

Though at first discredited, the reports, reiterated by other Arabs at every bend of the Nile, filled the hearts of all on board with anxiety and alarm. "Who can tell," says a writer, "what passed in the hearts of these men hurrying to the relief of Gordon, and dreading every moment to discover that the statements of the natives were true; that blood and treasure had been poured forth in vain, and that they were destined to arrive too late?"

Those on board the two steamers were not left long in doubt. At 9 o'clock they were abreast of the island and village of Vakeel Amin, now occupied by the troops of the sheikh Mustapha, one of the Mahdi's most resolute Emirs. "On reaching Gebel Seran," says the *Daily Chronicle*, "a battery opened fire upon them, but without doing much damage."

On they steamed, running the gauntlet of the rebel fire, and when just below Fighialha, where a glimpse of Khartoum, with its tall minaret, burst upon their vision they found the banks on both sides swarming with hostile Arabs. This was at 11 o'clock, when an island twelve miles south of Gebel Royan was reached, and where the rebels, hidden among the tall grass and

shrubbery on the low banks, opened a terrible rifle fire.

The *Bordein* was in front, the *Tell-howeija* close astern, and by noon they were abreast of Halfiyeh, where the enemy had thrown up a four-gun battery, to the fire of which both vessels responded briskly with howitzers and rifles, at a 500 yards' range, and still steaming onward they were now abreast of Tuti Island, on which the crews hoped to find Gordon's troops. But therefrom a heavy fire was poured on them at 150 yards' range, while guns began to shell them from Khartoum, the city they had come to relieve!

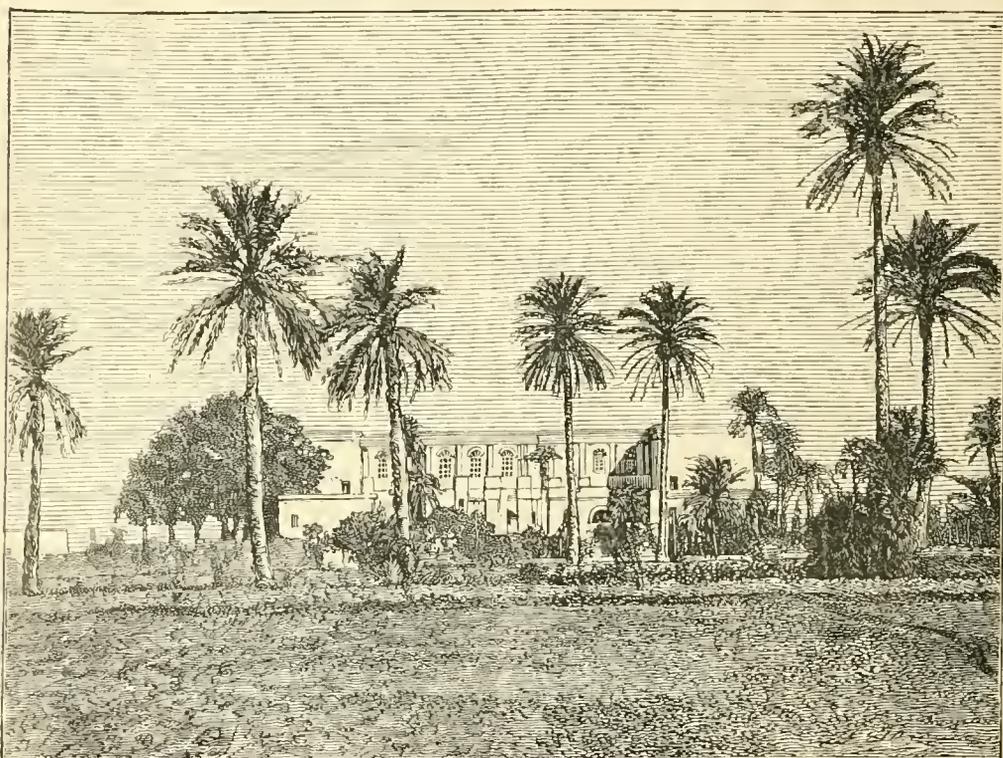
At the southern extremity of the island of Tuti, which is some three miles in length, another heavy fire was opened upon them from four Krupp guns in the fort of Omdurman, which was evidently in possession of the enemy, while rebels in thousands swarmed all over the river banks on both sides and blazed away with their rifles at the steamers, but, owing to the constructed shelters on board, fortunately with little effect.

Gordon's troop-barges, together with a large fleet of nuggars and other native river craft, were now noticed moored together opposite the Omdurman ferry, and on the shore of Khartoum; but there was nothing seen of the two steamers which Gordon was supposed to have retained.

On looking towards the city, the north-west shore outside it seemed literally alive with rebels, while men in the uniform of the Mahdi, and with numbers of his flags displayed, thronged

the streets, the forts, and the flat roofs of the houses. Others in thousands, many of them frantic dervishes, despising the cover of wall or trench, rushed to the low ground by the margin of the stream, brandishing their

fiyah, and Omdurman, and many an old round bullet, while an endless roar of rifles rung on every hand. Again and again the steamers were hit. Sometimes the Krupp shells burst over them, and others fell on board. The



THE PALACE, KHARTOUM.

burnished weapons, firing at the vessels, and shouting in fierce derision the name and fate of Gordon.

One of these men came to the very verge of the water, and, waving a white flag, strove specially to attract the attention of those on board the steamers; but, whatever his desire was, to parley then was impossible, for cannon were now throwing in shot and shell from three different points, Khartoum, Hal-

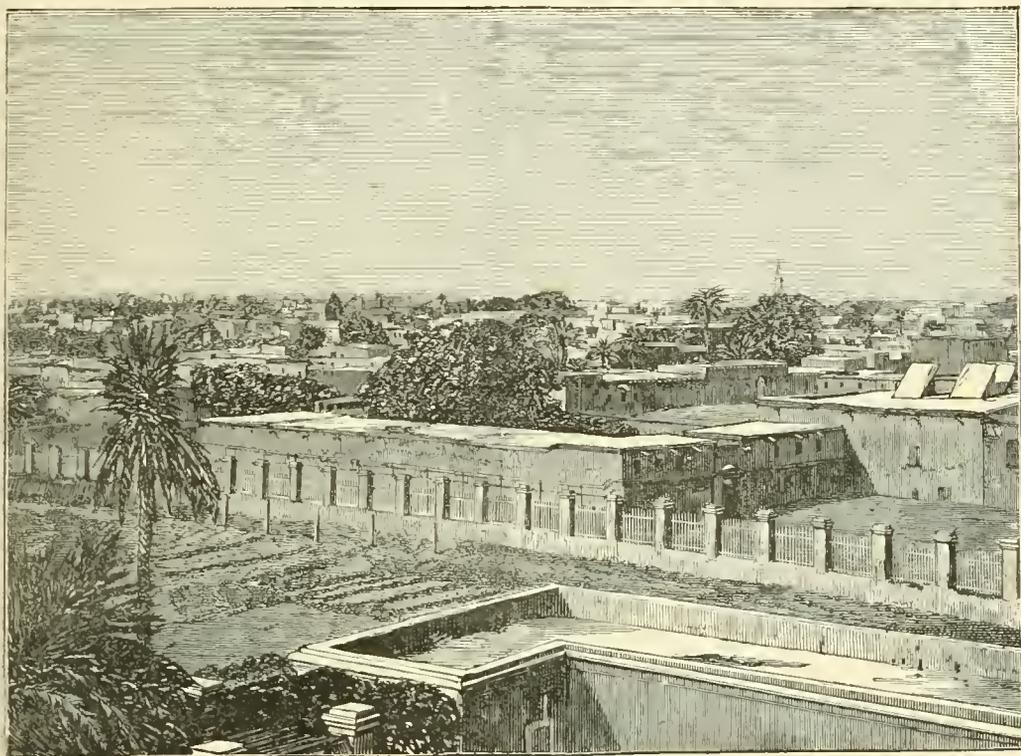
rifle fire was like one continuous shower of gigantic hail—a fire directed from every nook and cranny. The din was terrific, the situation one full of infinite peril. The number of the enemy in sight, armed with Remingtons alone, was estimated at 9,000 men (*Daily Chronicle*).

Our fire, though necessarily from lack of numbers thin, was exceedingly telling, picked shots having been selected

by Sir Charles Wilson. Scores of the enemy bit the dust or fell from the banks on which they swarmed, into the Nile below.

According to the official report of Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, the *Bordein*

been killed and sixteen wounded. The *Bordein's* dingy was blown to pieces by one shell; another exploded in the cabin of the *Tellhoweiya*; and now the terrible conviction that Khartoum was in the power of the Mahdi for a time



THE FORT, KHARTOUM.

steamed to within 200 yards of the north-west shore of Khartoum, and he there saw that no flag was displayed from the staff on the summit of the palace; that many of the buildings were shattered ruins, and that the whole city was evidently in the hands of the Mahdi.

Thanks to Gordon's armour-plating, the loss on board Wilson's steamers was still small. Only two men had

crushed and demoralised the native soldiers and crews. Weeping like children, Khasm-el-Moos and his officers and men flung themselves on the deck; some rent their turbans, others covered their heads with their garments. Khasm-el-Moos suspected, and ultimately learned, that he had lost his family and all he possessed in the fall of the city.

Meanwhile, our tough fellows of the

Royal Sussex kept up file-firing till their shoulders ached, and several hundreds of the enemy fell under their rifles alone.

To land under the heavy fire opposed to him would have been madness and futility; thus Sir Charles Wilson ordered the steamers to be put about, and while running the gauntlet again to go at full speed down the Nile; but it was not until a quarter past four p.m. that the expedition was beyond the range of the enemy's guns. They stopped at an island below Gebel Rayon. Here messengers came on board, and reported that Khartoum had fallen on the night of the 26th "through the treachery of Farag Pasha, the very scoundrel mentioned in Gordon's private letter, and said to have been originally a black slave, whom the General had freed and entrusted with the command of the Soudanese troops. This man opened the gates of Khartoum to the Mahdi's followers, and a terrible massacre had ensued, the heroic governor being slain and all his followers with him."

But we are somewhat anticipating that part of our narrative.

Lord Wolseley had certainly, perhaps, done all in his power to achieve a different issue, short of assuming the command of the Bayuda flying column; but the British expedition had been a deplorable failure, for many noble and gallant lives had been lost, and a frightful slaughter of towns and garrisons, and incredible toil and suffering, with the expenditure of millions of money, had been incurred, for no purpose!

The exact circumstances under which Khartoum fell into the power of the Mahdi can scarcely be recorded with certainty, as all the accounts given by messengers and fugitives varied in their most important details. The followers of Mohammed Achmet asserted that the whole catastrophe was a divine miracle, and the Emir of Berber sent a circular to that effect to all the sheikhs under his command. This document ran thus, beginning with the formula prefixed to all the chapters of the Koran except one:—

"In the name of the most merciful God.

"From Mohammed Kheir Abdullah Khoy Fali, Emir General of Berber, to his friend Abdul Majid Abiel-Lekalek and all his men.—I inform you that to-day, after mid-day prayer, we received a letter from the faithful Khalifa Abdullah Eben Mohammed, in which he tells us that Khartoum was taken on Monday, the 9th Rabi, 1302, on the side of El Haoui, in the following manner:—

"The Mahdi prayed upon his dervishes and troops to advance upon the fortifications, and entered Khartoum in a quarter of an hour. They killed the traitor Gordon, and captured the steamers and boats.

"God has made the Mahdi glorious.

"Be thankful, and praise God for his unspeakable mercy. I announce it to you. Tell your troops."

The impression was very general in England that the fall of the city by treachery was only in accordance with the traditional policy of Orientals. No matter when the expedition drew near to Khartoum, it was urged, the capital of Kordofan would undoubtedly have been betrayed before the British troops had arrived.

Into the difference of opinion that arose respecting the action of Sir Charles Wilson we cannot enter here, for reasons that are apparent.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE DEFENCE OF KHARTOUM.

History of the City—Memoranda of the Siege—Power's Notes—Lord Wolsley's Letter to Sir E. Baring—Gordon's Journal—Frag and the Traitors in the City—Distress of the Besieged—Population and Trade of Khartoum—The Black Deed.

AT the beginning of the present century Khartoum consisted of only a few fishermen's mud huts; but Kurshid Pasha, on his appointment by Mehemet Ali to the government of Sennaar, fixed his residence there, and erected several public buildings, even constructing a dock on each of the two great branches of the Nile. Except those buildings, which are built of sun-dried brick, the houses are chiefly constructed of lath and clay, but several mansions are large and isolated, being surrounded by fine gardens.

The banks of the Nile are there thirty feet in height. About 1850 the population had amounted to 30,000, of whom barely fifty were Christians. In 1885 it numbered between 50,000 and 60,000 inhabitants. The exports from Khartoum are gum arabic, calicoes, sugar, rice, ivory, and slaves, all of which are sent to Cairo and the Red Sea, while the White Nile carries into the city, from the most distant parts of Central Africa, ivory, ostrich feathers, and live stock, and by the Blue Nile corn, gold, coffee, tamarinds, and senna.

Stone and lime are found in abundance in the neighbourhood, and the public buildings are, after a fashion (according to a writer in the *Century Magazine*) substantial, the houses belonging to the rich merchants being

alike spacious and comfortable. There were large bazaars, in which were to be found a much greater variety of European and Asiatic goods than might be expected in a region so remote. In the great market-place a brisk trade went on in camels, horses, asses, sheep, and grain.

The city occupies a large parallelogram, surrounded by a solidly built wall, within which are beautiful gardens, full of palm, fig, and orange trees, surrounding a massive cathedral, hospital, and other substantial edifices. "Before the people of the Soudan," says the writer above quoted, "had been irritated by foreign interference, such was their perfect toleration and good temper that the priests and nuns in their respective costumes were always safe from molestation, not only in Khartoum, but even in El Obeid, and the neighbourhood where the majority are Mussulmans and the rest heathens." Shortly after the siege had been formed Gordon abandoned the governor's palace, and transformed the Catholic mission into a fortress, its surrounding wall and massive buildings rendering it capable of strong resistance.

De Casson, on returning down the Nile from Abyssinia, when he came to Khartoum, states that he was struck with "the dockyards, steam-engines, lathes, steam-hammers, and punches;



SIR CHARLES WILSON EXAMINING THE LAST MESSENGER FROM GORDON.

(The Delorin was sent from Kharloum, and announced that Gordon had fired twenty-one guns in his joy at the approach of the English army.)

in short, all the apparatus necessary for repairing and fitting up steam-boats filled the workshops." He adds, that though knives and forks were unknown in Khartoum, he found dinners that reminded him of a Parisian *menu*.

sion is a very large and handsomely walled-in place, having walls eight to ten feet high, built of stone from the Ras. There is a main entrance built of sandstone, which faces the road."

Had Gordon ruled the Soudan in quiet



KHARTOUM, LOOKING UP THE NILE.

Colonel James A. Grant, writing of "Khartoum as I Saw It in 1863," says, "looking across a low bit of bare country to the east, we saw its single minaret, with groves of date-palm showing here and there. . . . The minaret forms a corner of the musjid building. A strong, high wall surrounds this mosque. We did not go inside, as we should have had to take off our shoes. . . . The Austrian mis-

times he might have realised all his dreams of progress and development at Khartoum, but now, in the course of one of the most remarkable sieges in history, the aspect of the city had become quite revolutionised. The houses on its northern side had been loop-holed, fortified, and stockaded. The ground over which the foe would have to pass had been honeycombed with mines, strewn with glass, and protected

by torpedoes. Guns had been mounted on the palace and the Government House, and Gordon had a tower constructed, from which he might view the whole operations afield.

According to a tabular statement, quoted in an earlier volume of this work, the garrison at Khartoum, in the end of 1883, consisted of 2,490 men.

We have already detailed how Gordon, blocked up in Khartoum by the thousands of the Mahdi's army, had begun to lose all hope towards the close of 1884; but by the tenor of some of his last letters, his mind seems to have varied as to the view he took of his probable fate.

In one, written to his sister on the 11th March, 1884, he said, "Remember our Lord did not promise success or peace in this life. He promised tribulation. So, if things do not go well after the flesh, He is still faithful. He may do all in love and mercy to me. My part is to submit to His will, however dark it may be."

In another letter, written to his brother, Sir H. W. Gordon, he said, "I am quite alone, *and like it*. I have become what people call a great fatalist, namely, I trust God will pull me through my difficulty. The solitary grandeur of the desert makes one feel how vain is the effort of man. This carries me through my troubles and enables me to look on death as a coming relief, when it is His will. It is only my firm conviction that I am only an instrument put in use for a time that enables me to bear up; and in my present state, during my long, hot, weary rides, I think my thoughts better

and clearer than I should with a companion."

He clearly anticipated his fate. In his letter to Sir Charles Wilson, says the *Daily Telegraph*, he wrote, "that he hoped by God's will that the British would arrive in time to save him and others, but feared they would be too late; that he knew he was being betrayed, but was powerless to prevent it. His information was, that Khartoum was to be surrendered to the Mahdi on the 19th of January. He could get away if he wished to run, but would remain to the last. As he would not permit himself to be taken prisoner, there was nothing left but death."

During the last weeks of the siege food became very scarce along the banks of the Nile, as Gordon's foraging parties from his steamers and the marauders of the Mahdi swept away everything edible from the villages to a great distance above and below Khartoum.

Towards the latter days of the siege it was no secret that there were traitors in Khartoum. A letter written by the unfortunate Austrian, Consul Hansal, mentioned that one dark night £6,000 in cash, besides a quantity of sugar, rice, and coffee, which the Mahdi's adherents in the city were trying to smuggle into his camp at Omdurman, were seized.

For some time subsequent to March 23, 1884, the following were the chief events of the siege, as noted by Mr. Power and published in the *Times*:—

"March 23.—Hassan and Seyid Pashas were put to death for treachery in the battle of the 16th, in which we lost 350 killed and wounded.

"April 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20.—Attacks by the rebels on the palace from the village opposite. Fearful loss of life to the Arabs from mines put down by General Gordon.

"April 27.—We heard of the surrender of Saleh Bey at Mesalamieh to the rebels with fifty shiploads of food, seventy boxes of cartridges, 2,020 rifles, and a steamer.

"May 1.—The officer commanding engineers having put down a mine of seventy-eight pounds of powder trod on it, and with six soldiers was blown to pieces.

"May 3.—A man reported an English army at Berber.

"May 6.—Heavy attack from the Arabs at the Blue Nile end of the works. Great loss of life from mines we had placed at Buri.

"May 7.—Great attack from a village opposite. Nine mines were exploded there, and we afterwards heard that they killed 115 rebels. The Arabs kept up a fire all day. Colonel Stewart with two splendidly-directed shots from a Krupp 20-pounder at the palace drove them out of their principal position. During the night the Arabs loop-holed the walls, but on the 9th we drove them out. They had held the place for three days.

"May 25.—Colonel Stewart, while working a mitrailleuse at the palace, was wounded by the rebel fire, but he is now quite well.

"May 26.—During an expedition up the White Nile Saati Bey put a shell into an Arab magazine. There was a great explosion, sixty shells going off.

"During May and June steamer expeditions were made daily under Saati Bey. Our loss was slight, and many cattle were captured.

"June 25.—Mr. Cuzzi, English Consul at Berber, who is with the rebels, came to our lines and told us of the fall of Berber. Mr. Cuzzi has been sent to Kordofan.

"June 30.—Saati Bey captured forty ardebs of corn from the rebels, and killed 200 of them.

"July 10.—Saati Bey having burnt Kalakla and three villages, attacked Gaterneb, but, with three of his officers, was killed. Colonel Stewart had a narrow escape. Saati's loss is serious.

"July 29.—We beat the rebels out of Buri, on the Blue Nile, killing numbers of them, and capturing munitions and eighty rifles. The steamers advanced to El Efan, clearing thirteen rebel forts and breaking two cannon. Since the siege began our loss has been under 700 killed.

"July 31.—This is the end of the fifth month of the siege. Yesterday I sent you *via* Kassala a despatch giving the situation here and the chief incidents of the siege since March 23. I wrote you

several times each week up to April 23, when all hopes of men getting through to Berber had ceased. For the last five months the siege has been very close, the Arab bullets from all sides being able to fall into the palace. Since March 17 no day has passed without firing, yet our losses in all at the very outside are not 700 killed. We have had a good many wounded, but as a rule the wounds are slight. Since the siege General Gordon has caused biscuit and corn to be distributed to the poor, and up to this time there has been no case of any one seriously wanting food. Everything has gone up enormously in price, and meat is, when you can get it, 8s. or 9s. an ober. The classes who cannot accept relief suffer most."

We shall probably never have exactly the details of this disastrous siege and of its close. Some that are of interest were in a letter from Lord Wolseley to Sir Evelyn Baring, dated from his camp at Korti December 31, 1884, referring to Gordon's brief note, mentioned elsewhere:—

"The messenger who, on the 29th October, started with one of many copies of my messages, dated the 20th September and the 26th October, to General Gordon, has just returned here. He brings only a piece of paper, the size of a postage stamp, on which is written 'Khartoum all right. Signed G. C. Gordon. December 14, 1884.' It is genuine, as I know Gordon's writing well. Gordon's seal is on the back of it. General Gordon told the messenger to give me the following message: 'We are besieged on three sides, Omdurman, Halfiyeh, and Hoggiali. Fighting goes on night and day. Enemy cannot take us except by starving us out. Do not scatter your troops. Enemy are numerous. Bring plenty of troops if you can. We still hold Omdurman, on the left bank, and the fort on the right bank. The Mahdi's people have thrown up earthworks within rifle shot of Omdurman. The Mahdi lives out of gunshot. About four weeks ago the Mahdi's people attacked Omdurman and disabled one steamer. We disabled one of the Mahdi's guns. Three days after, fighting was renewed on the south, and the rebels were again driven back. Saleh Bey and Slaten Bey are chained in the Mahdi's camp. (*Secret and confidential*) Our troops in Khartoum are suffering from lack of provisions. Food we still have is little: some grain and biscuit. We want you to come quickly. You should come by

Metemneh or Berber. Make by these two roads. Do not leave Berber in your rear. Keep enemy in your front, and when you have taken Berber send me word. Do this without letting rumours of your approach spread abroad. In Khartoum there are no butter or dates, and little meat. All food is very dear."

The written message, dated 14th December, that the city was "all right,"

This was owing to the same cause as nearly blew out my eyes the other day. We are going to send down the *Bordein* the day after to-morrow, and with her I shall send this journal. If some effort is not made before ten days' time the town will fall. It is inexplicable this delay! If the expeditionary forces have reached the river, and meet my steamers, 100 men are all we require, just to show themselves. I send this journal, for I have little hope of saving

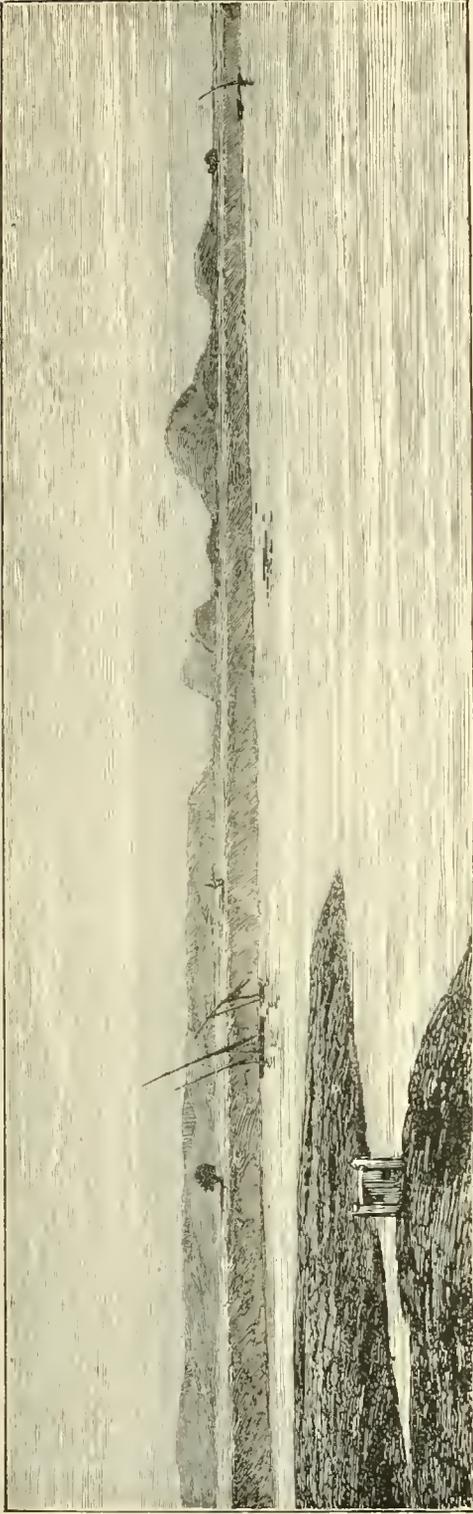


MR. FRANK POWER.

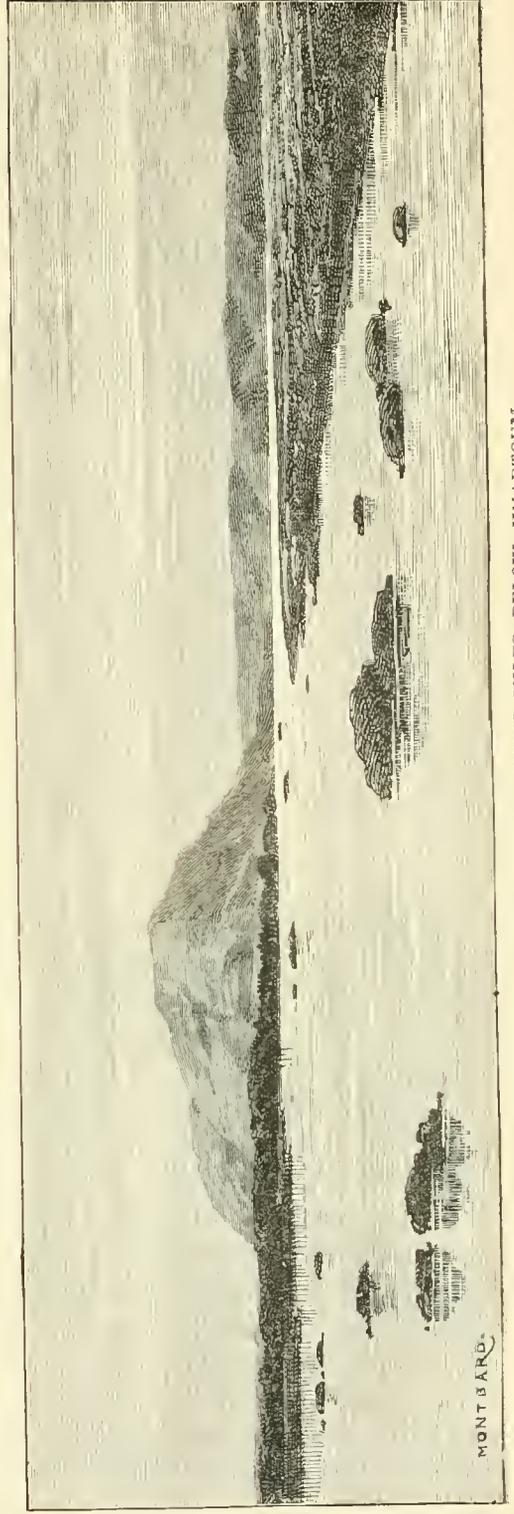
was, of course, meant as a blind if it fell into the hands of the enemy, and contrasts painfully with the two last entries in Gordon's diary, as edited by Mr. A. Egmont Hake, which we give here at length:—

"December 13th.—The steamers went up and attacked the Arabs at Bourré (certainly this delay day after day has a most disheartening effect upon every one. To-day is the two hundred and seventy-sixth day of our anxiety). The Arabs appear, by all accounts, to have suffered to-day heavily at Bourré. We had none wounded; but one man by the discharge of a bad cartridge got a cut in the neck.

if the town falls. I have put in (App. E, F) the sort of arrangement I would make with Zebehr for the future government of the Soudan. Ferrateh Pasha is really showing an amount of vigour I did not give him credit for. Even if the town falls under the nose of the expeditionary force it will not, in my opinion, justify the abandonment of Senaar and Kassala, or the Equatorial provinces, by Her Majesty's Government. It is absolutely necessary for fifty of the expeditionary force to get on board a steamer and come up to Halfiyeh, and thus let their presence be felt; this is not asking too much, but it must happen at once, or it will (as usual) be too late. A soldier deserted to-day to the Arabs from the North Fort. The buglers on the roof, being of short stature, are put on boxes, to enable them to fire over the parapet. One, with the



SITE OF OMDURMAN AT THE JUNCTION OF THE BLUE AND WHITE NILES.



LOOKING DOWN THE NILE, SIXTY MILES BELOW KHARTOUM,

MONTBARD

recoil of a rifle, was knocked over, and caused considerable excitement. We thought he was killed by the noise he made in his fall. The Arabs fire their Krupps continually into the town from the south front, but no one takes any notice of it. The Arabs at Goba only fired one shell at the palace to-day. It burst in the air.

"December 14.—Arabs fired two shells at the palace this morning. 546 ardebs of dhoora in store; also 83,525 okes of biseuit! 10.30 a.m. The steamers are down at Omdurman engaging the Arabs, consequently I am on tenter hooks. 11.30 a.m. Steamers returned. The *Bordein* was struck by a shell in her battery. We had only one man wounded. We are going to send down the *Bordein* to-morrow with this journal. If I was in command of the 200 men of the expeditionary force, which are all that is necessary for the movement, I should stop just below Halfiyeh and attack the Arabs at that place before I came on here to Khartoum. I should then communicate with the North Fort, and act according to circumstances. Now mark this: If the expeditionary force—I ask for no more than 200 men—does not come in ten days the town may fall. I have done the best for the honour of our country. Good-bye."

So ended the fifth volume of Gordon's Diary, which was delivered, by Khasm-el-Moos, to Sir Charles Wilson, on board the flotilla.

Of what occurred in Khartoum between the 14th of December and that terrible day in January, when its heroic defender perished so miserably, we shall never fully know.

Concerning the treason in Khartoum, Gordon stated in a private letter that Farag and Ahmed Gelab Bey, were secretly negotiating with the Mahdi to deliver up the city to him. It has been alleged that he always mistrusted Farag, who had actually been condemned to death for treason, on a former occasion, but been reprieved. For many months recently his conduct had been beyond suspicion; but it was afterwards thought that he was induced

to re-open negotiations with the rebel leader, under the influence of fear that some punishment would befall him when the Relieving Column came.

The capture of Omdurman by the Arabs had rendered the position of Khartoum more difficult and insecure. Provisions were growing scarcer every day, and the dread of starvation acted as an incentive to treachery; and the Egyptian soldier whose narrative of the siege was taken down at Dongola, and published in the *Daily News*, stated that there were traitors in the city, who met and plotted together against General Gordon. It is said he was warned of this; but replied, "Suffer it to be so"—a very unlikely answer, as he would more probably have pistolled them with his own hand.

The plan of the conspirators was, to deliver up Khartoum when the British force drew near; and the traitors increased in number as the people began to despair of relief. There was one incident which decided many. After the battle of Abu Klea, the Arabs collected all the white helmets they could find strewed about, and waved them in the sight of the besieged in Khartoum, while crying "Thus, and thus, have we eaten up the Feringhees!"

Gordon's Admiral Khasm-el-Moos confirmed this statement of the Egyptian soldier in part, by stating that the Mahdi had a number of helmets made like those of the British, and paraded his men with them, in face of the townspeople, while shouting that they

were the helmets of infidels they had slain in battle.

"Thus were faithful men even sorely tempted," continued the Egyptian, "and they became sick at heart. At night time the enemy often came to the south end, within speaking distance, and we used to revile each other. We were called the cursed rebels who spoke evil of the fathers and mothers to the third and fourth generation. In return we called them 'Sons of dogs,' and shouted '*Allah bou rau Gehenna!* Ye rebellious ones, maledictions on your fathers—depart to Gehenna!' and they would answer, 'Ye are the slaves of the infidels; ye too are infidels, as you do not believe in our book. We will eat you up and wipe you from the face of the earth of Allah!' Thus, and thus, did we call out to each other during the long night."

A Greek named Rosti Penago, who, after the capture of Khartoum, made his way to Dongola, said that Gordon went over the town every Friday. That from the palace roofs he watched day and night for the Column of Relief, adding, "I think he never slept. By night he used to send up rockets."

As accommodation for the coming force, he had all the shops and magazines on the promenade over the Blue Nile cleared out; as the Greek said, "for those English who never came."

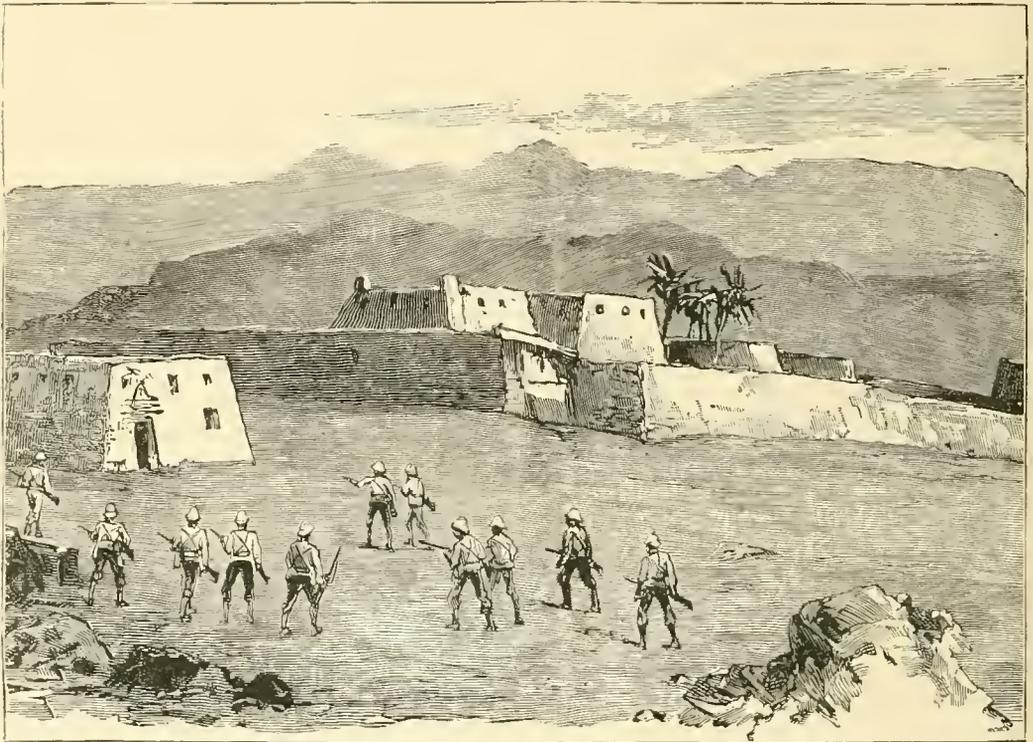
The people were starving. Some Europeans ate grass, and cut down the palms to extract the pith from them. "The Egyptians and blacks ate anything they could get hold of—camels, donkeys (I have known a donkey's tail

sell for eight dollars), dogs, cats, and rats. We were entirely surrounded for three months. The English could have come up with great ease. If one Englishman had shown himself, the whole population would have cheered up out of its despondency. Natives outside, who were starving too, would have joined us, and I believe the Mahdi's forces would have melted away. Boom, boom, boom, was the sound that greeted us from dawn to sunset," continued the Greek. "We were sad, sorrowful, and depressed. Power was always in the magazine in the church, guarding and looking after the ammunition. Do you know that a woman once got in and nearly succeeded in blowing up the ammunition? She was seized; but, after a while, Gordon released her. I used to sit in my shop all day near the barracks selling coffee. All spirituous liquor was gone. We used to sit all day gambling and playing cards; we had tobacco; there were forty-two of us and two Jews. Some of us had our women with us—Greek women. Cuzzi used to go and come with messages from and to General Gordon. Gordon said if he came again, he would hang him, and after that he came no more. And now the day arrived that was to separate husband from wife, brother from sister, and parent from child. The streets were soon to run with blood!"

A newspaper published at Dongola, called the *Mubashir*, stated that the fall of Khartoum was due, not only to the villainy of Farag Pasha, but also to the fact that several followers of the

Mahdi had contrived to make their way into the city, and sow dissension among the garrison, and that for some days before the close of Gordon's long and gallant struggle, numbers of the rebels were roving in secret about the

that many Government employés, and nearly all the native traders, are secret partisans of the Mahdi, in the hopes that he will re-establish the slave trade. It is questionable how far these statements are justified, but perhaps I shall



THE HOUSE IN WHICH COL. HAMILL STEWART WAS MURDERED.

town, paving the way for the betrayal of the garrison.

Concerning the population of Khartoum, the ill-fated Lieutenant-Colonel Donald Stewart wrote thus on the 16th of January, 1883:—

“Of the 50,000 or 55,000 inhabitants (including 30,000 slaves) if I am to believe what I hear, I must consider the majority as unfriendly to the Government. I have been assured

not be far from the truth in saying that the majority will take whichever side they think is the strongest.”

There was in Khartoum at this time a floating population, estimated at about 14,000 souls, consisting of Europeans, Syrians, Albanians, Turks, and Copts, with some Jews. The free resident population were Makhass, or aborigines, Dongolawis, from Dongola, Shagiyes, from a district along the

Nile north of the city, and Robatat, a tract north of Berber.

The numerous slaves belonged to Dinka, Shulook, Berta, and other tribes of negroes. Both the free population and their slaves were Mohammedans of

Of the floating population, the Copts were mostly employed in the Government service. The Turks and Albanians were soldiers, loafers, and rowdies. The European element was represented by about a hundred individuals, Greeks,



COL. HAMILL STEWART'S WRECKED STEAMER "ABBAS," AS SEEN ON FEBRUARY 20, 1885.

the Maliki school of divinity, and were followers of the Hamdi, Rufai, Kadri, and Saadi sects of dervishes. They were grossly superstitious, and they had no other political creed than that of taking part with the strongest.

The free inhabitants were chiefly engaged in commerce or trade, and the slaves in agriculture, hired out as daily labourers by their owners, only a few were employed as domestic servants.

Italians, Germans, French, and Austrians.

Such was the polyglot population which Gordon had come to rule over and to defend.

The chief export and import trades were in the hands of the Europeans, Syrians, and Copts. Except the manufacture of cotton cloths, mats, and ropes, made from palm leaves, with some filigree silver work, there was

none worth speaking of. The bazaar was of considerable size, and pretty well supplied with Manchester goods. The export and import trades were considerable, and besides numerous caravans, employed some 300 boats of various sizes. A considerable trade in grain was carried on with Sennaar and Karkotsch, districts that are practically the granaries of the Soudan.

Farag Pasha, according to the *Mubashir* newspaper, had command of the western gate of the garrison—that is to say, the gate commanding the position of the Mahdi's troops at Omdurman, his duty being to watch admissions into the town, and look after all so-called deserters from the camp of the Mahdi. The number who obtained admission as sham deserters was considerable just before the betrayal, all of them pretending that they had left their camp owing to the starvation which existed there.

They were received with hospitality in Khartoum, and by their own special request were quartered in the western fortifications of the city, under the direct orders of the alleged traitor, Farag; and they actually appear to have assisted in repulsing some attacks of their former comrades, hence Gordon was without the slightest suspicion of their entire good faith.

On January the 21st, Farag informed the heroic defender that the famine in the camp of the enemy had reached a point of utmost severity, and that the foe would desert in hundreds if they could only cross the White Nile without being fired on.

The account given thus in the *Mubashir* does not tally with the other statements that food was then scarce in Khartoum, as the alleged deserters would have been worse off for provisions inside than outside the city.

Gordon, acting on this information, ordered two of his steamers to cruise about before Omdurman for the purpose of aiding any deserters to cross the river; but the captains, who were bribed by the Mahdi, on the night of the 25th brought from Omdurman to Khartoum several hundreds, who were admitted through the western barriers by Farag Pasha, at four a.m. on the following morning. Various citizens asserted that it was by the southern, or Mesalamieh gate, the rebels came in, and the Gaulin tribe were the first to enter, according to Khasm-el-Moos.

We tell the story as it was given then; but in the subsequent report, published by Major Kitchener, Farag is exonerated from the charge of treachery.

Another account, given by Colonel the Hon. E. E. Boscawen, of the Guards, was to the effect, that a treacherous pasha marched the whole garrison to the Omdurman side of Khartoum, asserting that an attack was to be made there; while the other traitor pasha opened the gate and admitted the enemy.

One fact remains certain, the latter gained entrance by treachery, though Major Kitchener says, "by sudden assault, when the garrison was too exhausted by privations to make proper resistance." "Two natives

informed Sir Charles Wilson when on his way down the Nile, that General Gordon and M. Nicola, the Greek consul, had shut themselves up in the Catholic church of Khartoum, with 500 Greeks, some men of the Shagiyeh tribe, a large store of ammunition, and a certain quantity of food. As this position was known to be a very strong one, there seemed to be yet a faint hope of saving Gordon, providing that the information was correct."

This statement was certainly confirmed by other natives, when questioned by the Admiral Khasm-el-Moos; but hope died when they added, that

the Mahdi, after summoning Gordon to capitulate, had shelled the church, reduced it to a ruin, and slain all within it.

A somewhat different, much more circumstantial, and apparently true account, was given by Abdul Kerim, a native of Wady Halfa. He had been a cavass of Ibrahim Bey Ruchdi, who had come in the capacity of a secretary or chief clerk with Gordon from Cairo to Khartoum. Abdul asserted that he had seen Gordon fall, and the details of that event, and the sack of the city, as told by the Greek, Penago, we must give in another chapter.



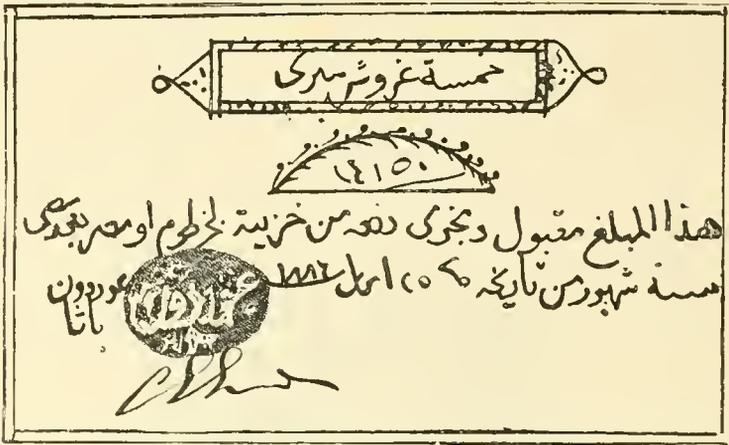
GENERAL GORDON.

## CHAPTER XIV.

## THE LAST DAY OF KHARTOUM.

The Surprise—The Slaughter—The Story of Said and Jacob—The Greek's Narrative—Gordon Slain and Beheaded—Females sold into Slavery—Horrors of the Scene—Fate of the Arch-Traitor—The Treachery of Farag denied—The Escape of Father Bonomi—The Memorial of the Clan Gordon.

FARAG PASHA is said to have opened the gate in the southern wall early on the morning of the 26th of January, and a vast force of the Mahdi's men, he had seen General Gordon's body lying outside the palace, without any mutilation except that inflicted by spears, which, according to their cus-



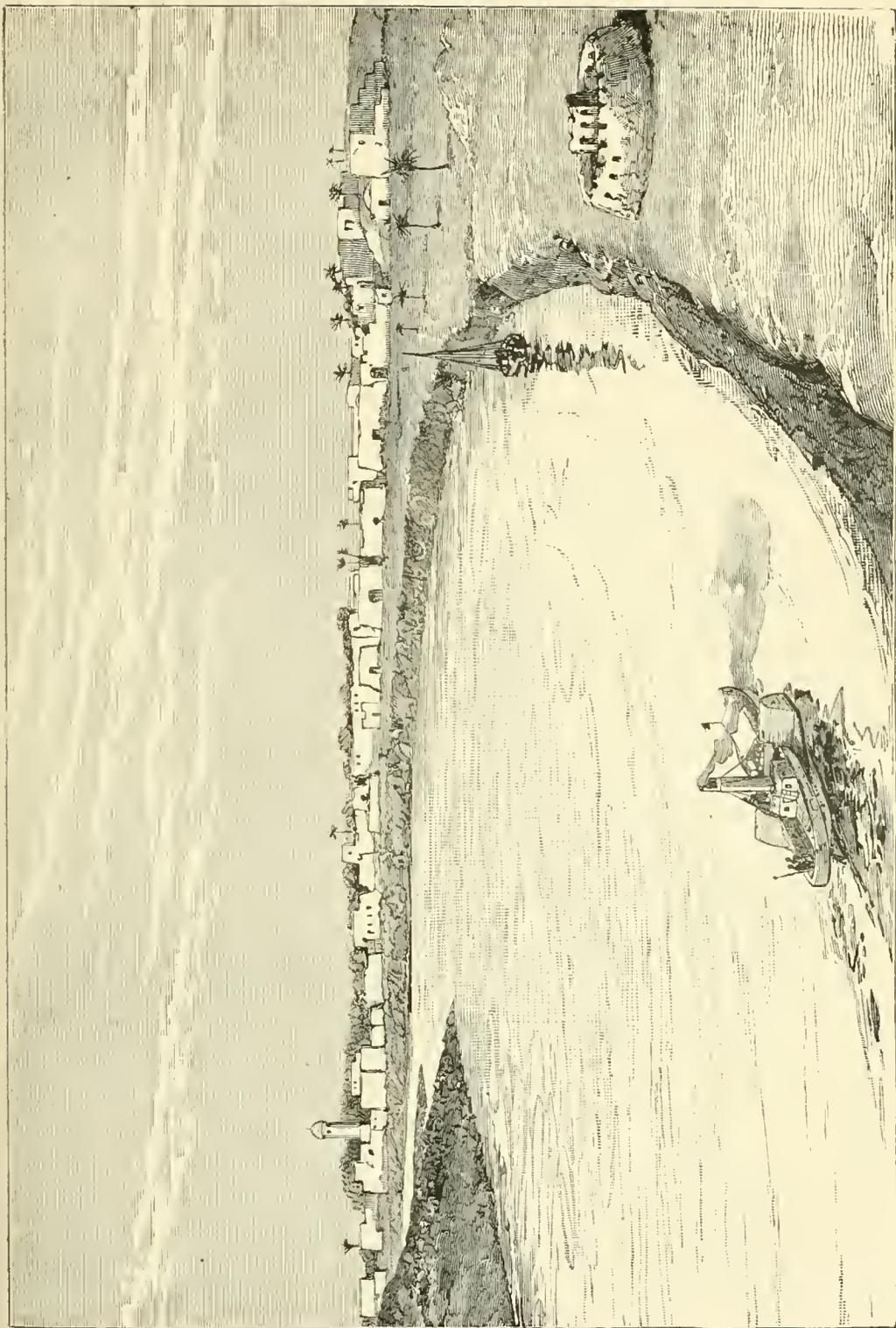
ONE OF GORDON'S NOTES FOR MONEY, ISSUED DURING THE SIEGE OF KHARTOUM.

who were close by, flowed like a living stream into the town. On hearing the alarm, General Gordon rushed from the palace, armed with a sword and axe, according to one account; with a revolver only, according to another. He was accompanied by Ibrahim Bey Ruchdi, and about twenty armed men.

On his way to the house of the Austrian consul he was met by a party of the enemy, who fired a volley, and shot him dead. The Arabs, with their spears, then dispatched Ibrahim and nine men, the rest achieving their escape. Abdul Kerim further stated that

tom, they thrust through and through it. Herr Hansal, the Austrian consul, was killed in his own house; but Nicola, the Greek, was made prisoner.

All the Greeks and other Europeans employed in the arsenal had been exterminated, together with most of the notables. Abdul Kerim affirmed that the great majority of the inhabitants fraternised with the Arabs, and that no women or children were slain; also, that all who surrendered their valuables were permitted to go unharmed. But, on the other hand, other accounts, particularly a letter written by one of the captive



KHARTOUM, FROM A SKETCH TAKEN BY COL. GRANT, F.R.S., IN APRIL, 1863.

*(The Steamer is introduced to show the spot from which Sir Charles Wilson reconnoitred the town.)*

missionaries to Padre Vincentini at Dongola, and brought there by a messenger, stated that the city had been utterly sacked, and its people put to death, the number of victims being over 2,000. Major Kitchener says 4,000, with 3,327 Regulars and Bashi-Bazouks, and 2,330 of the Shagiyeh tribe, were all slain in cold blood, after laying down their arms. The fact that the massacre had taken place was further confirmed by Wilson and his returning party, who saw dead bodies—many of them tied back to back, evidently before slaughter—floating down the Nile.

It was now believed that there had been in Khartoum a greater number of Europeans than was at first supposed.

One of the latest accounts of the fall of Khartoum was that supplied on the 11th of April to the military correspondent of the *Daily News* at Dongola by two soldiers of Gordon's army, Said Abdullah and Jacob Mahomet, who were taken prisoners, and sold as slaves to some Kabbabish merchants, from whom they effected their escape at a place called Abandon.

"Khartoum was delivered into the hands of the rebels," they stated; "it fell through the treachery of the accursed Farag Pasha, who opened the gate. May he never reach Paradise! May Shaytun take possession of his soul! But it was *Kismet* (Fate). It was the gate called Buri, on the Blue Nile. We were on guard, but did not see what was going on. We were attacked, and fought desperately, at the gate. Twelve of us were killed and twenty retreated into a high room,

where we were taken prisoners. And now came the ending!

"The red flag with the crescent was destined to wave no more over the palace; nor would the strains of the hymn of his Highness the Effendina be heard at evening within Khartoum. Blood was to flow in her streets, in her dwellings, in her very mosque, and on the Kennish of the Narsira. A cry arose:—

"'To the palace! to the palace!' A wild and furious band rushed towards it, but they were resisted by the black troops, who fought desperately. They knew there was no mercy for them, and that even were their lives spared, they would be enslaved, and the state of the slave, the perpetual bondage with hard taskmasters, is worse than death. Slaves are not treated well, as you think; heavy chains are round their ankles and middle. They are lashed for the least offence, till the blood flows."

So these black troops fought desperately, knowing they would receive no mercy. The party the narrators were with could not help being taken prisoners. The house they defended was set on fire; the fight raged, and the slaughter went on, till the streets were slippery with blood. They saw the hordes rushing towards the palace, but did not see Gordon slain.

They understood that he met his doom as he was leaving it, near a large tree which stands on the esplanade, not a gunshot from the house of the Austrian consul. They did not hear—so they stated—what became of his body, or that his head was cut off.

They added that they did not hear that the black troops had given way, nor that the Egyptians fought well; the latter were craven, and had it not been for them, the two soldiers asserted, that in spite of the treachery of many within the city, the Arabs would not have got it.

"I was not at my house," said Penago in his narrative. "I was with some Greeks—eight in all—near the mosque, when we heard a hideous uproar as of men shouting and yelling and women wailing, on all sides. Nearer and nearer did this long-continued roar approach. Men with frightful gashes on their faces and limbs came flying by, and women, with torn garments and dishevelled hair, shrieking and screaming. I shall not forget that horrible din to the day of my death. 'We are lost! we are lost!' we cried; 'the place is taken!' But no one could tell us exactly what the matter was. We ran to the top of the mosque and saw that the town was given up to massacre and bloodshed. We rushed to a house, barricaded the doors and windows, went up-stairs, shut ourselves into a room, and determined never to surrender, but to die like Greeks, and, mindful of our ancestors, fight to the last. I did not see Gordon slain, but everybody in Khartoum knows when the event happened."

Penago then goes on to say, that "an Arab shot him with a gun as he was reading his Bible." This latter detail is most improbable. After that another cut off his head, and put it

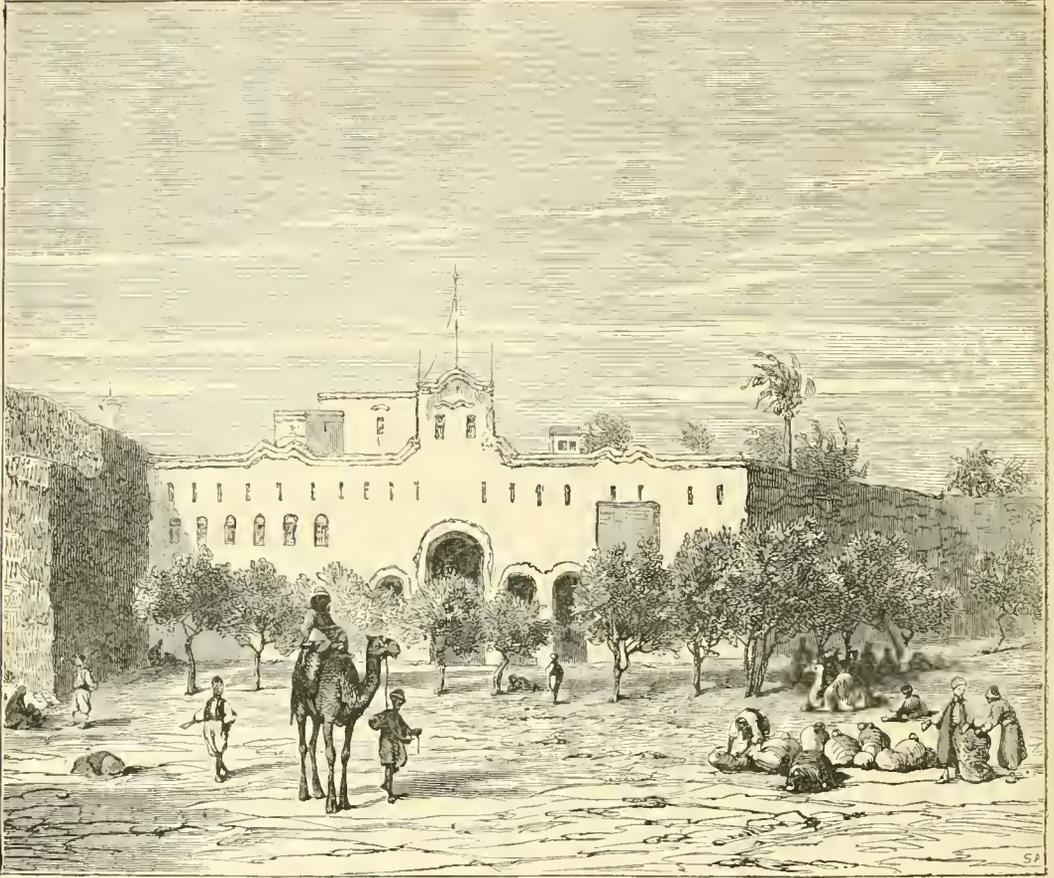
on a spear, and went forth with it through the city, brandishing it on high. Men shut themselves up in their houses, but the doors were burst in, and the shooting, spearing, and slashing went on in the streets, the market-place, and the bazaars. "It was a horrible scene, this bazaar," said Penago. "Gay curtains, crimson-coloured and orange-striped, golden-edged satins, silks and muslins, lay smeared and splashed with blood; everything was upset, strewed about, and trampled on. Everywhere was the wildest disorder. One corner was so full of corpses and dying that we could not get by."

The havoc went on till 8 a.m., or six hours, according to Major Kitchener. Penago was taken, and had his hands tied behind him, when the Mahdi, he stated, sent word from Omdurman, that Allah had revealed to him that the slaughter was to cease; but it did not. Those who were in hiding were bidden to come forth; but of forty-two Greeks he says only eight escaped, and sixteen Jews were killed. He again adds, "Gordon's head I saw on a spear. It was taken over to Omdurman and shown to Mahomet Achmet."

When it was laid before the Mahdi, a grim smile passed over his face. He gazed long on the countenance. "God be praised!" he exclaimed, "Can this be his?" He made merry at the death. The head was then borne away, and men plucked the hairs out of it and the chin, and spat in his face. "His body was then cut into little pieces. This was his end."

In the *Daily Chronicle* for April 22nd, 1885, is the following news from Dongola:—"We have just got a most authentic account that Gordon's head was cut off, and put on one of the

"And now fearful scenes took place in house and building, in the large market-place and the small bazaars. There were the same terrible scenes in the dwellings where the window-sills and



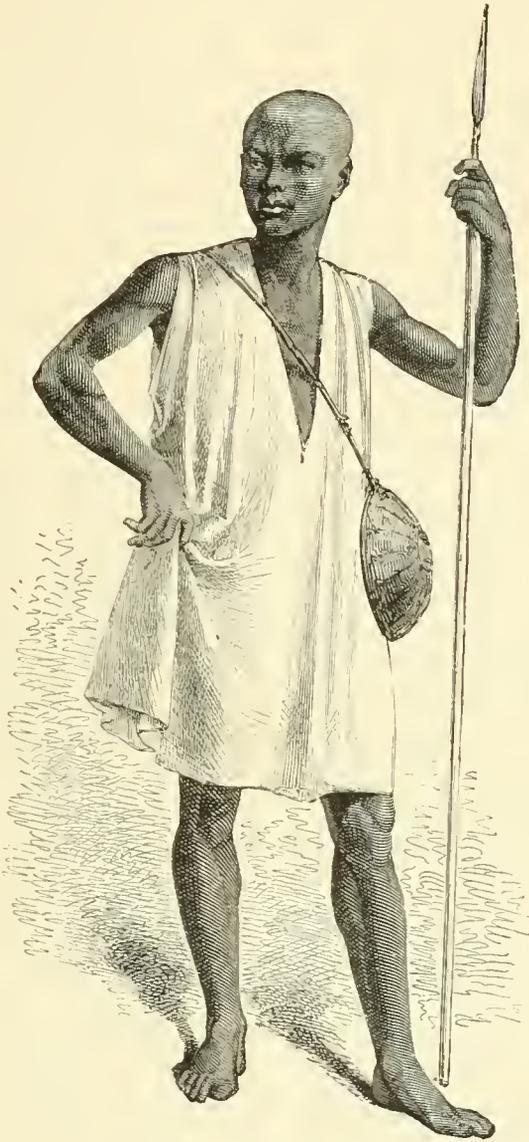
THE SQUARE OF THE MUDIR, KHARTOUM.

chief buildings at Khartoum. This was kept secret from the newspapers, for fear of exasperating the British public."

But in the account of all that followed, we cannot do better than give the graphic narrative of the two soldiers, Said Abdullah and Jacob Mahomet, already partly quoted:—

the door-lintels were painted *azrek* (blue), where there had been many feasts and fantasias, and where *merissa* had flowed in plenty; and where walls were built of *wahál*, and the roofs formed of dhurra stalk. Men were slain shrieking for mercy, when mercy was not in the hearts of our savage enemies. Women and children were robbed of

their jewels of gold and silver, of their (head-dresses)—ladies clad in silk and bracelets, necklaces of precious stones, satin. Mother and daughter were



TAKRURI SOLDIER (NUBIA).

and carried off to be sold to the Bishareen merchants as slaves. Yes—and white women, too—Egyptians and Circassians, who wore the *burko* (veil) over their faces; the *rabtah* and the *turbah*

alike dragged from their homes of comfort.

“These were the widows, wives, and daughters of Egyptian officers, some of whom had been killed with Hicks

Pasha; wives and children of Egyptian merchants, formerly rich, owning ships and mills, gardens and shops. They were sold afterwards—some for 340 *thaleries* or more; some for 250, according to age and good looks; while the poor black women, already slaves, and their children, were taken off too. These were sold for 100, 80, or 70 *thaleries*. Their husbands and masters were slain before their eyes, and yet we hear it said there was no massacre at the taking of Khartoum!

“This fighting and spilling of blood continued till *dohr* (noon), till the sun rose high in the sky—red, yet darkened by the smoke and dust. There were riot and clamour, hubbub and wrangling over spoil; cursing was heard till the hour of evening prayer; but the muezzin was not called, neither were any prayers offered up on the evening of that dark day . . . . Yet the howling herd, possessed by evil spirits and devils, and bespattered with gore, swarming about in bands, found not the plunder they had been promised. Then they were exasperated; their fury knew no bounds, and they sought out Farag Pasha, but he was with the dervishes. ‘Where is the hidden treasure of the Greek merchants and Bachalees, of Leontides and Giorgio Themetrio? Yes, and of the Franchesi Marquet, of the Italian Michaelo? Where are all the thaleries of Marco-polo, and of the German tailor, Kleine? We know that those who left Khartoum were unable to carry away their silver, and you know where it is hid.’

“Farag was now questioned, but

he swore by Allah, and by the souls of his fathers, back to three generations, that Gordon had no money or treasure. ‘You lie!’ cried the dervishes; ‘you wish, after a while, to come here, dig, and get it all for yourself. If the Inglezzi had no money or silver how did he make all those silver medals we have seen?’

“‘Most of them are lead,’ replied Farag, ‘and he paid every one with paper.’ ‘It is false,’ they replied. ‘We are sure you know where the money lies concealed. We are not careful of your life, for you have betrayed the men whose salt you have eaten; you have been the servant of the infidel, and you have betrayed even him! Unless you unfold the secret of the buried treasure, you shall surely die.’

“But Farag, it is said—for we were not there,—seeing that his end was approaching, and that his words were not believed, assumed a proud and haughty bearing, and an attitude of defiance.

“‘I care not,’ he said ‘for your threats; I have told the truth, as Allah knows. There is no money, neither is there treasure. You are *magnoons* (fools) to suppose there is; but if there were, you would not divide it fairly among your followers; you would keep it among yourselves. I have done a good deed. I have delivered to your master the city, which you could never have taken without my help. You would have been beaten back from the trenches by the Inglezzi, who, even now, await their time to punish you; and I have no secrets regarding these,

which, if I die, will die with me. I tell you, there is no treasure; but you will rue the day if you kill me.'

"One of the dervishes then stepped forward and struck him, bound as he was, on the mouth, telling him to cease his fool's prophecies; while another rushed at him with a two-edged sword, so that with one blow his head fell from his shoulders. So perished the arch-traitor — may his soul be afflicted! But, as for Gordon Pasha, may his soul be enjoying the fuller knowledge! . . . All the Egyptian men were slain, in spite of their casting themselves down and praying for mercy. Farag Pasha's head was then carried to Mahomet Aehmet. We heard this when the Kordofan soldiers, who guarded us at the Dormas Gate, talked of it among themselves. We were there for some days; we saw nothing, but only heard what these soldiers told us. They said two steamers with British had come up, and gone back. We have nothing more to tell you."

"The story of these men, so far as it goes," wrote the correspondent of the *Daily News*, who took it carefully down, "seems perfectly trustworthy."

The correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* recorded that many little children were spitted on Arab spears in pure wantonness, and that all the relatives of the faithful five hundred under Nusri Pasha, who met and assisted us at Gubat, shared the same fate. It was a scene unparalleled in horror since the days of Tamerlane. When the officers and men of Nusri Pasha's force

heard of the massacre of their families, they gave way to the wildest paroxysms of grief, and for a time were quite demoralised by the blow that had fallen upon them.

The bulk of the people willingly joined the Mahdi, who, with his chiefs, speedily organised a complete system of defence for the city, throwing up outlying redoubts, arranged on a tolerably sound military principle, to command the approaches from every point.

He sent out a proclamation demanding fresh levies, stating that the British were few, and that the gates of Paradise were now open to all the Faithful; but he did not enter the town until the third day after its capture. The consul Nicola was spared, and kept as a medical man.

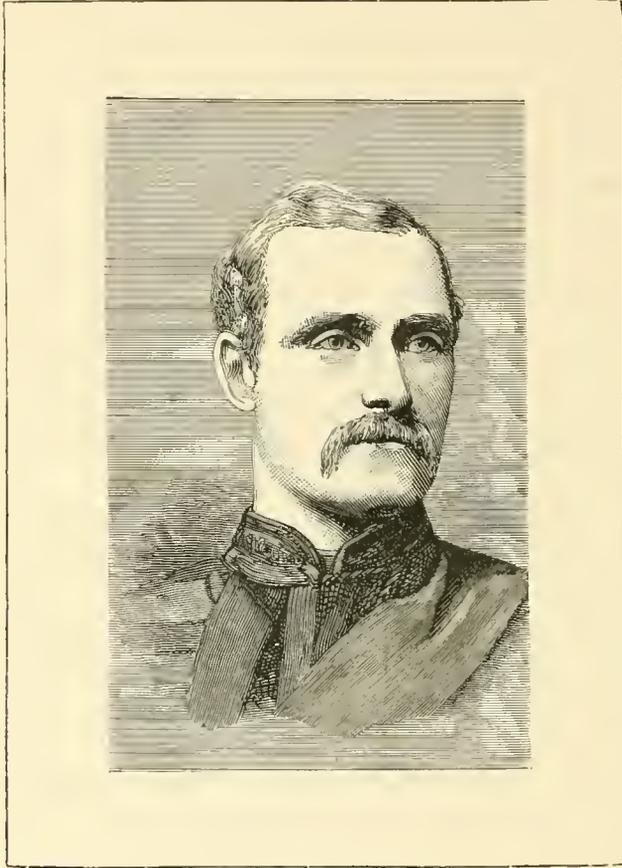
Rosti Penago, the Greek refugee, stated that when he left Khartoum no one lived in the palace, as the bodies of the dead had not been cleared away, and a fearful stench of corpses pervaded the entire city.

The correspondent of the *Daily News*, at a subsequent period, records a curious statement made to Major Turner by one Abdullah Bey Ismail, commander of a battalion of irregular troops, who made his escape after the capture. He denied the treachery of Farag Pasha, who was his brother officer. He stated that twenty days before the fall of the city, Gordon had urged all civilians capable of bearing arms to leave, in order to avoid the threatened famine, and sent a letter to the Mahdi, saying, "Behold these people, now that I have had them six months. Feed and sup-

port them. Then as I have done up to the present date, do you in the future."

Abdullah stated that the number of persons left in Khartoum at the time of its capture was only 14,000, including

"Gordon," said Abdullah, "with a European doctor, and two other men, killed 200 Arabs from the Palace, and when their ammunition was exhausted, the eastern door was thrown

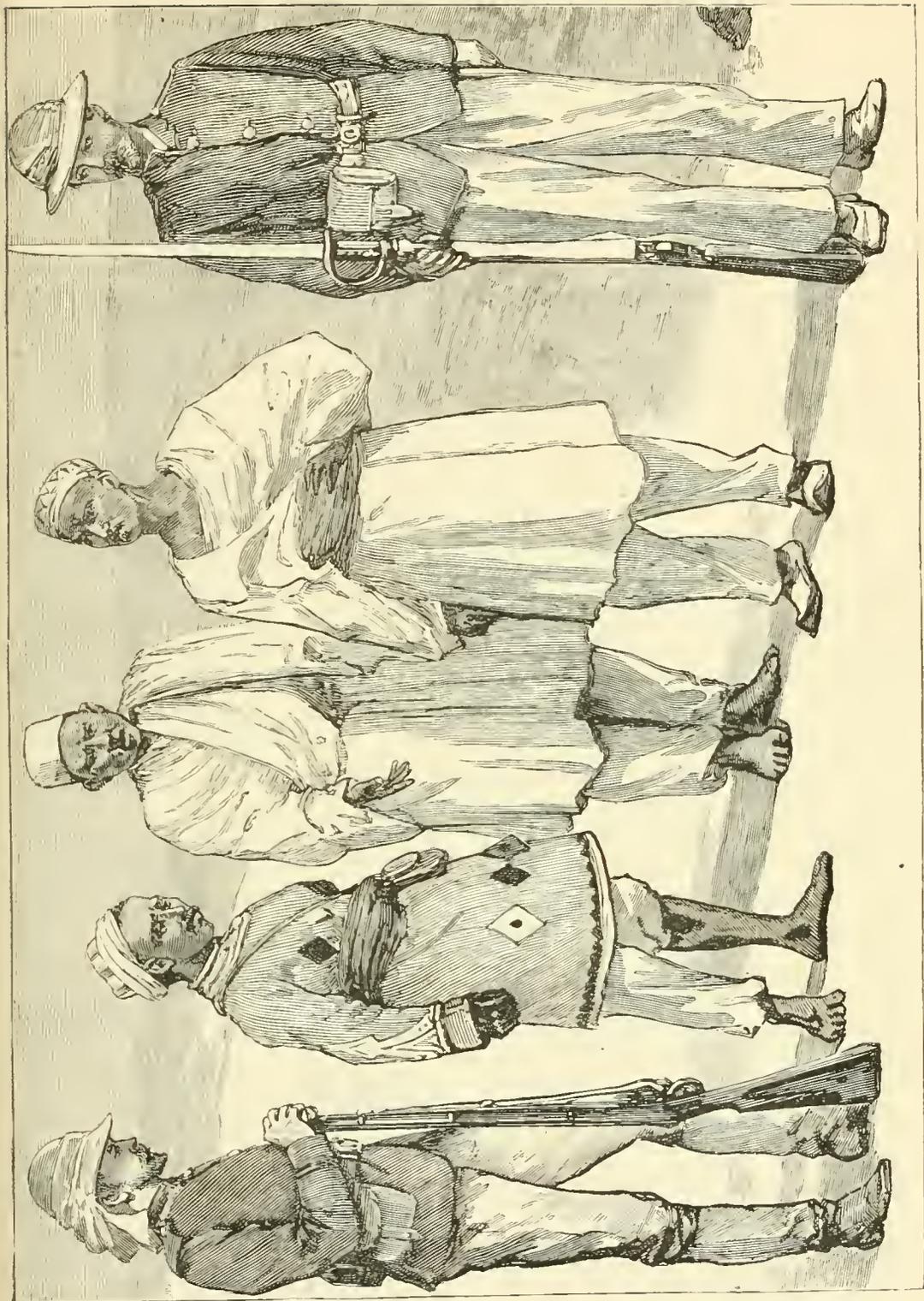


COL. BOSCAWEN.

*(Commanding the Infantry Division of the Camel Corps.)*

the troops, which is very unlikely; and that Farag was killed because he had served the Infidels. He also thought that the number of slain amounted to about 5,000; but Major Kitchener puts it at 9,657. Several grappled with their murderers, and strangled them in the fury of their despair.

open, and Gordon, calm and serene, smoking a cigarette, and with a sword in his right hand, appeared. There was a pause for a moment, but one near him raised a rifle and shot the General dead. I speak the truth and lie not, Allah knows! The Mahdi, every day after reading his prayers,



PRISONERS IN THE MAHDI'S UNIFORM.

rises to his full height, and turning to the north, draws his long two-edged sword and cries, 'Woe to you, Stamboul, for this sword is against you!'"

Pitted with spear thrusts, Gordon's body was, no doubt, flung into the Nile, a prey to the crocodiles, so that not even the palm of martyrdom could be laid upon his tomb.

The Roman Catholic missionaries, taken prisoners at El Obeid and Gebel Nuba, seven men and five women, were some of them at this time in Omdurman, clad as dervishes, to save them from insult.

One of the former, Father Bonomi, a captive at El Obeid, afterwards achieved his escape. The first instrument of his deliverance was a letter from the Superioress of the Sisters of Nigritia, addressed to Mgr. Sogaro, Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa. A proposal was made at Dongola to send four camels to El Obeid, for the escape of Father Bonomi and his companions in misfortune. But only one driver, with two camels, could be got. He was to be paid 100 thalers down, and 500 more if he brought back Bonomi safe. The latter had with him in captivity Father Ohrwalder, a Tyrolese priest, and each besought the other to depart on the solitary camel; and ultimately, Father Bonomi, eluding the vigilance of the Arabs, quitted the city, and on the camel began the long and perilous journey, without other food than a few grains of dhurra daily, and generally not daring to approach the wells; after travelling for thirteen days and nights,

he reached Wady Halfa in safety, and thence to Cairo.

Tidings of the fall of Khartoum reached Great Britain early in February. The hard-won victories of our troops had filled every heart with hope that the end of the horrible war was near, and on learning that the advance of the long-delayed expedition had reached the Nile and been joined by Gordon's steamers, every one anticipated that Khartoum would be relieved at last.

Then came the mournful news that all was over; that not only had the long-defended city been captured by treachery, but that its gallant upholder was slain.

A relic of Gordon was given by his sister as a marriage present to the Princess Beatrice—a jade ornament, brought by him from China in 1865, called "The Gem of Bright Gems," and which had belonged to the Emperor Hein Fung.

Among the many public meetings summoned to do honour to his memory was one held in April, 1885, by the clan and surname of Gordon, convened at Aberdeen by the Marquis of Huntly, as chief, and by the Duke of Richmond and Gordon. There were present the Earl of Aberdeen, the Gordons of Essilmont, Banchory, Monar, Craig, Ellon, and other gentlemen of the surname, when it was universally carried that there should be a fitting memorial erected in Aberdeen "to the memory of the late General Gordon, C.B., killed at Khartoum, one of the most distinguished members of the clan."

## CHAPTER XV.

## SIR CHARLES WILSON'S STEAMERS.

Stuart-Wortley's Tidings at Abu Kru—Wilson's Captains and Pilots—His Downward Voyage—His Letter from the Mahdi—Wrecked on an Island—Rescued by Lord Charles Beresford—Benbow and the Boiler—Honourable Mention to the Rescuers—The *Times* on the Relief Expedition.

WE have stated how our troops in camp at Abu Kru (or Gubat) were excited by the commotion, firing, and rejoicing in Metemneh on the 27th of January. The reasons for all this hubbub were unknown to our people at the time, and the matter had been forgotten till about dawn five days after, when a solitary boat was seen being rowed down the Nile.

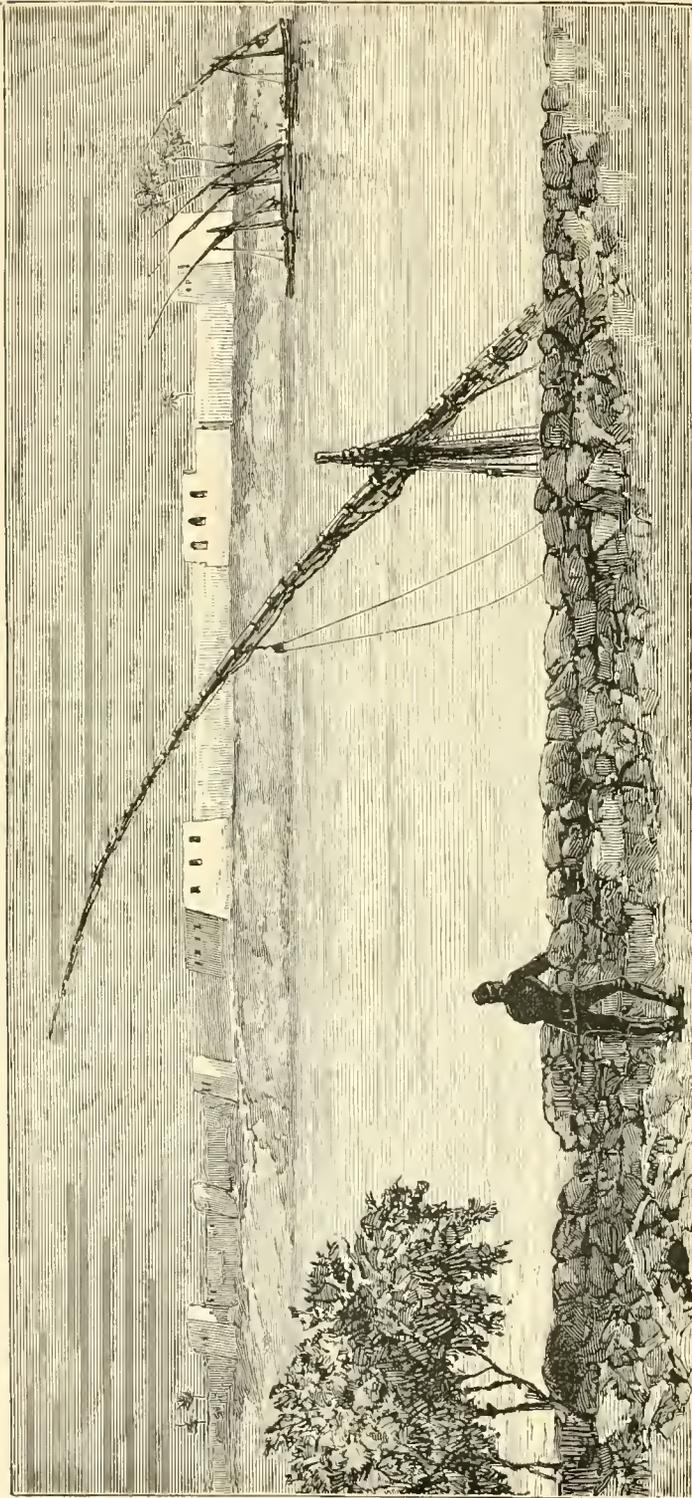
It was found to contain Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, R.N., four British soldiers, and eight Soudanese, who had rowed for forty miles down the river, and, strange to say, unmolested by the enemy. They brought the terrible tidings that Khartoum had fallen, that the two steamers sent there had been wrecked when descending the Nile after their futile expedition, and that Sir Charles Wilson and his slender force had taken refuge on an island, where they were in hourly peril of destruction.

These unexpected tidings fell like a thunderbolt upon the few hundreds in camp, and every countenance fell, every heart grew sad. To all the eager inquiries made about General Gordon, Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley was unable to accord a single reply, yet from his statements it was but too evident that Sir Charles Wilson was sorely in need of instant succour and reinforcements.

To render this, it was decided that Lord Charles Beresford should start with the steamer *Sofia*. By the same evening everything was ready, and twenty picked shots, men of the Royal Rifles, attached to the Mounted Infantry, were taken on board, and the steam got up.

Concerning the loss of Sir Charles Wilson's two steamers on the rocks of the Sixth Cataract, very little doubt prevailed that the catastrophe, which might have ended in the destruction of him and his whole party, like that of Colonel Donald Stewart, was due to treachery, and to treachery, says the *Daily Chronicle*, which might have been rendered unavailing by a little presence of mind.

On the evening of the 28th the captain of the steamer, on board of which were Sir Charles Wilson and Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, and which had reached the top of the Sixth Cataract, said, with an air of hesitation, that the vessel might have too much draught to pass the Rapids, so a great quantity of dhurra was thrown into the Nile to make the vessel lighter. "Obviously," continues the *Chronicle*, "a man of the world would have said to the captain, 'You shall have 200 dollars if we get down safely; if not, I will shoot you on the spot!'" But, as it was, the captain



ISLAND OF TUTI, FROM KHARTOUM, LOOKING ACROSS THE BLUE NILE.

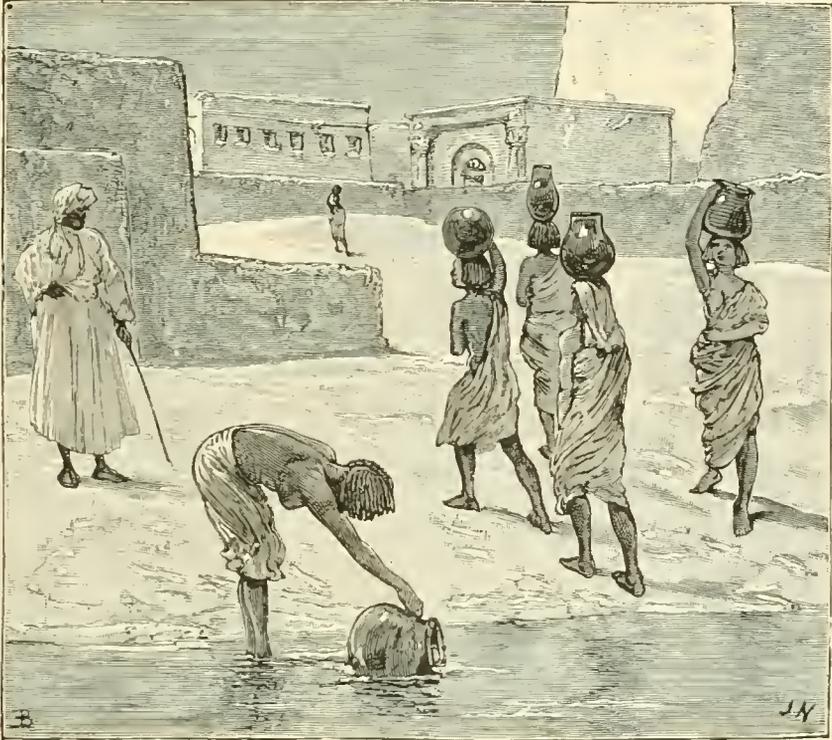
put his vessel on a rock, and then effected his escape to make his peace with the Mahdi by reporting his exploit.

Thus, naturally enough, as a sequence, next day, when the second steamer had got clear of the Cataract, the other captain, finding that all had gone well with his brother skipper, repeated the trick, and got away too. However, Sir Charles had in his hands both the reises, or river-pilots, and a court of inquiry afterwards sat to determine whether there was evidence enough of their complicity to justify the trial and shooting of them by court martial. Some thought that this preliminary measure would be nothing but one of those formalities which may occasionally be useful, but are time-destroying, and, in the face of an enemy, give the appearance of hesitation.

The narration of

the downward voyage ran thus:—On Thursday, 29th January, the *Bordein*, having damaged a paddle, could not be got under weigh till 7.30 in the morning. Two hours subsequently she stuck upon a sand-bank. At 11 a.m.

vessel. To this Sir Charles consented, and then the pilots took the *Tellhoweyah* down the rapid stern foremost, and both vessels went under steam in this manner for two miles, till suddenly the *Tellhoweyah* struck upon a rock in mid-



SOUDANESE WATER-CARRIERS.

both steamers lay to for an hour, for no apparent cause, except to allow some natives—dangerous visitors certainly—to come on board and hold a conference; and, after much squabbling, more dhurra was jettisoned to lighten the ships.

At 12.30 p.m. they stopped at a very bad part of the Sixth Cataract, the reises refusing to proceed unless all the party were placed on board one

stream, and in seven minutes the water was over her engines. Her fires were thus extinguished, and she stuck fast. It was proposed to cast the guns overboard, but the officers prevented this; and most of the ammunition was destroyed.

The guns and such stores as could be secured were put on board a nuggar and landed on an adjacent sandbank, where it was found necessary to pass

the night, as darkness had now fallen. Several natives who were aware of the catastrophe now came over and talked to the party, and ere long the same Soudanese dervish who had displayed a white flag so energetically on the shore at Khartoum, arrived opposite the stranded steamer, the progress of which he had followed down the right bank on a camel.

He again waved the same flag, and, when rowed across to the sandbank, it was found that he was the bearer of a letter from Mohammed Achmet, the Mahdi, in whom he was a devout believer. He was an intelligent and powerfully-made negro, and remained half an hour, adding personal persuasion to his leader's appeal, which was written in plain, bold Arabic characters upon tawny-white paper, and signed by a large square seal. It ran thus:—

**“THE MAHDI'S LETTER.**

“In the name of the most merciful God! Thanks for the honourable God and prayers be to our Apostle Mohammed.

“From the poor servant of God, Mohammed El Mahdi, son of Abdullah, to the British officers and the Shagiyeh and all their followers.

“First thing, surrender yourselves and you will be safe. I briefly tell you, but perhaps God will direct you in the way of the righteous. Let it be known to you that the city of Khartoum and all the neighbourhood thereof has been destroyed by the power of God Almighty, which no one can oppose. This thing was done through us; everything is now in our hands. As long as you are a small force, and very likely in our power, you can do whatever you like, either give yourselves up and prevent bloodshed of the servants of the creatures of God who are in your hands, and the grace and peace of God and His Apostle will settle upon you.

“If you do not believe what I have written, and you want to know the reality about Khartoum, send a special messenger from yourselves here and assure yourselves of the truth of the information,

and the peace of God and His Apostle be with your messenger. We shall not kill you till he comes here and sees all about the matter for himself, and we will send him back with a safe escort from us. As God says in His precious Book, ‘If any of the ungodly come to you, you must keep him safely until he listens to the words of God, and then do for him whatever he wishes.’ If, on the other hand, you like to fight, we shall not oppose your wish. If you yield, you should know that the peace of God will settle upon you, and you will be saved from all hurt. If you do not wish to yield, you will be punished in this world and the next. It is known that victory is for Believers.

“You must be proud of your steamers and many other things. If you do not yield to my advice you shall repent. You must be quick or your wings will be cut. A man who guides the people in the right way, God will guide him also aright.

“11 Rabbeah mani, 1302.

“P.S.—No God but God. Mohammed is the Apostle of God.

“MOHAMMED EL MAHDI, son of Abdullah.”

When the purport of this missive was made known to the Soudanese and the Egyptian officers, it manifestly had a most distressing effect upon them, and all exhibited a desire of complying with the wishes of the writer.

In reply to questions of Sir Charles Wilson, the sable messenger said that “the Mahdi had been sent by God to convert the world to the Moslem religion, and that it was his intention to march straight on Stamboul.” He added that General Gordon was a prisoner at Omdurman, and had adopted the uniform of the Mahdi; and now the dervish pressed Khasm-el-Moos and Abdul Hamid Bey for a direct reply to his master.

To gain time Sir Charles Wilson wisely approved that they should do so. Khasm-el-Moos wrote to the Mahdi stating that it was his intention to submit, with his men, to the

Fakir Mustapha, who was in position at Wad-el-Habesha, at the foot of the Sixth Cataract, with a force of 4,000 men and three guns. It had been greatly feared that much difficulty would be experienced in getting past that point; thus it was hoped that the answer might throw the rebels off their guard. The letter completely satisfied the dervish, together with the sheikh of a neighbouring tribe who accompanied him, and had made preparations to oppose the downward passage of the steamers. The sheikh withdrew his riflemen, and thus the descent of the Cataract was not interfered with at that place.

A slave who likewise visited the sandbank, corroborated the tidings of the fall of Khartoum, and added the intelligence, which perplexed so many at the time, that General Gordon had succeeded in shutting himself up in the Catholic Mission building, with the Greek consul and fifty Soudanese, and that he had a vast store of ammunition. He also said that the rebels had a great dread of the coming British, and had refused to advance unless led by the Mahdi in person. The night of the 29th passed over quietly.

On Friday, 30th January, the shipwrecked soldiers and crew came down the last of the Cataract in the nuggar, with sweeps out to guide her, and passed through the narrow and perilous gorge without being fired on; and at half-past ten in the forenoon all the soldiers were landed on an island to lighten the boat. The steamer had been let down by ropes stern foremost;

but the wind threw her on a bank, and two hours were passed before she was got afloat, through a passage only twenty-five yards wide, and all said to each other, that "it was God's mercy which prevented the rebels from lining the banks and shooting all down."

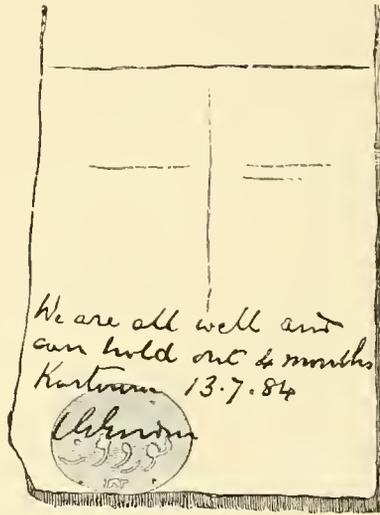
Near the north end of Hassan Island the anchor was let go at 5 p.m., three miles only having been achieved in one day, owing to the incredible difficulties of the navigation. Four of the Shagiyeh tribe came on board and endeavoured to persuade Khasm-el-Moos to desert to the Mahdi, with whom the whole tribe were now about to cast their lot, though on the way up, and while the issue was doubtful, they had promised to remain strictly neutral. It was discovered that Abdul Hamid Bey, with the reises and several of the Soudanese soldiers, had been conferring with the Shagiyeh and other natives from the shore, and had agreed secretly to surrender or wreck the ship, that they might join the force under the Fakir Mustapha. They had invited Khasm-el-Moos to join in this conspiracy, but he firmly declined, otherwise they would have conducted their nefarious negotiations even more openly.

Saturday, January 31st, saw the steamer passing down through channels full of many perils, and slowing out but fifty yards of hawser at a time, till the last rapid was left astern, and she got into open water at 10 p.m., and stopped two hours for wood.

While the attention of the other officers was thus occupied, the traitor

Abdul Hamid contrived to send, by a villager, a letter to the Fakir Mustapha. The missive contained nothing of importance; but it was suspected to be accompanied by a verbal communication of a dangerous nature. Thirty minutes after starting, the unlucky *Bordein* stuck for three hours upon a long sandbank, requiring that all the

come from Abu Kru. The Soudanese prepared their evening meal, while Sir Charles Wilson, Captain Gascoigne, and the little party of the Sussex, slept on the sandbank, where double sentries were posted for the night of anxiety. There were now only the nuggar and two small boats left, to move the men and all their stores; and then it



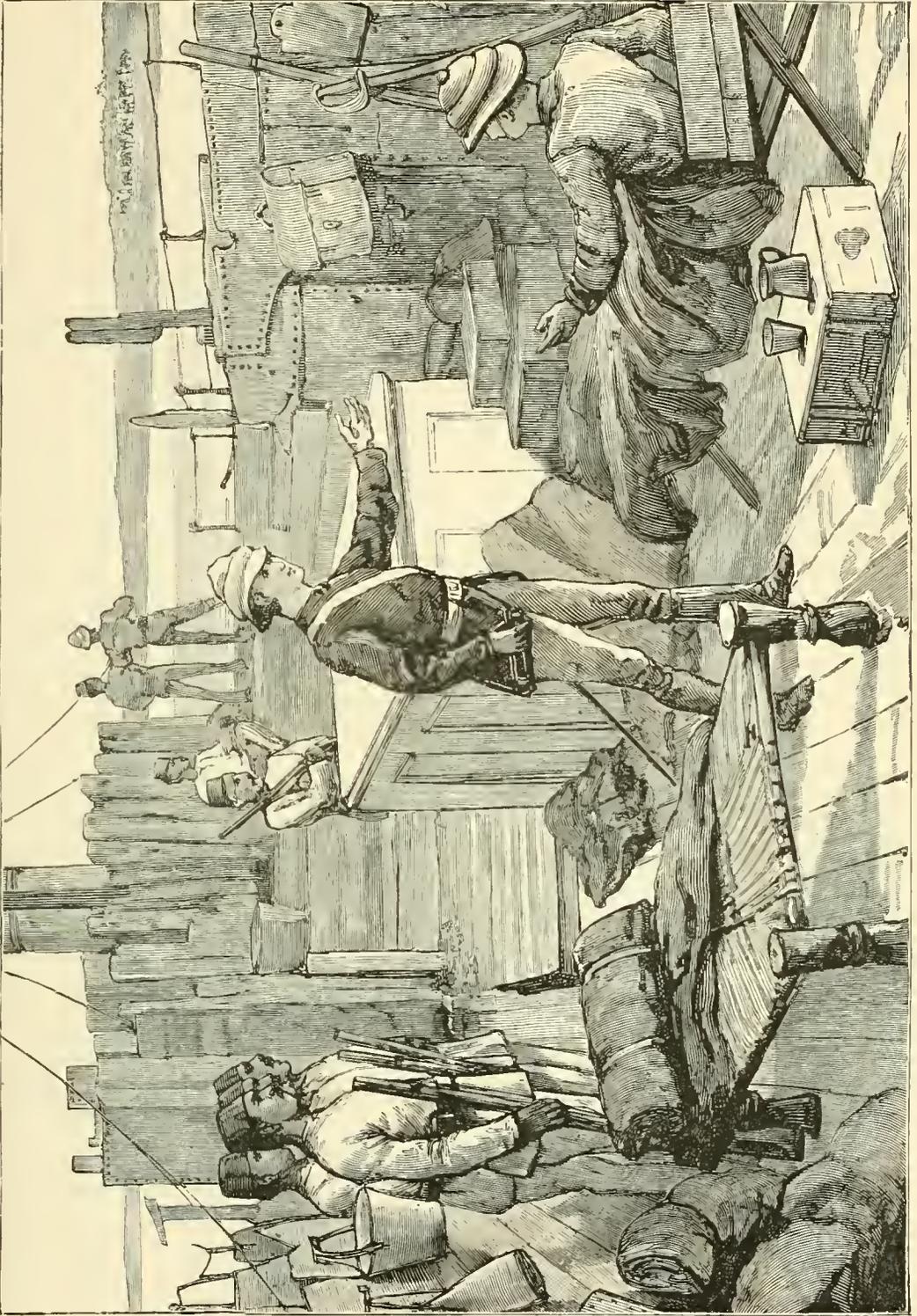
FACSIMILE OF LETTER FROM GENERAL GORDON TO MAJOR KITCHENER.

soldiers should be landed and marched to the end of it. They were embarked after she was got into the deep water; but she was barely under way when she struck upon a hard rock, and the soldiers had hardly time to land again, when she sank, the water filling her hull and rising over her deck.

To raise or repair her was impossible; but as there was a spacious island near, three miles long, by three-quarters of a mile broad, the men were encamped there, and a zeriba was to be formed next day, and held till succour should

was, that Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley, with four men of the Royal Sussex and eight natives, left for Abu Kru, to bring back succour.

Floating down the stream, their tiny craft was not discovered until they had passed the red glowing line of bivouac fires, lit by the enemy in their entrenched works twenty-five miles south of Metemneh; on which a few haphazard volleys were fired at them without effect, for the boat was soon out of range, as the river widened. Lieutenant Stnart-Wortley reached Abu Kru soon



LORD CHARLES BERESFORD DIRECTING A CATTLE RAID FROM ONE OF GENERAL GORDON'S STEAMERS.

after three next morning, and immediately made his report to Colonel Boscawen, and other officers in command.

Sir Charles Wilson, on the same morning, Sunday, February 1, had a zeriba constructed on the island, armed with four pieces of cannon, in excellent positions; but all present expressed their thankfulness that no attack had been made on them in the night. Had it been otherwise, all must have perished miserably.

A number of villagers wearing the uniform of the Mahdi, together with the Fakir Mustapha, now landed on the island, and talked with the officers, and native beys or colonels. Mustapha the Fakir advised Sir Charles Wilson, the Admiral Khasm-el-Moos, and all the others, to surrender to the Mahdi without delay, and in doing so, they would not be injured, adding that he was organising local governments at El Obeid, Khartoum, and wherever he went. Mustapha urged that his force was one of great strength. Sir Charles told Mustapha that he would consider the matter. The latter seemed to do so, and to hope that he was taking the whole shipwrecked force prisoners. He then retired, and that night three strong pickets were posted, and till day broke the officers went the round of the sentries constantly.

The zeriba was improved and strengthened on Monday the 2nd of February. The Fakir Mustapha and his attendant villagers again visited it, and was nearly all day in close consultation with Khasm-el-Moos and other native offi-

cers. Knowing the foul treachery of which the oriental nature is capable, this must have been a keenly anxious time for Sir Charles Wilson, who, to his joy, learned at 3 p.m., from a villager, that on the preceding day a steamer had left Abu Kru to succour him.

By Mustapha's admission that the fights at Abu Klea and Abu Kru were each known in the camp of the Mahdi on the subsequent day, it was evident that he had established a system of camel posts. At sunset all the Sudanese soldiery were paraded inside the zeriba, and Khasm-el-Moos implored them to be faithful and true to their salt. They brandished their Remingtons in the air, and shouted that they would be true till death; but curiously refused to take the out-picket duty, so a double line of sentries was placed inside, and the night was passed in quietude.

Next day, February 3rd, Captains Gascoigne and Trafford, when loitering at the northern end of the island, saw the enemy opening fire on the steamer *Sofia*, when too distant, about 7.30 p.m. The Egyptian flag was hoisted, and three pieces of cannon fired—the signal agreed upon with Lieutenant Stuart-Wortley—to indicate that the detachment was still upon the island. Suddenly, a great cloud of white smoke arose from the steamer, and all knew that she was seriously injured. On this, there was a general stampede for the nuggar among the native troops, each man snatching up his kit ere he ran; and, with great difficulty, some degree of discipline was restored.

Shots now began to come quickly from the mainland, and to these the soldiers replied with their rifles; and by 9 a.m. the nuggar, in charge of Captain Gascoigne, dropped down to the north end of the island, most of the officers and men walking abreast of it. Owing to sunken rocks, she was moored half a mile below the island, and a small boat was employed to convey the men to the bank, a process which occupied two most anxious hours. From the bank, which is lofty, an extensive view inland was obtained. One man was killed and ten wounded.

The force then marched to a point nearly abreast of where Lord Beresford's steamer, the *Sofia*, lay, at 500 yards' distance from a work of the enemy. He signalled for the main body to march for two miles down the bank of the river, and he would pick them up next morning. Meanwhile, a vigorous conflict with cannon and rifles was being maintained between the *Sofia* and the fort. A force remained for a time to fire and aid the ship; but after darkness fell, it joined the main body. During the day an attempt was made to pass the nuggar down the Nile, but she went fast aground at 4.30 p.m., and could not be got off; so Sir Charles Wilson formed a zeriba for his harassed and weary party two miles below the rebel fort.

From this point, we shall chiefly take up the narrative of the rescue, as given by Lord Charles Beresford in his despatches, under date 3rd February, 1855.

“At 7 a.m., observed a very strong

earthwork on the starboard hand; four embrasures in it; Sir C. Wilson's steamer on the rocks, about a quarter of a mile beyond it. Instructed the Riflemen, Gardner and howitzer gun crews, to fire solely into the embrasures as the ship passed the fort, and not at the bodies of riflemen I perceived on the banks.

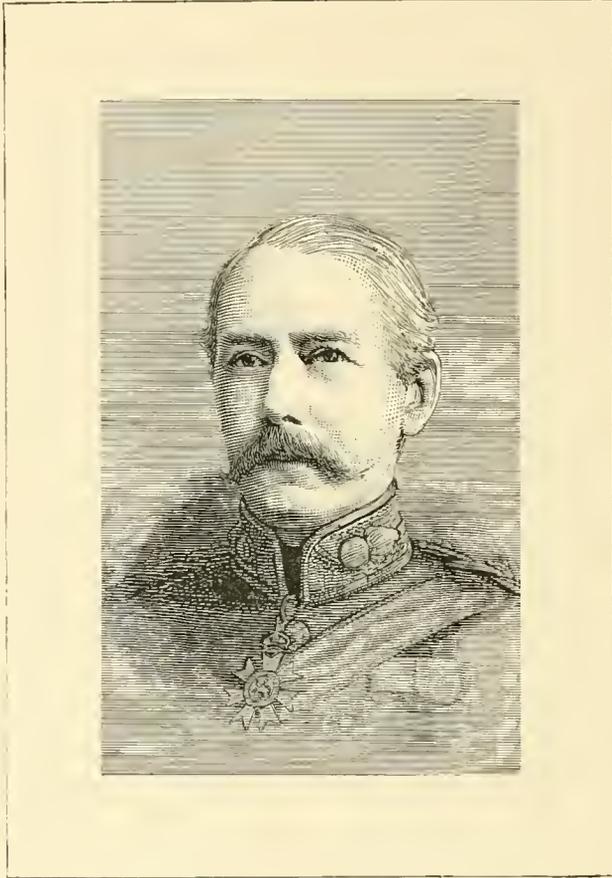
“Opened a heavy fire with our bow gun at 1,200 yards. Enemy opened a heavy fire from 600 or 800 rifles all along the bank, and also with a gun from an embrasure pointed down the river.

“Owing to the depth of water, the steamer had to pass at about eighty yards from the fort; but the machine-gun and marksmen's fire, directed into the embrasures, was so accurate and terrific that the enemy were luckily unable to fire their two guns when the fort bore on the beam, distant eighty yards.”

The *Sofia* was now flying the British, not Egyptian ensign. Lieutenant Bowen commanded the twenty men of the Mounted Infantry, and the Blue-jackets were more immediately under the command of Lieutenant the Hon. A. Keppel, the scion of a house famous in our naval annals. He had charge of the one-gun battery on the bridge; Lieutenant Van Koughnet attended to the two Gardner machine-guns; and Mr. Webber worked the bow-gun. When the *Sofia* had passed the fort about 200 yards, the machine-guns would no longer bear, and but few of the Rifles, comparatively, could get their rifles to bear over the stern. The *Sofia* was

going at full speed against a stream that ran from two and a half to three miles an hour, and had to endure, in passing, the full fire of shell and rifles

up some planks and mounted one of the Gardner guns aft, cutting a hole in the after side of the battery where one of the seven-pounders was; and by



SIR CHARLES WILSON.

upon her poor old iron-plated and wooden-clad sides.

"The enemy sent a shot into the boiler," continues the despatch. "Observing the paddles still moving, I headed the steamer towards the opposite bank, and, waiting till her way was lost, anchored. The enemy, on seeing this, redoubled their fire. I got

cutting off a foot of the trail with a saw we were enabled to fire this gun, although it capsized after every round, as there was no recoil. The guns—Gardner and rifles—were all directed at the embrasure facing up stream, to prevent the enemy getting their gun to bear on the steamer from the earth-work, or taking the gun out of it, so

that they might bring it to bear on us from another position (as the earthwork was close down to the water, at the bottom of a steep incline). Had they and men exerted themselves strenuously to keep down the enemy's fire, while the amount of the damage was examined. The chief engineer, Mr.



ON THE FRONTIER OF KORDOFAN, LOOKING TOWARDS DARFOUR.

attempted to remove the gun, they would have been exposed to the fire from the steamer."

When the shot entered the boiler there was a double explosion, followed by a dense cloud of white steam. Two sailors and four natives were severely scalded, and for a time it was supposed the vessel was done for; and officers

Henry Benbow (another name famous in the service), coolly reported that he could repair the boiler in eight hours, and Lord Charles communicated this welcome intelligence to officers and men, telling them that the enemy's fire must be replied to and kept down while that work went on, and the steamer lay where she was. A little

later Lieutenant Van Koughnet was wounded, and a seaman killed at the Gardner; but as quickly as possible the artificers were set to work to put a plate upon the boiler, while shell after shell was sent at the embrasure of the fort, widening and tearing it to pieces.

"From 7.30 to 8.30 p.m.," says Lord Charles Beresford, "without a minute's intermission, a continuous fire was kept up with the 7-pounder, the Gardner, and the Riflemen, who were told off in reliefs, on the earthwork and embrasure. The enemy were equally diligent, particularly with their rifles, their bullets rattling like hail all over the ship. They managed to fire several rounds from the gun; none of the enemy, however, could train it on the vessel, on account of the hot fire, and the shots travelled more than 100 yards to the right of the steamer.

"Having communicated with Sir Charles Wilson in the evening, and arranged that his party should land on the opposite bank, while his sick and wounded should float down in a nuggar after dark, I hauled the boats, four in number (brought up to take his party back) along the vessel's side, hoping that the enemy might think we were deserting the steamer, as at night, although we could not see them they could see us, and I feared they would take their guns out of the fort, run them up the bank abreast of the vessel, when their range would be under 100 yards, and when they would most certainly sink us.

"The ruse answered perfectly. I ceased firing and maintained a dead

silence, while Sir Charles Wilson and his party floated down. The enemy opened fire on the nuggar, but being dark, with little effect, and after it had passed them, took their guns out of the fort, and fired several rounds at the steamer, accompanied by a heavy rifle fire. To this I decided not to reply, remaining perfectly silent. The enemy, evidently thinking we had gone, ceased firing for the night.

"At 11 a.m., on the 3rd, when the boiler had got cool, Mr. Benbow, chief engineer, commenced to repair it. This took ten hours. Too much credit cannot be given to this officer, as he had to shape the plate, bore the holes in plate and boiler, and run the screws and nuts, almost entirely with his own hands, the artificers and every one in the stokehole having been severely scalded when the shot entered the boiler. The plate was 16 inches by 14 inches. Some idea can, therefore, be formed of the work entailed on him."

When the boiler was fully repaired, Lord Charles only waited for daybreak to weigh anchor. The last rivet was closed by 9 p.m., and at 5 a.m. the following morning (4th February) he ordered the fires to be lit, the furnace doors kept closed, and every precaution to be taken to prevent sparks coming out of the funnel, but it was not until 5.30, within ten minutes of dawn, when the steam was fully up for proceeding, that the enemy perceived the crew had not deserted the ship, but remained on board, and that their chance of destroying them was lost.

They gave utterance to the most

fiendish yells, and trained their guns to bear on the steamer, but by the time they commenced firing she was under way, and steaming southward. Proceeding up the river for three-quarters of a mile to where there was more space, Lord Charles Beresford put the vessel about, and passed the fort, using the guns, Gardners, and Riflemen as he had done on the previous day, and so accurate was his fire that not an Arab ventured to show his dark face above the earthworks, though they were 500 yards distant.

After passing the fort, the crew of the *Sofia* were much disappointed to find the nuggar, containing the sick and wounded of Sir Charles Wilson's party, aground on a rock, just within range of the enemy's fire. The steamer's anchor was again let go, and Lieutenant Keppel was sent off to get her afloat, which he succeeded in doing in a clever and gallant manner, after three hours' toil, under a sharp fire from the fort.

"He was most ably seconded by Captain Gascoigne," continues the despatch, "who was with Sir Charles Wilson's party in the nuggar all the time. On the nuggar getting afloat, we weighed, and proceeded about two miles down the river, picked up Sir Charles Wilson's party, which had marched down the right bank, and proceeded to Gubat, arriving about 5.45 p.m. During this action the men fired 5,400 rounds of Gardners, 126 of howitzer, and 2,150 from Martini-Henry.

"I consider that we owe our safety

in the steamer, as well as the safety of Sir Charles Wilson and his party, who would undoubtedly have been killed if the steamer had been destroyed, to the untiring energy of Sub-Lieutenant Keppel and Mr. Webber, boatswain (who worked the howitzer), to Lieutenant Bowen, commanding the picked shots of the Mounted Infantry, and Mr. Ingram of the Yeomanry, who is attached to the Naval Brigade, and who attended to the working of the Gardner, after Lieutenant Van Koughnet was wounded, at the moment the fort bore on the beam. Surgeon May, R.N., was also very attentive to the wounded. Testimony must be borne to the splendid discipline maintained by the men, one and all, during a tremendous fire which lasted thirteen hours."

Lord Charles Beresford (said the *United Service Gazette* about this time), is as simple-minded as he is gallant, and accepted all the perils he had undergone as matters of course. When he returned to Gubat, after rescuing Sir Charles Wilson and the party under him, he telegraphed to Lady Beresford, "Back all right—All jolly."

"The fact that the wreck of Sir Charles Wilson's steamers was caused by the treachery of the pilots," said the *Times*, "points to a probable explanation of the deaths of Colonel Stewart and Mr. Power, in consequence of similar treachery. It is a singular coincidence, that the commander of the advanced force in the Soudan should be Sir Charles Wilson, who, thirty months ago, recommended the employ-

ment of an Indian Contingent to crush the Mahdi. At that moment the task was an easy one, but his advice was neglected on the ground that insignificant rebellions in a distant province of the Khedive's dominions did not

Britain, precisely the expedition which we declined to undertake in October, 1882, and in March, 1884, with our troops on the spot. The sole apparent change in the situation is, that then the expedition would have been in time,



LORD CHARLES BERESFORD.

concern us. Eighteen months later, the rebellion having materially grown and come nearer, we discovered that the rebels were patriots righteously struggling for freedom; and simultaneously with the discovery we killed a few thousand of them, but, *pour encourager les autres*, we declined to relieve Khartoum. Now, after exactly twelve months, we are going to undertake in March, 1885, with troops from

whereas now, it is too late. In pursuing our policy of 'rescue and retire,' it would appear to be fated that the former half should always be adopted too late, and the latter too soon. The News Agencies are responsible for the statement that Lord Wolseley is instructed not to close hostilities till the rebellion has been suppressed. It is to be hoped the Government has not committed itself to any such instructions.<sup>22</sup>

## CHAPTER XVI.

## LORD WOLSELEY'S PLANS.

Proclamation to the Soudanese—Wolseley's Despatch from Korti—Rumours Circulated by the Mahdi—Strange Story of a Copt—Emissaries of the False Prophet—Skirmish at Handoub—Resolve of the Government.

ON the 28th of January, the following proclamation had been issued by Lord Wolseley to the inhabitants of Metemneh and adjacent villages, addressed generally to the notables and people of the Soudan :—

“The British Government has sent me with an army to restore peace, and not to collect taxes or injure any one. I pay you for all produce, and guarantee to execute General Gordon's promises.

“Only those deserving of punishment at our hands will receive it. We call upon you to submit and not to listen to evil advisers. Come into my camp and see my officers. No one shall harm you, either coming from, or returning to, Metemneh.”

The following despatch from Lord Wolseley to Lord Hartington, dated from his camp at Korti, 12th January, is full of interest, as descriptive of his designs before the final catastrophe at Khartoum. After alluding briefly to the last message of General Gordon, he wrote as follows :—

“It has been to me a source of heartfelt regret, that I was not able to reach this place at an earlier date. My advance has been delayed through the difficulty of collecting supplies at this point, 1,400 miles by river, from the sea, in sufficient quantities to warrant an advance into the neighbourhood of a besieged garrison that is very short of food, when all the surrounding districts have been laid waste, and when even the besieging army finds it difficult to subsist.

“I have always thought it possible, that upon arrival here, I might find it necessary to operate beyond this point in two columns; one continuing up the river in our English-built boats, while the other pushed rapidly across the Desert to Metemneh; and it was with the view of securing to myself

the power of moving across this Desert, that in my letter of the 11th September last, I proposed the formation of a Camel Brigade of picked troops, under carefully selected officers, organised on the lines therein recommended.

“Any march across the Desert with a small column, as an isolated operation, would be hazardous, and for the purposes of my mission a most useless undertaking. Such a column would most probably be able to fight its way to Khartoum—possibly fight its way out again—but it could not bring away General Gordon and his garrison in safety. Undertaken, however, under present circumstances, the march of a small force across the Desert presents a different aspect.

“The so-called Mahdi and his supporters, are well aware they have to deal with the British army, which they know is advancing up the Nile on Khartoum, by Abu Hammed and Berber.

“Upon my arrival here, I had to decide whether I should keep all my force together and follow the Nile Valley to Khartoum, or divide it into two columns—one following the river, while the other was pushed rapidly across to Metemneh.

“If I were not restricted by time, the first course would be the most satisfactory, and ensure the best results; but I know that General Gordon is pressed by want of food, and the hot season is not far off, when military operations in this country are trying to the health of European soldiers.

“I therefore decided upon the last-mentioned course, and—as reported to your lordship by telegraph—I dispatched Brigadier-General Sir Herbert Stewart, on the 30th ult., to seize the Gakdul Wells, which are 100 miles from this, and about 76 from Metemneh.

\* \* \* \* \*

“This column will reach the Nile at Metemneh as the advanced guard of what the natives of this country believe to be an enormous army. Covering in its column of route, as this army may be said to have done lately, about 450 miles of the Nile Valley, it seems countless to the native mind, which is incapable of estimating numbers. The most exaggerated stories of great strength are current,

and have certainly reached Mohammed Achmet; indeed, the impression has got abroad that, for some deep reason, we persist in pretending that our great army is only a small one.

"The column to advance in our boats up the river is under the command of Major-General Earle, C.B., and will rendezvous at Handab, about 54 miles above this, where a camp has been already formed.

"Although the physical obstacles encountered in the ascent of the Nile above the Second Cataract have been considerable, and although the labour of surmounting the many cataracts between Sarras and Hannek has tested to a remarkable degree the strength and endurance of the troops, the advance of the boats up the river has been accomplished in a manner which has reflected the highest credit upon all ranks, and has conclusively proved, if proof were wanting, that her Majesty's soldiers of to-day possess all that strength of body and that military pride and regimental spirit for which the British Army has been long renowned. . . .

"The Nile has now fallen so low that its navigation by the native craft of the country has become quite impossible, but to our boats movement by water is actually more feasible to-day than it was in November last; nor am I led to anticipate, by those who are best acquainted with the river, that any stage of water will be reached during the next three months which cannot be successfully passed by our English-built craft. In fact, our English-built boats have been, so far, a complete success, and without them it would have been simply impossible for this force to have reached Korti ready and provisioned for a movement on Khartoum.

"The average time taken by the boats in ascending the river from the head of the Second Cataract, near Wady Halfa, to this place, a distance of 450 miles, has been about forty days, and although the labour of rowing, poling, and tracking up the numerous cataracts which made the first 250 miles has been very great, the health of the troops has been so good that their physical and fighting condition at the present moment is of the highest possible excellence."

Of course the fall of Khartoum involved a reconsideration of the entire military situation and of the objects of the campaign.

Early in February the Arabic paper, the *Mubashir*, published a letter of great, though retrospective, interest

from the Mahdi to Osman Digna, in which he stated that twice he had tried to cross the Nile with his army and get into the rear of Khartoum, but the stream was too deep to be forded, and he was without boats or rafts. "I went, therefore, along the river to Omdurman, where I have now my headquarters, and am able quietly to await the arrival of the British army, if it intends to come to the Soudan. Thou art on the other side of the river, and to thee I leave the duty of guarding the road which leads from the sea to Khartoum. Thus both gates from the north to Khartoum are in our hands, and, should the enemy really try to go through them, we shall quickly close the gates, and not one of our adversaries will escape."

The surrender or capture of Khartoum greatly strengthened the hands of the Mahdi. Besides soldiers and much munition of war, it gained him now many more adherents, though he had lost in battle many of his most powerful and gallant Emirs; but the whole Kabbabish tribe were making common cause with us, at least all save those inhabiting Walad Gerlish, who sold dates at 30 dollars a camel-load to the Mahdi's troops at Omdurman—a proof of the great scarcity of food that existed.

The Emir of Metemneh, Ali Walad Saad, and another Emir, Annour Angar, lay severely wounded in Metemneh. The head chief, Moussa El Tashi was killed at Abu Klea, and thirty other sheikhs in two battles; and of the Ababdieh tribe, who num-

bered 1,000 warriors, 500 were killed or wounded at Abu Klea alone, and the return of the maimed to their native villages did much to dispel their belief in the assurances of the Mahdi that "British rifles only spit water."

A wounded prisoner, a native of Kordofan, who fell into our hands, stated that all the Mahdi had told his people was false. He had said the British were only a small number, whose weapons were harmless, and who would take to flight at the sight of the Arab spears. The prisoner added that many of the Mahdi's troops were compelled to fight or suffer the most cruel punishments. Any who refused to fight were kept without food for forty days; and if they survived that ordeal they were declared to be exempt from military service by the will of Allah.

The most, however, preferred the chances of war to the risk of certain starvation, and gave in long before the allotted time. This prisoner appeared to know much of the rebel movements, and said they had twenty-two pieces of cannon before Khartoum, worked by Soudanese, and commanded by officers who were *protégés* of Ismail Pasha, who had taught them the use of artillery at Cairo. When that Khedive went to live in Italy they had been dismissed without pay, and made common cause with the Mahdi. He added, that all the sharpshooters, whose fire had so harassed our troops in the zeribas at Abu Klea and Abu Kru, were deserters from Hicks's army.

On the 6th of February a messenger, or spy, was sent to Khartoum to dis-

cover what was being done there, but failed to get through the enemy's lines. He was stopped at Nefishe, where he intended to cross the Nile, by a number of the Mahdi's people, who asked him the name of his sheikh, and the colour of his banner; and, after satisfying them on these points, he was allowed to proceed.

On arriving at Kerrera, he met a Yaalin tribesman who was at the taking of Khartoum, and who told him, with referenee to General Gordon's death, that the soldiers had consulted among themselves whether to take him alive or not; but they decided on killing him, because if they took him to the Mahdi his life would be spared, and they did not wish that, as they thought he ought to be killed for all the trouble he had caused.

He added that the Mahdi had ordered his people to collect all the animals they could procure, and to prepare large numbers of water-skins, as they would soon be on the march again. This messenger brought back with him several British sovereigns, which he said the rebels sold at three dollars each; he further stated that he did not venture farther than Kerrera as he dreaded discovery, and the Yaalin men had told him all he required to know.

In spite of the circumstantial accounts of Gordon's death many strange stories of his escape were current at this time, and even doubts of it were expressed in Parliament and other places. The following particulars were communicated to the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* by its Cairo correspondent:—

“A Coptic merchant, who was one of the few men who had managed to escape from Khartoum after the massacre, has arrived here after a long and painful journey, and has made a most astounding statement to the authorities. He asserts, in the most positive manner, partly from his own observation, and partly from information supplied to him on the spot by credible witnesses, that shortly after the massacre, which followed the entry of the rebels, and before the terrible confusion resulting therefrom had subsided, the Mahdi, on hearing that Gordon had been slain, ordered his head to be brought before him. The rebels at once produced the head of Herr Hansal, the Austrian consul, which was at first accepted as that of the gallant Gordon. But, as it lay upon the ground, it was recognised by one of the rebels, who knew Hansal well, and a hue and cry for Gordon was at once raised. The city was scoured by parties of the rebels, and every European corpse was minutely examined, but without result. Indeed, no trace could be found either of Gordon or of Abougatas, a rich merchant, long resident in Khartoum, or of Gordon's two cavasses. Neither were any documents found, and the most diligent search failed to bring to light any of the clothing usually worn by Gordon. The narrator therefore believes that there is at least a slight chance that Gordon may have made his escape, and fled south in the direction of Sennaar. I have seen the Coptic merchant referred to, and can testify that he is a smart, honest-

looking man whom one would be inclined to trust.”

However, this, and other similar rumours, were put an end to by the minute narrative of the soldiers, Saïd Abdullah and Jacob Mahomet.

Early in February the *Globe* newspaper asserted that emissaries or spies of the Mahdi existed in the city of London, and related their nature and movements, on the authority of “a clergyman holding a distinguished position” in the metropolis—a startling statement, which was reproduced next day in the *Daily News*. One of these emissaries, the Préfet de Police under Arabi at Cairo, and who had aided in concealing the latter after Tel-el-Kebir, was stated to be a *habitué* of a hotel near the Victoria station, where he wore a scarlet fez, and generally conversed in French; and there he was recognised—or discovered—by the correspondent of the *Globe*, in the course of a conversation too long to be inserted here. The latter states that he overheard him conversing with two gentlemen from Birmingham, concerning the purchase of rifles.

“The narrative,” said the *Globe*, “brings into striking relief the intimate relations which, under the present condition of social life, may exist between the centres of Western European civilisation, and what we are accustomed to regard as the almost inaccessible strongholds of Oriental barbarism. There seems to be no reason to question the fact that in the West-end of London the False Prophet is represented by skilful emissaries, who are

not only in his confidence, but have been systematically informed as to his future movements. The conclusion can scarcely be rejected that the machinery which can bridge the space between the wilds of the Soudan and Belgravia, can easily perform converse

place of the Mohammedan world, before the Kaaba, in Mecca, for one Christian, who is no other than General Gordon, for his just and gentle treatment of the Mohammedans when Governor of the Soudan. This, added the *Mubashir*, will explain the bitter



COLONEL EYRE.

(From a Photograph by Robert Cox, Clifton.)

operations. The revelation suggests the immediate necessity of carefully observing the movements of all persons in London, who either have, or profess to have, a special sympathy with the Mahdi, with Arabi, or any of the other troublers of Egypt."

In the subsequent April the *Mubashir* mentioned a circumstance perhaps unknown in Europe, that once a year, namely, during the great pilgrimage, prayers are said in the holiest

feelings that were created when news came that General Gordon had been slain by order of the Mahdi, who looked quietly on while hundreds of true believers were massacred; and the deed effaced much of the sympathy for the Mahdi which formerly existed in Arabia, where the Grand Sherif proclaimed him an outlaw, and said that the British were fully entitled to deal with him as a common murderer.

Prior to the next great event of the

war, the battle of Kirbekan, a little fighting occurred near Suakim.

A force, consisting of a troop of the 19th Hussars, under Captain D. R. Apthorpe, and another troop of Egyptian cavalry, under Captain Gregory, were sent out on the morning of the 2nd February, to reconnoitre in the direction of Handoub. On arriving at that place only a few of Osman Digna's people were visible, and they took to flight. After destroying some native huts and property, and capturing some cattle, this reconnoitring force, when returning, suddenly came upon a body of the rebels, about 5,000 strong, barring the way.

This was at a distance of one mile from Handoub, and their line extended for a mile or more across a plain, where they were covered by thick scrub. The cavalry then tried, at full speed, to get round the enemy's flank, under a heavy fire, and a rapid and most determined advance. This manœuvre was accomplished, but not without great difficulty, owing to the rough nature of the ground. The Hussars, according to one account, lost eight men and eleven horses killed or missing, the Egyptians three killed and six horses missing. According to another account, the force lost in all, after a terrible sixteen miles' gallop round by the sea coast, sixteen men and nineteen horses killed, and one Egyptian wounded, while the enemy's loss was trivial.

This unfortunate affair gave a fresh impetus to Osman Digna's waning prestige; but no blame could be attached to General Fremantle for send-

ing out the cavalry, as he had now received reinforcements. The harassing state of things at Suakim had then grown intolerable, and it was becoming a question whether a purely defensive policy would enable us to hold that place much longer; and now Osman very nearly cut off two troops of our cavalry, while the friendly tribes did not assist us very much in these outpost affairs.

At a parade of the troops soon after, General Fremantle called to the front Captain Stopford, A.D.C., Captain Gregory, of the Egyptian army, Private Baker, of the 19th Hussars, and three *Nafars*, or privates of the Egyptian cavalry, and publicly complimented them upon the gallantry they had displayed in rescuing some of their comrades in Apthorpe's reconnaissance. The action of the General in thus associating the Egyptian with the British troops, in recognising their individual gallantry, had an excellent effect upon them, and there was a general feeling among the Europeans that it was well deserved; but there were some divisions of opinion about this reconnaissance.

The question was raised, that it must have been known to General Fremantle that any force which ventured to approach Handoub would be in imminent peril of having its retreat cut off by the enemy, who were posted in strength at Hasheen, on its left flank. It was said, that either Apthorpe's force was not intended to advance more than a mile or so from our lines—and in that case the reconnaissance would have told us nothing—

or the officer in command was left at discretion to proceed to the vicinity of Handoub if he found his advance unopposed. Any way, the affair proved a species of *fiasco*.

Extensive works were carried on at Suakim after General Fremantle took the command; and this was in the face of discouragement, strange to say, from the home authorities though it was known that the works would prove of special use to the reinforcements that were expected.

On the day after the skirmish, Major Chermiside arrived at Suakim from Mas-sowah, with intelligence that Kassala was still blockaded by the rebels, through whom, however, a convoy with provisions had cut a passage into the town.

With regard to military measures, which were now deemed necessary in order to recover British prestige so seriously injured by the fall of Khartoum, it was felt in official quarters at home that prompt and vigorous action should be taken; but the initiation of suggesting their nature was left with Lord Wolseley.

At this crisis a long telegraphic despatch from Lord Wolseley was submitted to the Cabinet, in which his Lordship requested specific instructions as to the course he should pursue. He laid the whole situation before the Ministry with perfect clearness; he pointed out that a march upon Khartoum could still be carried out; and that he was perfectly ready to do that, and to crush the Mahdi, if ordered to do so. But, nevertheless, the fall of Khartoum, and the elation in the rebel

ranks consequent on their triumph over General Gordon, and the retreat of Sir Charles Wilson, had rendered the task not only difficult, but dangerous. He, further, again directed attention to the rapidly-advancing season, which would increase the hazard of the expedition, as in a few weeks' time the tropical heat would decimate the British ranks; and, that in any case, more men would be lost from this cause than from the lances and rifles of the Arabs; and that with the utmost efforts he could not be ready to deliver an assault on Khartoum in less than five weeks; and he expressed his intention of drawing his forces to more favourable quarters, unless he was ordered to continue their march against the Mahdi.

The Government decided eventually to give Lord Wolseley *carte blanche* to adopt any measures he thought fit. In the meantime, he was to advise them of the steps he meant to take, and of what he wished the Government to do in assisting him.

This line of action recommended itself to most people, as it seemed to afford a prospect of operations being carried out under the direct responsibility of Lord Wolseley, who was himself on the spot, and who might therefore be, not unreasonably, expected to know what was required for prompt and decisive effect—so long as no leading principle of Imperial policy was compromised—better than the home authorities, who were so remote from the scene of operations, and between whom and the army in the field communication was tedious and difficult.



COLONEL COVENY.

(From a Photograph by Van der Weyde, Regent Street, W.)

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE BATTLE OF KIRBEKAN.

Departure of the Canadian Boatmen—Retreat of Suleiman Wad Gamr—Battle of Kirbekan—Charge of the Black Watch—Colonels Eyre, Coveny, and General Earle killed—Salamat occupied—Brigadier Brackenbury in Command—House of Suleiman Wad Gamr—Crossing the Nile—The Steamer *Abbas*.

WE may here mention chronologically that the Canadian *voyageurs*, and Canadians, having taken the last boat up the cataracts below Dongola, were ordered to return from the front. Before proceeding to Alexandria, they spent a day sight-seeing at Cairo at the expense of the Government. Carriages were at the railway station to meet them, and they were driven to the citadel, mosques, bazaars, and the Pyramids; and were amply supplied with food, liquor, and tobacco—a programme arranged by Lord Wolseley, as a reward for their

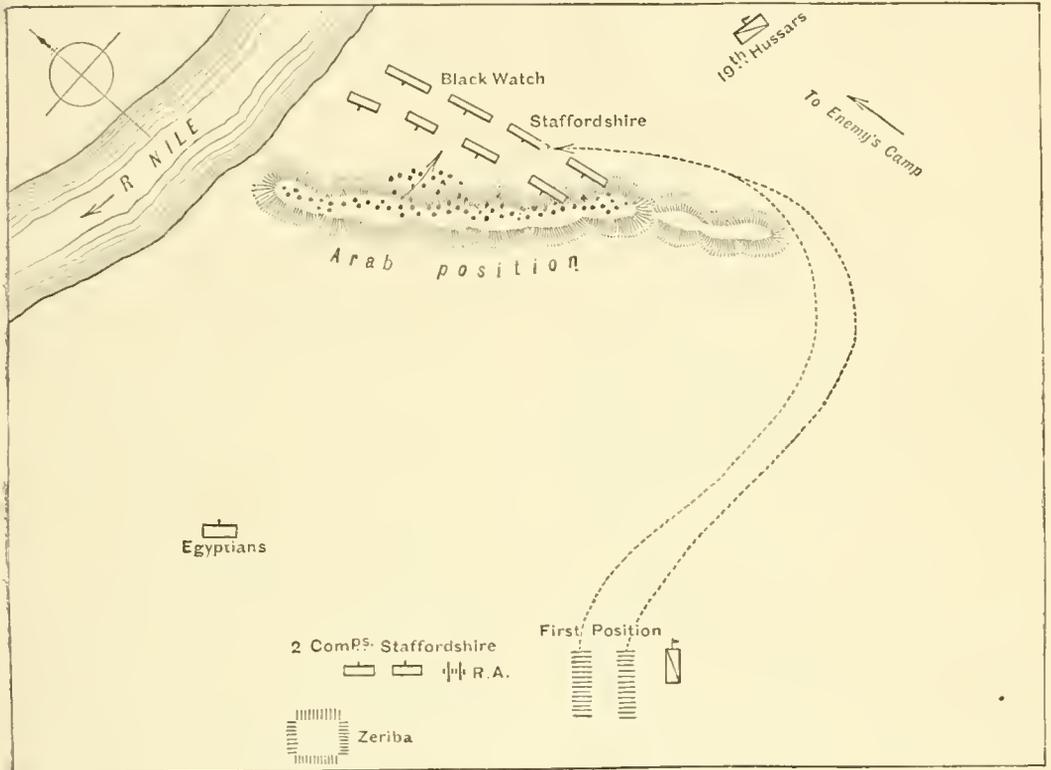
exertions and uniformly good conduct. They then embarked with their chaplain on board the *Poonah* at Alexandria.

While the column under Brigadier Sir Herbert Stewart was toiling across the Bayuda Desert and winning the hard-fought battles of Abu Klea and Abu Kru (or Gubat), the troops under General Earle had voyaged up the Nile to avenge the murder of Gordon's friend and coadjutor, Colonel Donald Stewart, on Suleiman Wad Gamr and his tribe. The succession of cataracts

made the progress of his force necessarily very slow, especially above Handoub; and it was only on the 1st of February, 1885, that he at last reached the village of Berti, where the Arabs were expected to make a stout stand.

found; but that the district was very bad for military operations, being rocky, broken, and altogether impracticable for cavalry; also, that there were few attempts at cultivation.

The Rahami cataract proved ex-



PLAN OF THE BATTLE OF KIRBEKAN (FEBRUARY 10, 1885).

But Suleiman Wad Gamr had fallen back from that place two days previously, thus it was necessary for General Earle's Column to press onward in pursuit. On the 4th February a party of his troops pushed forward from Berti in the direction of Shukok Pass under Colonel Butler, who reconnoitred the country for nine miles in front. He reported that good water was to be

tremely and unexpectedly difficult and dangerous to General Earle's column, and the labour of getting up the boats was very great. The bed of the Nile is there broken up by rocks, and it rushes through narrow chasms with immense force and volume. The boats had to be tracked up the entire distance, and at these chasms, often with many sharp turns and sunken rocks, a large number

of men was required for each boat at a time, consequently the column, comprising the Black Watch, South Staffordshire Regiment, a squadron of Hussars, and the Egyptian Camel Corps (with two guns) had its hands full.

The perils and difficulties were quite as great as any hitherto encountered on the passage up the Nile. For the last six miles below Berti, the river takes an acute angle, and then as sharply resumes its former course. The Royal Highlanders were the first to come up, but after they had got their boats through, another channel was discovered on the western side of the stream, and as it turned out to be less difficult, the succeeding regiments were enabled to come up more quickly.

A quantity of grain and ammunition, with some rifles, were found buried at Berti. These were brought into General Earle's camp, together with papers of importance, which were discovered in the village. Suleiman Wad Gamr had evidently considered his position at Berti almost impregnable; the village being surrounded by rocky hills, and having stone walls built across its southern end, Berti would have presented some difficulties against a direct attack, but might have been taken in flank, through a narrow valley. The news of the conflicts at Abu Klea and Abu Kru had shaken Suleiman's faith in his powers of resistance, and hence—to the disgust of Earle's column—he had decided on a retreat without fighting.

General Earle sent letters to the

various sheikhs of the Monassir tribe, inviting them to come in; but as they refused to do so, and still remained under arms with Suleiman; all their property found in Berti was destroyed. Great care, however, was taken, not to damage the houses or property of any of the natives who showed themselves friendly, and in consequence of this care and forbearance, the staff obtained much valuable information, which otherwise would not have been forthcoming.

Suleiman was now reported to have withdrawn his force to Berber, after holding the Shukok Pass for a few days; but his mounted scouts were still seen hovering in the vicinity of the column as it advanced. A small boat, which had belonged to the unfortunate Colonel Stewart's steamer, was found in a creek, with a bullet embedded in her port side.

The nights and early mornings now were bitterly cold, and the days oppressively hot, but the troops were in excellent spirits, and anxious to advance towards Berber, the main road to which was found on the 8th of February to be barricaded. A number of prisoners and cattle were captured by the Camel Corps when out scouting, and the troops of the Mudir of Dongola were seen occupying the opposite bank of the Nile, and after a four days' halt, Earle's column resumed its march, leaving the Soudanese regiment of the Mudir to occupy Berti.

On the 9th of February the column reached Kirbeka, near the island of Dulka, seventy miles above Merawi,

and the enemy were known to be in force, and at a little distance off. The column formed a camp near the water's edge at Dulka, and a zeriba was constructed, under an occasional fire from the enemy, who held a strong position on some high hills in front; but our pickets advanced and drove them back; then strong guards were posted when darkness fell, and all was in readiness to repulse an attack, in case the enemy came down.

Their force consisted of above 2,000 men, composed of Monassir and Robatat tribes, with some Berbereens, and thirty-five fellahen soldiers, posted on high rocks. The greatest enthusiasm prevailed among the troops at the prospect of having a brush with them at last, after an advance of eighteen miles, which had occupied them twenty days!

No fires were lit that night in the zeriba. "Cold suppers were the word; neither did the bugle sound 'first or last post,' nor, for this night only, did the rocks re-echo with the shrill pibroch at tattoo. It was determined," says the *Daily News*, "to give as little alarm as possible. Of our presence they were of course aware, and of this we soon had most unmistakable evidence. About nine, shot after shot was fired over our heads, from a long distance, without damage. Then all was silent, and the night passed without alarm."

At 5.30 a.m. on the 10th February, fires were lighted, and the men had their coffee—for too many the last cup—and afterwards the column got under arms, formed, and began its march straight inland over a very rocky

country, for about a mile. By this time the blood-red morning sun was just above the distant horizon.

The column now inclined to the left for about half a mile, and reached the Berber road. The rocky position held by the enemy was now distinctly visible; but few or none were run against the sky-line; a dark head popping up now and then could be detected by the field-glass alone.

The Black Watch and South Staffordshire now broke into skirmishing order—six companies of the former, and four of the latter—the Cavalry being sent to the right, the two guns of Major Carter's battery following in support of the Infantry; while two companies of the Staffordshire, and two guns, were left in rear to protect the boats, the Hospital Corps, the surplus ammunition and rations.

This order was preserved till the ten companies of skirmishers reached the high rocks in front, when they rushed between and over them, and there Colonel Eyre, a noble veteran officer, fell, when leading the South Staffordshire to attack a second ridge, where, behind some giant boulders, the sheikh Moussa Abu Hagil was with his Robatat tribe—the most determined of the Arab race. These were then faced by only two companies of Highlanders, led by their Colonel, and the General in person.

Desperate was the struggle that now ensued. Behind every rock and crag and stone, says the correspondent of the *Daily News*, a hidden or half-concealed enemy poured forth a murderous fire,

“but as foxhounds thrown into a cover at the huntsman's holloa,” the men dashed with the charged bayonet right through any passage or aperture that could be found, however steep or narrow. Theirs it was to get at the lurking foe, to draw the lurking savage; but like wild beasts of the forest surprised in their lair, the Arabs fought at bay with the courage of desperation,

“huge boulders of black granite rock, where every available nook had been built up with small stones, making a continuation of rifle galleries, from which the enemy kept up a hot and well-aimed fire.” “It being found,” he continued, “quite impossible to dislodge these Arab riflemen, who showed no fear, but only a fixed determination to conquer or die, General Earle



FORTIFIED HOUSE AT KIRBEKAN, HELD BY THE ARABS.

and a fury born of religious rancour and fanaticism, while having everywhere the advantage of ground.

But against desperate odds, and amid a blinding and bewildering fire all round, our soldiers stormed rock after rock, fastness after fastness, over places red and slippery with human blood, over ghastly corpses, the groaning and shrieking, the dead and the dying, while from every loophole in the wall of rock the puffs of white smoke spirted forth.

The correspondent of the *Standard* describes the position at Kirbekan as

ordered the left half-battalion of the Black Watch to charge by half companies in rushes. This order, with a ringing cheer, and the pipers playing ‘The Campbells are Coming,’ was quickly carried out, and the koppie was in our possession; for, with the combined movement of the right half-battalion of the Black Watch, who had charged and rushed the other extremity of the koppie, it was filled by red-coats, and the Mahdi's soldiers rolled down the rocks, never to move again after their acquaintance with British steel.” Here fell Colonel Coveny, a

most popular officer of the Black Watch.

Before these rushes were carried out, a most resolute band of the enemy, armed with spears and swords, and led by a standard-bearer, rushed straight out of the koppie on the thin red Highland line. The standard-bearer was instantly shot, and as his body went rolling down the rocks, the

the ring of the rifle, the clashing of sword and spear, the cheers of the soldiers encouraging each other, the yells of the infuriated Arabs, the roar of the guns and the groans of the dying."

Inside the koppie was a stone hut, full of the enemy, who, though surrounded by victors, refused to surrender. General Earle rashly approached



BURIAL OF GENERAL EARLE AND COLONELS EYRE AND COVENTY.

standard was seized in succession by three who all perished in the same manner. Some of this band now rushed away towards the Nile to escape the storm of bullets, but were met there by a company of the Staffordshire, and all shot down.

The latter corps had a feat to perform somewhat similar to that of the Highlanders, "and most coolly and resolutely did they set to work at it," says the *Daily News*, "clambering over, pressing through, and climbing up a most difficult and naturally fortified ground; and there for hours was heard

it, though warned by Sergeant Watts of the Black Watch, that it was occupied by Arabs. He attempted to enter it, but was shot dead by one who hurled his rifle at him as he fell. An entrance was found impossible, the door was so securely barricaded, so the edifice was set on fire, and breached by powder; and about twenty-five Arabs who were within, were all shot down or burned alive.

The enemy now gave way on all hands, and while these events were in progress at the position, Colonel Buller with a squadron of the 19th Hussars,

had galloped beyond it, and captured the camp, about three miles in rear, and General Brackenbury now assumed, as next senior officer, the command of the column.

The battle or affair of Kirbekan lasted nearly five hours, and the loss of the enemy was reported to be 600 at least; but it was difficult to estimate it, though their dead lay thickly all over the position, for an unknown number were drowned in the Nile. Our own losses were General Earle, Colonels Coveny and Eyre, seven non-commissioned officers and men killed, with eighty of all ranks wounded—some most severely. Among the latter were Major Wauchope and Lieutenant Kennedy of the Black Watch.

Seventeen of the enemy were taken alive. These men said that when the column came in sight, they took it for a herd of "red cattle"; which perhaps was true, as they had been accustomed to see our men in grey khaki; but the Highlanders went into action in their scarlet doublets and dark-green kilts.

A kind of general order or circular letter, written by the Mahdi, was picked up on the field. It ran thus:—

"In the name of the most merciful and bountiful God. To the sheikhs of Dar Monassir, Dar Robatat, &c. Twenty-five rifles have been distributed to every village in your country, and in all the Shagiyeh districts. No man must, therefore, come without arms. Should any join your camp without a rifle, he is to receive 200 strokes of the kourbash. Unarmed men are useless, and only eat up provisions; besides, they may be suspected of being lukewarm in our cause, and afraid of being seen by the Giaour, or the Turks—who are not true Mussulmans, and more to be cursed than the Giaour. All these ye shall destroy in good time. After much

blood has flown there shall be peace. See that these instructions of our Lord, the Long-Expected One, are followed. Woe to the disobedient!"

Then followed the signatures of Ibrahim Emon-Hassan, Mahomet Ali, Hamid Ageil, and Suleiman Yousseff.

Major-General Earle, C.B., C.S.I., who fell here, was the senior general on the staff in Egypt. He joined the 49th Foot as an ensign, 17th October, 1851, and in the Crimea was present at the battles of Alma and Inkerman, the memorable sortie on the 26th of October, 1854, and the capture of Sebastopol; and for his services in the campaign he was specially mentioned in the despatches. During the Egyptian war of 1882 he commanded the base and lines of communication, was again mentioned in the despatches published in the *Gazette* of 6th October and 2nd November in that year. On the commencement of the Soudan War he commanded the garrison at Alexandria, and, until the selection of Lord Wolseley, was designed as the leader of the army. The latter part of his career had been passed in the Grenadier Guards.

Colonels Coveny of the Black Watch and Eyre of the South Staffordshire Regiment were both distinguished officers. The former was an ensign in the Welsh Fusiliers, 23rd January, 1862, and in the September of that year was transferred to the Royal Highlanders, with whom he served in the Ashanti War, including all the conflicts there and the capture of Coomassie. He was wounded at Tel-el-

Kebir, and fought in the battles of El Teb and Tamai.

The latter, Colonel Eyre, though his father was Eyre of Eyre Court, a landed estate, joined the South Staffordshire Regiment as a private in 1854, and for his conspicuous bravery in the Crimea received an ensigney. He subsequently went through the Indian Mutiny, taking part in the assault and capture of Meeangunge, the capture of Lucknow, and the affairs of Barree and Nuggur. For his services in Egypt in 1882 he was specially mentioned in the despatches. When Colonel Creagh, commanding the home battalion of the Staffordshire Regiment, telegraphed to the 2nd Battalion in Egypt, "A Merry Christmas on the Nile," Eyre wrote thus to his brother officer—the last communication ever received from him:—

"Near Merawi, January 1st, 1885.

"MY DEAR CREAGH,—It was most kind of you and the 2nd Battalion to think of us at Christmas, and send the kind telegram which reached me at night on Christmas Eve. I replied to it as soon as I could get a message through, and published your telegram in the general orders. I assure you all ranks deeply appreciated the feeling of you all. We were inspected by Lord Wolseley on the 24th, and he was most flattering in his address to the regiment, and said he would send us to the front, which he did on the 28th. We are now the advance guard of the force to move on Khartoum. The column is under Brackenbury. To-morrow we go on, and after getting over the cataract, take up a position where the column will form. It has been a hard job, but my men did well. No sickness, no crime, and all worked hard. I hope you like Manchester. You will find many old friends there. No use my telling you any news from here. The correspondents are in crowds, and no doubt every move is reported. My wife was very glad to see you—so kind of you to call. Wishing you and all your comrades a happy and lucky New Year, believe me, yours truly,

PHILIP H. EYRE."

General Earle, the two Lieutenant-Colonels, and the other brave fellows who had fallen with them, were all interred on the field with military honours, under a solitary palm tree, without any mark to attract the eyes of the natives. To these were added the remains of Captain Viscount Avonmore, of the Hampshire Regiment, who died of fever.

A visit to the enemy's position after the fight showed how great was its strength. It had been carefully prepared by the erection of strong stone screens between the rocks and boulders. The bodies of the dead were found behind these in heaps; in other places lying in the chasms and crevices of the rocks. The high ridge taken by the Staffordshire could only be ascended by climbing with the hands and feet.

General Earle was universally regretted, and on the 12th February General Brackenbury issued a general order to the troops under his command. He desired to express his appreciation of their gallant conduct, adding that he knew perfectly well the wishes of their late General, stricken down in the moment of victory, and trusted they might be conducted to a successful issue.

The day after the conflict at Kirbekan was devoted to quiet and rest, while several detachments were sent over the field to collect the rifles, swords, and spears which were strewn in every direction. Surgeon-Major Harvey, with his medical staff, had hard work with the wounded, all of whom were brought into the zeriba.

Those officers who examined the position, were surprised that it had been stormed with such a small loss of life on our side, though this, of course, was due to the tactics adopted by General Earle in turning the enemy's flank. This movement completely deceived the enemy, as we learned from the prisoners taken; for on seeing the Highlanders appear round the northern end of the ridge, they never doubted but that the British army had arrived after capturing Berber, and thus a panic seized them; but flight was almost impossible, as we hemmed them in on all sides.

At the southern flank of the ridge the Egyptian Camel Corps was posted, and, acting as Mounted Infantry, did excellent service, not only in the early part of the eventful day, but throughout the conflict; they were continually discovering the whereabouts of the enemy, who, from the nature of the ground and their knowledge of it, could shift from point to point, so as to conceal and apparently increase their strength. The Egyptians here behaved not only well under fire, but were with difficulty restrained on more than one occasion from making a rush at the black fortress of natural rocks before the main body of the column came up.

"As a rule," says a writer, "the ordinary native of Lower Egypt is not a lover of animals, but an exception must certainly be made in favour of the Egyptian Camel Corps, for they take every care of their steeds, which are selected from the best class of dromedaries and are always in good con-

dition. Rider and camel undoubtedly thoroughly understand each other. Perhaps it is from the fact that both are accustomed to rough it a bit; at any rate, the Egyptians working side by side with the British soldiers are full of *esprit de corps*, and are always ready to show it."

Brigadier-General Brackenbury now pushed on after sending the Cavalry, the Egyptian Camel Corps, and a wing of the Cornwall Regiment, three miles in advance to occupy a strong point *en route*. From Kirbeka to Salamat, about thirty miles, little that is favourable can be said of the way. Directly after leaving the former place, a track strikes right across the desert to Abu Egli, a village that stands north of Berber, and where the road is through a mass of lava and black granite rocks, with few variations save now and then the stony bed of a dried-up water-course, till the Shukok Pass, seven miles in length, is reached. "The traveller can see nothing; he follows the marks of some previous wayfarer up and down over the crags, between the massive stones, till at last a break comes, and in the far distance he catches a glimpse of the deep blue waters of the Nile. The pass does not run over very high ground; it is merely a short cut across a sea of rocks, from twenty to one hundred feet high, but avoids a serious detour of several miles away from the water."

At the northern end of the Shukok Pass the country bends back from the river, and there is more cultivation as the ground becomes level. Here and

there a sakiyeh is seen, and then comes a mud house or two, showing that some civilisation is once more reached; but then these were the only signs of it, as the water-wheels were unworked and not a Soudanese was to be seen. As at the hill of Kirbekan, the rocks of the Shukok Pass were all prepared with stone screens and rifle galleries at every salient point from which a deadly fire could be brought to bear upon our boats as their crews toiled up against the swift downward current; or against the Cavalry or transport animals, as in long and sinuous single file they passed the loopholes where the Remingtons were—or would be—ensconced; but the flight and demoralisation of the enemy was so complete, that they never waited to defend a bit of the country, which fifty resolute men might have held against twenty times that number. So the column came through that deadly pass unmolested, and Brigadier Brackenbury arrived with his headquarters at Salamat on the 17th of February. Colonel Butler, with the advance party and squadron of the 19th Hussars, having come in a few hours before, after a most successful reconnaissance of the whole neighbourhood the preceding day.

Brigadier Henry Brackenbury, C.B., Deputy-Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General in Egypt, was an officer of the Royal Artillery, who had served in India during the memorable years 1857-8, and was present at the action of Banda and the capture of Kirwee. In the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1 he was at-

tached by Government to the service of the British National Society for Aid to the Sick and Wounded, and was present with the armies till the conclusion of the armistice. For his services in this capacity he was appointed an officer of the Legion of Honour by special decree of the French Government of National Defence, and received also the Royal Bavarian Order of St. Michael, with the Iron Cross, from the Emperor of Germany. Latterly he had been Professor of Military History at the Royal Military Academy.

He accompanied Sir Garnet Wolseley to the Gold Coast in September, 1873, as Assistant Military Secretary, and served throughout the Ashanti War of 1873-4, including the action at Essaman, relief of Abrakrampa, the battles of Amoaful and Ordashu, and the capture of Coomassie (mentioned in the despatches), and received a Brevet-Majority, with a medal and clasp. In 1875 he was further rewarded with the Brevet of Lieutenant-Colonel.

He served as Military Secretary to Sir Garnet Wolseley in the latter part of the Zulu War, and throughout the operations against Sekukeni, at the storming of whose remarkable stronghold he was present. He performed the duties of Chief of the Staff in South Africa from 29th September, 1879, to 7th February, 1880, and was again mentioned with honour in the despatches.

Salamat is not to be found on many maps, but it is at the northern end of Scherri Island, and, according to Lepsius, the name means "idols," or the

place of idols and "greetings." It is a village which is deemed the most important place in the Monassir country, and straggles for some miles along the bank of the Nile, its mud houses being built here and there, without any order; but it is evident that a large population had once been there, from the vast size of its cemetery, where every grave is neatly and carefully marked. There is no mound or enclosing wall; but the graves are covered with yellow, smooth, polished stones, or small pieces of white crystal, from the neighbouring hills. No names or inscriptions mark the resting-places of the fierce Monassirs, and those of the rich cannot be distinguished from those of the poor.

In that portion of Salamat where the murderer of Colonel Stewart, Suleiman Wad Gamr, lived, the houses were thickly clustered on a lofty rock, and that of the guilty sheikh commanded a good view of the river. The house was better constructed than the others, covering a large area, with the rooms all opening into each other, and a spacious courtyard for cattle and camels. Nearer the Nile stood the mansion of Suleiman's uncle, with a fine garden, enclosed by a wall eight feet in height.

There General Brackenbury set up his headquarters, for Suleiman's houses and property were all burned and destroyed by the troops, after a careful search had been made for any papers, &c., which might have been saved from the wreck of Colonel Stewart's steamer. On the bank of the river, groves of Suleiman's palm trees were also destroyed, but the property of

every one else was rigidly respected. Every one had fled at our approach, and many who had taken refuge on Scherri Island came down to the water's edge when they saw our troops, and called loudly for mercy.

In the house of Suleiman Wad Gamr were found four wooden boxes, all more or less full of papers, some of which belonged to Mr. Frank Power and M. Herbin the French consul. Many of these were stained with blood, but none were of importance. It was hoped that Colonel Stewart's diary might be found, but only a few pages were discovered on an adjacent islet. Beyond the papers, which consisted of old letters, Arabic account books, and proclamations of the Mahdi, the searchers found nothing but a European portmanteau, and the helmet of a suit of chain armour. Everything else had been taken to Berber.

During the halt at Salamat every opportunity was taken of replenishing the stock of grain with the column; and, though nothing was discovered at that place, the Commissariat Department found large stores of all kinds of grain and dates on the richly-cultivated isle of Scherri, at the foot of the Omderas Cataract. General Brackenbury's whaleboats returned from them heavily laden, notwithstanding that the islanders had carefully concealed their property under ground, and even in that favourite Oriental hiding-place—the cemetery. Since, on the approach of our scouts, they remained with their flocks and herds, and at work in the fields, it was

hoped they would not—as all others did—fly at the sight of the column; so the General sent them notice that they should be well-treated, and their cattle and grain paid for, if they gave up their arms; but no answer was given, and they all disappeared in the night, subsequent to Colonel Butler's brief interview with the chief men of the island.

On the 16th of February General Brackenbury formed his camp opposite the lower end of Uss Island, after marching through the Shukok Pass, over many miles of terribly rough country, where the jagged rocks and masses of land bore evidence of volcanic action. The Pass itself was but a series of narrow chasms or fissures in the rocks, the perpendicular sides of which varied from twenty to a hundred feet in height. Had the Arabs fought the column there, instead of at Kirbekan, our losses must have been infinitely greater.

As the force continued to advance, the wounded were conveyed with it in whalers, and for a time the Black Watch covered the rear. About this date the following despatch from Lord Wolseley reached the War Office:—

“Korti, 25th February, 1885, 5.0 p.m.

“News has been received from General Brackenbury up to 4 p.m., 21st instant, from Hebbah, opposite Kaniet Island. Whole force, including 780 animals, guns, and equipment complete, had then crossed to right bank, and was to advance on Abu Hammed, 40 miles distant, daybreak 22nd.

“General Brackenbury had visited scene of Stewart's murder, and found some of Stewart's visiting cards, some papers belonging to Herbin and Power, and a shirt-sleeve stained with blood.

“Stewart's steamer, now sixteen feet above the present level of water, gutted and filled with sand. The houses, and all the property of the blind man,

Fakri Etman, who was one of the principal instigators of the murder, completely destroyed.

“All wounded doing well; no deaths since 12th instant. Health and spirits of troops excellent; exclusive of wounded, only eighteen sick in total force.”

After a halt of the column at the village of Hebbah, as it was seen that the Nile was narrow there, where Stewart's wrecked steamer lay, the General ordered the crossing to be made at that point. The first who went over were some small parties of the 19th Hussars and the Egyptian Camel Corps to cover the landing-parties. The ferry-work was carried on at two places, a camel or a horse being haltered to the stern of a whale-boat, and taken swimming to the right bank, where there was a good landing-place of firm sand close to the site of the new camp, which overlooked the steamer and some two miles or so of the river.

Under Lieutenant Bourke, R.N., the Naval Brigade rendered most essential service in hitching the ropes to the animals, and persuading the camels to take to the water, when they appeared to swim easily enough, though many preferred to lie on their side and be towed over, while of others, the head and hump alone were visible above the current.

The crossing of the animals, nearly 800 in number, began at 11 a.m. on the 20th February and was concluded soon after mid-day on the 21st, which was deemed quick work, as there the Nile is three hundred yards wide; but, at least twice that distance had to be covered by the boats in their journey

up and down, for the ferrying had to be arranged with reference to the current, which was swift and strong. With fifty whalers at work, eighty camels per hour were taken across; while in addition to these, were the guns and ammunition of the Egyptian Camel Battery, with all the *impedimenta* carried by Captain Lea's Transport Company. In the end, the passage of the Nile, from the left bank to the right, was carried out without accident or obstruction. This was an excellent piece of work, admirably carried out, and reflecting the utmost credit upon the officers and men who took part in the operation.

"Amidst a mass of rocky islets, some hundred yards from the right bank," wrote a correspondent, "lies the shell of the ill-fated paddle-wheel steamer *Abbas*, which, as every one knows, was bringing from Khartoum to Dongola, Colonel Stewart of the 11th Hussars, Mr. F. Power, recently Britannic consular agent at Khartoum, and M. Herbin the French consul, with several Greeks, when she ran on the rocks, and the murders were committed by Suleiman Wad Gamr, acting under the authority of the Emir of Berber. The *Abbas* was iron-plated, about 40 feet long and 15 feet beam, drawing three feet forward and four feet six inches aft. She now lies down the stream with her bow in the air, her stern full of sand, and in her fore compartment a triangular hole, torn open by the sharp rocks over which she passed. Her roofing had been of corrugated iron, and it, as well as her iron-plated sides, was

riddled with bullet holes. The plates below the water line also show the mark of many a bullet. Four feet from her port side, just abreast of the paddlebox, is a huge rock, which must have been above water at the time of the accident. Whilst looking at the course she must have taken, it seems at first marvellous that the wreck did not occur much earlier, from the mass of sharp rocks. Yet there was deep water on either side of these rocks, and looking at the wreck as she now lies, one cannot but imagine that the steamer was purposely run on the rocks, unless it was through gross ignorance on the part of the pilot, which argument will not find many supporters, for it is well known that the navigation of the Nile is so difficult that no one will entrust himself to a chance pilot. Besides, for half a mile at this part of the river, its bed is, at low water, a confused mass of islands, showing even at high Nile, while on the other half of the stream there is no impediment of any sort; so that the general opinion of every one in the column condemned the wreck as having been an intentional fault of the pilot, who is now supposed to be living comfortably at Berber." Unfortunately, in the Nile operations, we had to place ourselves in the hands of "skilled" natives.

General Brackenbury pushed on till he covered half the distance to Abu Hammed, and he would doubtless have accomplished the mission assigned to him, when fresh instructions to Lord Wolseley, from London, caused a pause in his operations.









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