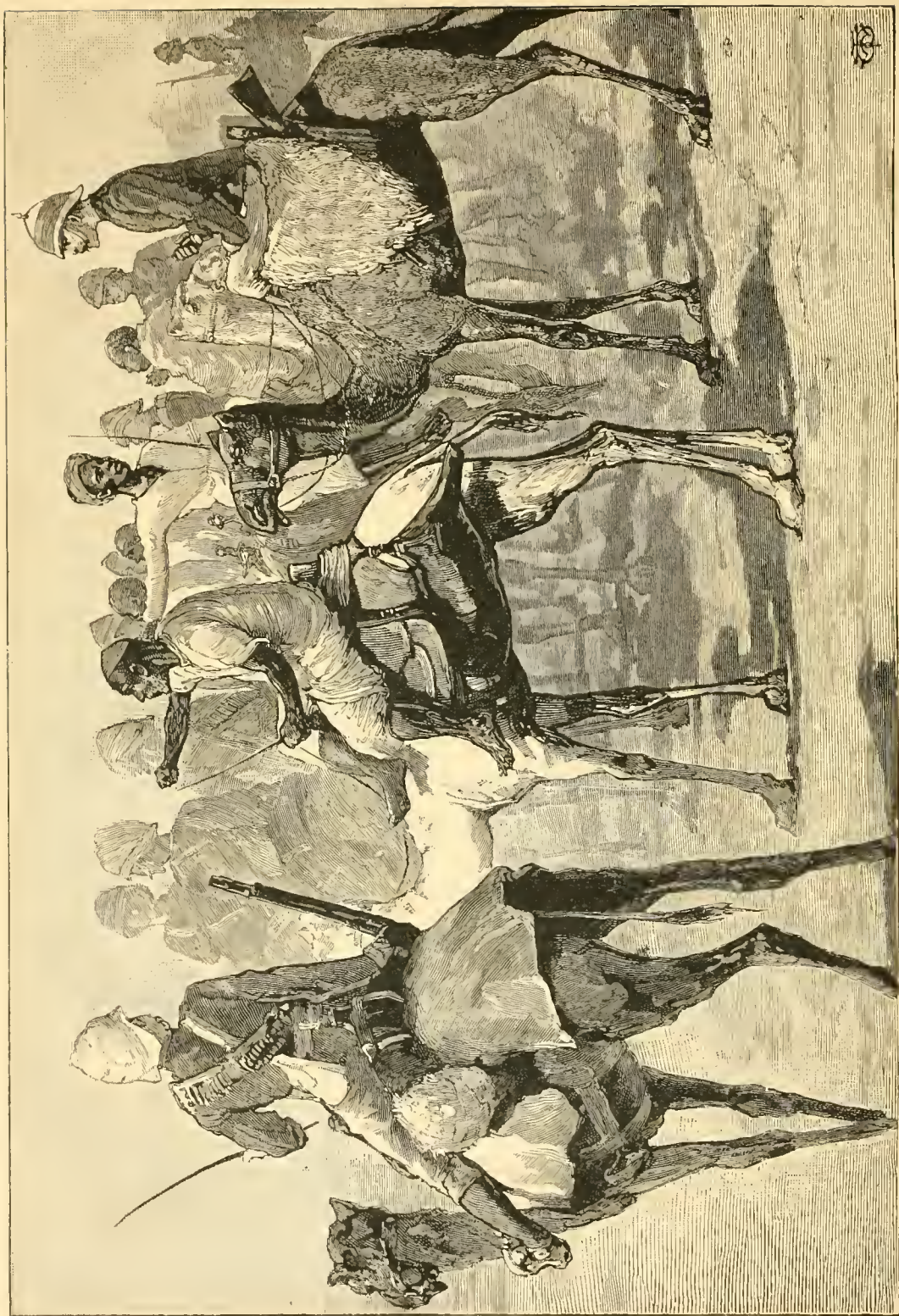


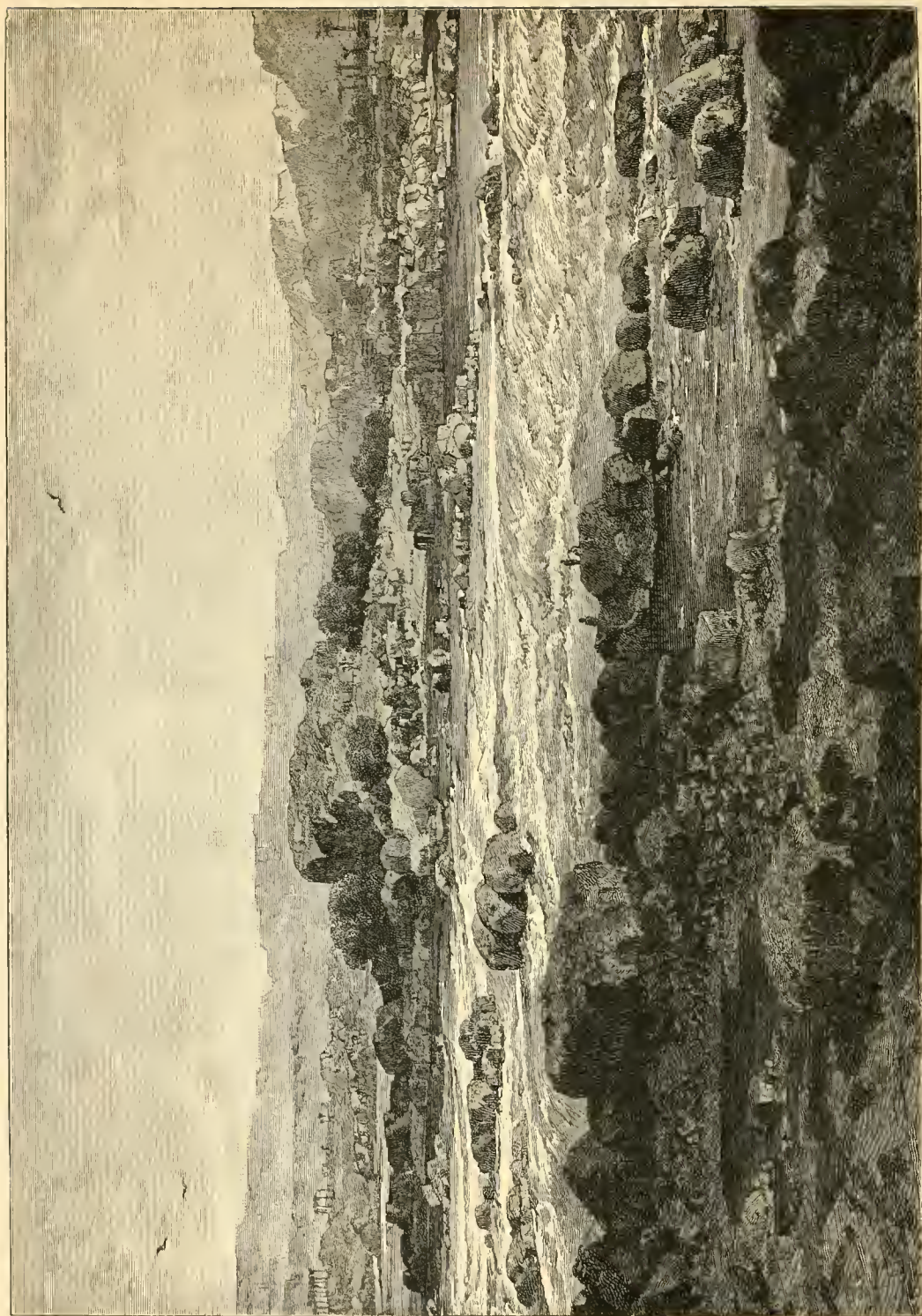


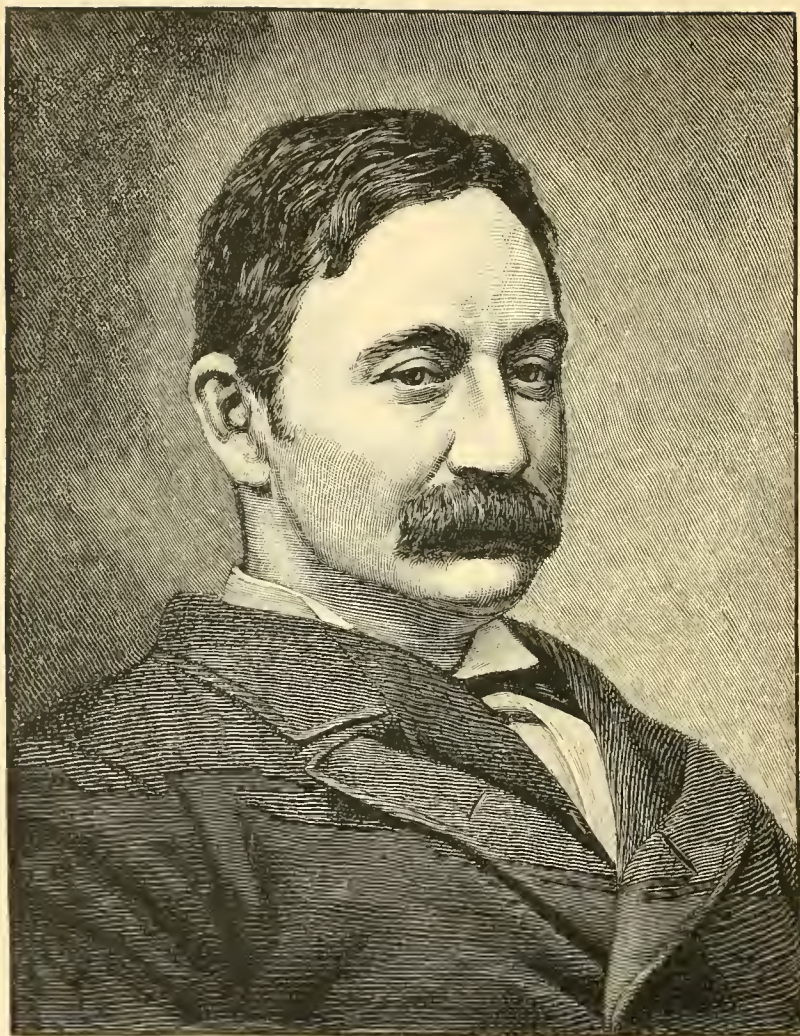
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CASSELL'S
HISTORY OF THE WAR IN THE SOUDAN.









COLONEL FRED BURNABY.

(From the Photograph by R. W. Thrupp, Birmingham.)



VILLAGE IN UPPER EGYPT.

(After the Picture by W. Gentz.)



GENERAL GRAHAM

from a Photograph by M.A.E. Frielle

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.

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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECOND FIGHT AT ABU KLEA.

	PAGE
Reinforcements for the Soudan—Position at Abu Kru—Skirmishing at Metemneh—Cartridges jamming again— The Wounded sent to the Rear—Talbot's Convoy—Buller's Retreat—The Second Fight at Abu Klea	1

CHAPTER II.

THE RETURN TO GAKDUL.

Major Wardrop's Reconnaissance and Ruse—Arab Reconnaissance—Buller Reinforced—Soudanese Prisoners— Short Rations—The White Flag—Return of Major Wardrop—Arrival at Gakdul—Death of Stewart ...	19
---	----

CHAPTER III.

FROM GAKDUL TO KORTI.

Gifts to the Sheikhs—Durbar at Korti—Posts in the Desert—Gordon's surviving Troops at Korti—Concentration of the Forces there—Hardships of the Retreat—In Danger at Gakdul—The "Cat" in the Soudan—The Australian Contingent—General Order to the Soldiers and Sailors of the Expedition—Benhow's Reward	31
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURN OF BRACKENBURY'S COLUMN.

The Descent of the Nile—The Crossing at Abu Dom—Camp at Ambigol—Concentration at Korti—Departure of the Canadians—The Mahdi and his Resources—Bad Bread—Casualties in Egypt—Blockhouses	59
--	----

CHAPTER V.

IN SUMMER QUARTERS ON THE NILE.

Losses at Kassala—Olivier Pain—Letters from the Mahdi—Destruction of Cavalry Horses—Story of a Slave Girl at Korti—State of the Troops in the Nile Camps—Our Posts on the Nile—Arrest of Zebchr and his Son	59
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

AFFAIRS AT SUAKIM, MASSOWAH, AND KASSALA.

Description of Suakim—Defences of the Town—The Italians take Massowah—General Graham to Command— Objects of the New Campaign—Kassala and its Siege—Arrival of General Davis—Night Attacks—Defence of Kassala—Death of Lieut. Askwith—Arrival of the Indian Contingent—Hut Barracks—The Enemy's Movements—Osman Digna and General Graham—Arab Assault by Night—Osman's Standard-bearer—Extra Precautions at the Camp—The Suakim-Berber Railway—Arabi in Ceylon	73
--	----

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

ABOUT THE GREAT DESERT.

Spread of the Mahdi's Cause—The Movable Columnus—The Camp at Korti—Lord Wolseley and the Canadian Boatmen—The Camel Bearer Company—The Great Desert—Hardships at Korti—Major Rundle's Explorations—Plea against the Suakim-Berber Railway—Fate of Captain Gordon—Nile Problems—The New Mahdi—Olivier Pain—Letters from the Ranks	99
--	----

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BATTLE OF HASHEEN.

A Cavalry Reconnaissance—Osman's Ground—The Battle of Hasheen—Charge of the Bengal Lancers—Shelling the Village—Valour of the Enemy—The Casualty Lists—The General's Despatch—Royal Humane Society's Awards—A White Camel	116
---	-----

CHAPTER IX.

THE SURPRISE AT SIR JOHN McNEILL'S ZERIBA.

Funeral of Captain Dalison—Sir John McNeill's Services—His Zeriba—The Surprise—Charge of the Hadendawas—Courage of the Rev. Mr. Collins—McNeill in Danger—His Life saved by the Hon. Alan Charteris—The Casualties—The Night after the Surprise—Loss of Camels—Parliament and the Surprise—The Press Censorship	132
---	-----

CHAPTER X.

OPENING OF THE ROAD TO TAMAI.

Removal of the Wounded from the Zeriba—Graham's Despatch—Successful Cavalry Operations on the 22nd of March—The <i>Ganges</i> Hospital at Suakim—Skirmishes in front of the Town—The Balloon Corps—Osman Digna's Tactics—Attacks on Convoys—Arrival of Nurses—Increase of Sunstroke—Arrival of the Australian Contingent—Osman's Movements	147
--	-----

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL GRAHAM'S ADVANCE TO TAMAI.

Graham's Plans—The Advance—Grant's Reconnaissance—Bivouac Disturbed—Formation for the Advance—Wells of the Desert—Tamai Reached—Villages Destroyed—Australians under Fire—The Return March—General Graham's Despatches—Railway Difficulties—Climate of the Soudan—The March to Handoub—The <i>Bosphore Egyptian</i>	167
---	-----

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE		PAGE
Distant View of the Pyramids of Meroe	1	New South Wales Troopship <i>Australasian</i>	49
Major Kitchener Questioning Prisoners at Gakdul Wells	4	Fort at Debbch, on the Nile	52
The Coldstream Guards Embarking on the <i>Manora</i> at Gravesend	5	Hannaak, on the Nile, the reputed Birthplace of the Mahdi	53
Surgeon-General Irvine, M.D., Principal Medical Officer to the Forces in Egypt	8	Evening in the Desert	56
The Steamer <i>Yarrow</i> taking Wounded to Dongola ...	9	Fellah Maiden	57
Major Wardrop	12	Lime Mill	58
Nubian	13	The Bahr-El-Gazelle	60
The Gardner Gun used in the Soudan Campaign ...	16	Abyssinian Village	61
The Gardner Gun—Loading	17	Proposed Route of the Suakim-Berber Railway—View between Kokreb and Ariab... ..	64
Ferry-Boats on the Nile	18	The Nile at the Head of the Gerendid Cataract ..	65
Lieut. R. J. Tudway	20	Sketch in Larnaca, Cyprus	68
Follower of the False Prophet	21	Egyptian Water Carrier	69
Special Uniform of Officer and Privates in the Camel Corps	24	Arab with Green Turban	72
Prayer in the Desert	25	Forts Carysfort and Euryalus, Suakim... ..	73
The Gardner Gun—Preparing to "Sight"	28	Occupation of Massowah—Hoisting the Italian Flag	76
Men of the 19th Hussars Fencing the Grave of Sir Herbert Stewart at Gakdul Wells... ..	29	Return of Friendly Natives to Suakim after a Successful Attack on the Enemy... ..	77
Saud-Grouse Shooting in the Soudan	32	Some Types of the Indian Contingent for the Soudan	80
The Dingy in which Colonel Stewart and Mr. Power landed near Berti, shortly before their Murder	33	Lieut. W. B. Askwith	81
Doctoring a Sick Camel	36	Mounted Infantry Skirmishing at Suakim	84
Sandstorm in the Desert	37	Beni Amer Warriors of Abyssinia	85
Proposed Route of the Suakim-Berber Railway—The Desert near Ariab	40	Sinkat	88
Proposed Route of the Suakim-Berber Railway—Ravine near Haratri	41	Arabs Fishing in the Red Sea	89
At Suakim: Rebel giving Himself up with his Wife and Family	44	Map of the Environs of Suakim	92
Departure of the Australian Contingent from Sydney, New South Wales	45	Mounted Infantry at Suakim Preparing to Picket	93
The Troopship <i>Iberia</i> leaving Sydney	48	Proposed Route of the Suakim-Berber Railway—View near Kokreb	96
		Reconnaissance towards the Enemy's Camp at Hasheen	97
		Arab Farmer	98
		Arab Labourer	100
		The Heights Above Assouan, with the Island of Elephantine	101

	PAGE		PAGE
Herdsman in the Desert (Lower Egypt) .. .	104	Men of the Indian Contingent in Khaki Uniform ...	146
Ride through the Desert (Lower Egypt)	105	People of the Beni Amer Tribe on a Journey... ..	148
1st Life Guards (Camel Corps) Building their Summer Huts on the Nile (the Frame-Work)	108	Lieut. Richardson, 5th Lancers (Royal Irish)	149
1st Life Guards (Camel Corps) Building their Summer Huts on the Nile (Putting Matting round the Frames)	109	"Roughing It"—Mess of the Grenadier Guards ...	152
The Egyptian Camp at Wady Halfa	112	Proposed Route of the Suakim-Berber Railway— Wady Yumga, near Ariab	153
M. Olivier Pain	113	Sir Gerald Graham	156
Surgeon-Major Lane	116	Arab Scavenger: Watering the Road	157
Arab Gipsy Encampment.	117	Fellah Widow Mourning	160
The Royal Artillery Shelling the Village of Hasheen	120	Laying the Suakim-Berber Railway	161
Captain Dalison	121	Shoeing-Forge of the New South Wales Artillery at Suakim	164
Plan of the Battle of Hasheen (March 20, 1885) ...	125	Redoubt at Handoub, held by the Australians ...	165
Among the Mountains near Handoub	128	Friendly Runners of the Amaras	168
The Berkshire Regiment Attacking the Arab Position at Hasheen	129	Mounted Infantry Skirmishing near Tamai	169
Egyptian Pitchers	131	Australian Infantry on the March through the Mountains	172
Rev. Reginald F. Collins	132	Burying a Comrade at Tamai	173
The Surprise at McNeill's Zeriba—A Corner of the Square Fifteen Minutes after the Attack Began	133	Australian Camp at Handoub	176
The Night After the Attack on McNeill's Zeriba ...	136	Burning the Village of Tamai	177
Captain Francis John Romilly, R.E.	137	Interior of the First Zeriba on the Handoub Route	180
Inside McNeill's Zeriba Five Days after the Surprise	140	Somali Village	181
Major Von Beverhoudt, 17th Bengal N.I.	141	On the Nile at Wady Halfa	184
Signal Station in a Zeriba	144	Aralian Horses	185
Lieut. Newman, R.E.	145	The Camp at Otao, Twenty Miles from Suakim ...	188
		Mounted Infantry under Captain Freeman Scouting with Friendly Amaras	189

LIST OF PLATES.

SIR GERALD GRAHAM.

COLONEL FRED BURNABY.

VILLAGE IN UPPER EGYPT.

THE FIRST CATARACT OF THE NILE

SIR HERBERT STEWART'S MARCH FROM KORTI TO GAKDUL WELLS—
A CONSULTATION OF GUIDES.



DISTANT VIEW OF THE PYRAMIDS OF MEROE.

CASSELL'S HISTORY OF THE WAR IN THE SOUDAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE SECOND FIGHT AT ABU KLEA.

Reinforcements for the Soudan—Position at Abu Kru—Skirmishing at Metemneh—Cartridges jamming again—The Wounded sent to the Rear—Talbot's Convoy—Baller's Retreat—The Second Fight at Abu Klea.

TOWARDS the middle of February, 1885, our force in the Soudan was of the most slender description, and so great was the pressure upon it that it was resolved by the home authorities to reinforce Lord Wolseley by way of Suakin, and, if possible, Berber. The troops detailed to join the new expedition were as follows:—

No. 9 Battery North Irish Division of Royal Artillery, from Gibraltar to Lower Egypt, to be replaced by a Battery of the Cinque Ports Artillery from Alderney to Suakin; 24th Company, a Telegraph Section and a Balloon Detachment of the Royal Engineers, from England; two Squadrons of the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, from Dublin; two

Squadrons of the 20th Hussars, from Aldershot; Headquarters and portion of a Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery, with No. 5 Battery of the Scottish Garrison Artillery, from Lower Egypt; 3rd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards, from Windsor; 1st Battalion Coldstream Guards, and 2nd Battalion of the Scots Guards, from London; 1st Battalion of the Shropshire Light Infantry, from Malta; 2nd Battalion of the East Surrey Regiment, and 1st Battalion Yorkshire Regiment, from Lower Egypt; of the Commissariat and Transport Corps, No. 3, 7, and 12 Companies, with a Detachment of the Ordnance Store Corps from Woolwich; Bearer Companies and Field Hospital Staff of the Medical Department; 2nd Battalion Dublin Fusiliers; 2nd Battalion Durham Light Infantry.

In addition to these troops, three Indian regiments were ordered to Su-

kim, namely, the 9th Bengal Cavalry, 700 strong; the 15th Sikh Infantry, or old Loodiana Regiment; and the 17th Poorbeah Infantry.

The new contingent was estimated at 10,000 men, to be divided into two divisions, each under a Major-General.

As in the Nile Expedition, so in that to Suakim, the supply of water was a serious question. To meet the difficulties of so large a force, where some of the wells are at great distances apart, some 3,000 waterproof bags were constructed, each holding from ten to fifteen gallons, besides a similar number of light small barrels and tanks of sheet iron, to be borne by camels. For the storage of water at stations, pending the approach of the force, several hundred tanks of waterproof canvas were ordered; while for the general purposes of the expedition the British consuls in Asia Minor and Aden were ordered to purchase mules, ponies, and camels.

Lord Wolseley, who had practically the control of the selection of the officers and men to be sent to him *via* Suakim and Berber, telegraphed for fifty men from each battalion of the Guards, to be equipped as Mounted Infantry, each detachment to be composed of picked men, officered by a captain and subaltern. Their kit was made up of a scarlet serge tunic, Bedford cord pantaloons, two khaki drill frocks and trousers, brown helmet and puggaree, goggles for the eyes, and bandoliers for ammunition.

The kit for the rest consisted of a scarlet serge frock, blue serge trousers,

khaki drill frock and trousers, brown helmet and puggaree, valise, black pad, goggles, two flannel belts, clasp-knife, slung by a lanyard, tea kit, ankle boots, cloak, forage-cap, and bandolier. A Brigade order, from the home district office, ran thus:—

“The following will be the strength of officers, non-commissioned officers, and men, that will embark with the battalions now under orders to proceed on active service. One commanding officer and one major, mounted; four majors and four captains, sixteen lieutenants and two staff. An officer of the Army Pay Department to be attached to each battalion, for pay duties. One sergeant-major, one quartermaster-sergeant, two colour-sergeants, one sergeant-drummer, one armourer-sergeant, two orderly-room clerks, one pioneer-sergeant, and one sergeant-cook; twenty-three sergeants, forty corporals, and seven hundred and ten privates. The 2nd Battalion of the Scots Guards will have, in addition, one sergeant-piper and five pipers. The mounted party of the battalion, consisting of one captain, one lieutenant, and fifty men each, is included in the above numbers. The colours are not to be taken. The men will leave their medals, and due care must be taken for their safe custody. The defaulter sheets will not be taken. A modified pattern of the defaulter sheets, for use during the campaign, can be obtained from Stanton's, Villiers Street, Strand. There will be no objection to a second major being mounted, provided the number of five horses per battalion, including adjutant and quartermaster, be not exceeded.”

Among the first to embark was the 3rd Battalion of the Grenadier Guards, who were inspected on the 19th of February by the Queen, at Windsor. They were then formed in hollow square, facing inwards, when she delivered to the officers a brief address, which they repeated to their men, whom it filled with the highest enthusiasm:—

“I have summoned you here before your departure to wish you heartily God speed. May God protect you on the day of battle; may He preserve

you in the hour of danger by land and sea, and may He lead you to victory! Confident that my Grenadier Guards will maintain the honour and reputation of British soldiers, I rely on your equalling the glorious deeds of those in the distant lands to which you are now proceeding. My thoughts and prayers go with you and your brave comrades, to whom, alas, I cannot bid farewell, as I now do heartily to you. Once more, God bless you!"

On the 19th of February the Coldstream Guards left Westminster Bridge by steamer for Gravesend, where they were embarked upon the transport *Manora*, and left the shores of Old England the same day.

While these preparations were in progress at home, General Brackenbury was ordered to fall back on Korti, a task of no little difficulty; but it was skilfully accomplished, and his column returned in safety to the headquarters camp.

About the same time a similar duty devolved upon Sir Redvers Buller, whom Lord Wolseley had despatched to Gubat, on hearing that Sir Herbert Stewart was severely wounded. General Buller's original orders were to seize Metemneh and march upon Berber, for which purpose he had been reinforced by the Royal Irish and the Light Camel Corps.

On the 11th of February he arrived at Abu Kru, with a large convoy from Gakdul under the command of Colonel the Hon. R. A. J. Talbot, of the 1st Life Guards, and with the six strong companies of the Royal Irish, who had marched across the Bayuda Desert on foot, and were ready to do it again. The appearance of this reinforcement put fresh life and spirit into

the little column that lay in Major Dormer's trenches, watching the foe in Metemneh; but it did not change the impression existing in Colonel Boscawen's force, that the sooner it retraced its steps to the safe headquarters at Korti, the better, as no good could be expected of an advance on Khartoum, though the men were ready enough to go, if in sufficient numbers.

To all it was evident that to advance with the troops and guns then at Abu Kru would have been the extremity of rashness, though finer soldiers were never seen, and then as yet there was still an uncertainty as to whether General Gordon was dead or alive. As Sir Redvers Buller had quitted headquarters before the tidings of the fall of Khartoum had reached Lord Wolseley, and as these tidings reached Sir Redvers himself only the day after his arrival at Gakdul, he was without distinct orders as to his movements, or what to do, in the then complicated state of affairs. "We had hoped to the contrary," wrote a correspondent; "but the fact remains, and thus, as regards our future, we are no wiser than before the arrival of the chief of the staff and Major Kitchener, whose face everybody was almost as glad to see as that of the General, for it is felt that if he had been here when Gordon's steamers arrived, we should not probably have had to deplore the dawdling which cost the three precious days that would have saved the hero of Khartoum. But it is of no use now to speculate either on the past or the future."

For the week prior to the arrival of Sir Redvers Buller, the little column under Colonel Boscawen had been strengthening the Guards' post on the gravel hill and the earthworks on the long, narrow island opposite. The

on tea leaves, yesterday's convoy, under Buller, put them in possession of a supply of the philosophic weed, and there is no grumbling to-day, even that the tea is not made sweet enough by the still limited rations of sugar."

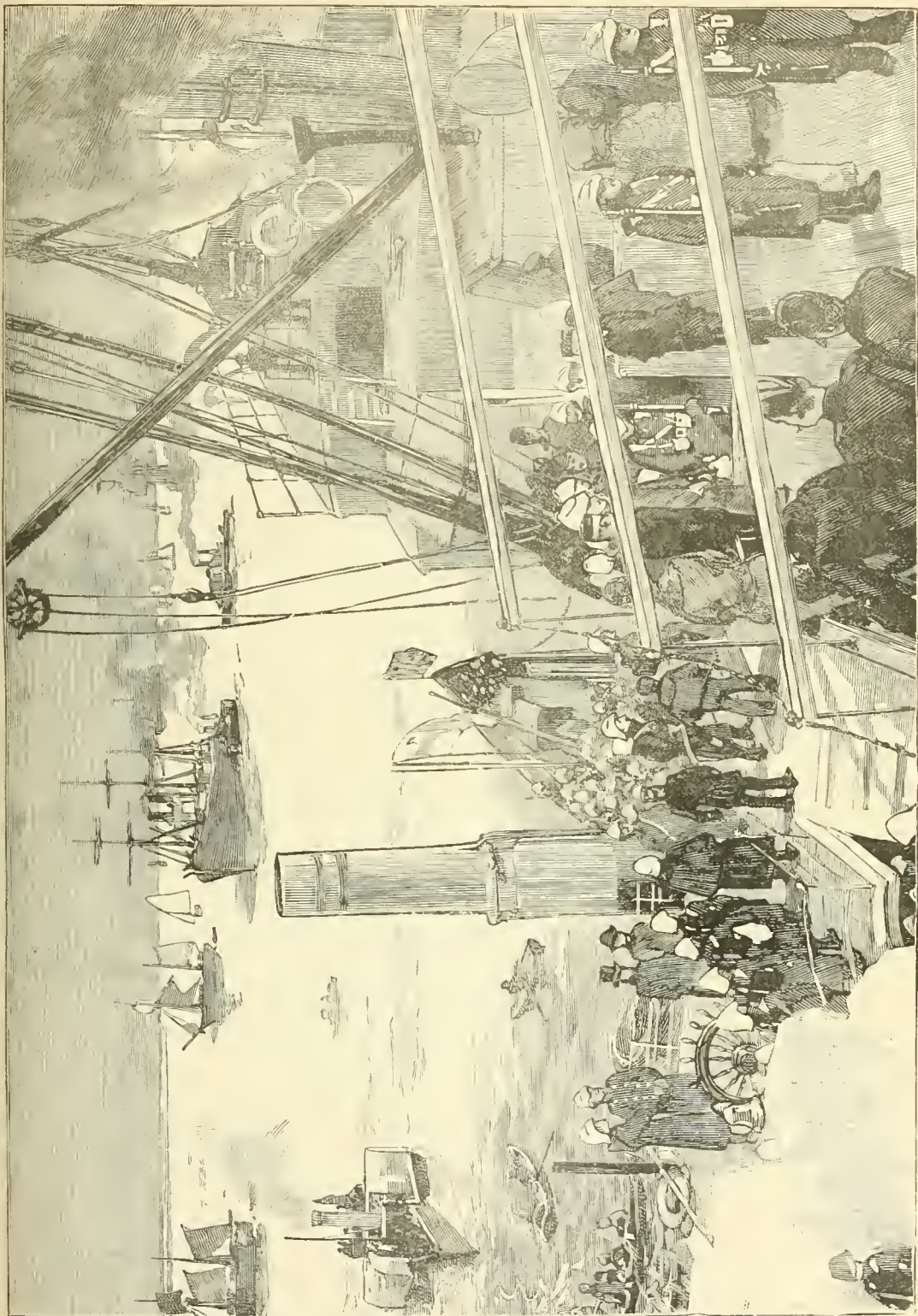


MAJOR KITCHENER QUESTIONING PRISONERS AT GAKDUL WELLS.

absence of tobacco was a great grievance amongst the troops, and it is high time, said the writer above quoted, "that the civilian officials in Pall Mall realised that the men would rather go without their dinners twice a week, than without their smoke daily, and that tobacco is among the actual necessities of life for smokers—and 99 per cent. of the soldiers are smokers on a campaign. Happily, just as the men have been driven to experiment

To the soldiers at this time, while waiting idly and dubiously at Abu Kru, an unfailing source of interest were the two steamers which Lord Charles Beresford took over, and on which he hoisted British colours. The smaller of these was under the command of Lieutenant Poore, R.N., and she was chiefly used for bringing green forage from the island opposite and for patrolling the river.

The larger steamer—the one which



THE COLDSTREAM GUARDS EMBARKING ON THE "MANORA" AT GRAVESEND.

received a shot in her boiler—was in the habit of being run down past Metemneh or Shendy almost daily, or up, for ten miles or so, foraging and obtaining information from the villages that were friendly to us. If a flock of sheep or herd of cattle, or a water-wheel (which was useful for fuel) were seen, a few picked Infantry shots and blue-jackets were quickly at work to bring them off. The cordon formed by the two forces would begin to fire on the Arabs, creeping stealthily with their rifles through the high reeds or crops, when half an hour's skirmish would ensue, in which hardly any would be hit; and if a prisoner was taken he was dismissed with a copy of Lord Wolseley's last proclamation in Arabia.

On board the steamers, as ashore, the men complained bitterly of the jamming of the rifle cartridges—an hourly occurrence. On the 5th February a party of the Guards Camel Corps, under Captain Crabbe, on board the *Sofia*, had five rifles useless out of twenty through the cartridge case refusing to come out after firing. In most instances, says the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, the men had to resort to the cleaning-rod as a last resource. It is obvious that in this there was a considerable element of danger. The soldiers kept their weapons as clean and bright as the nature of the country permitted; but if any detachment was taken, then it was certain that from five to five-and-twenty per cent. of the rifles would jam after firing a couple of rounds.

Though there are better extractors

than the cleaning-rod in the breech of a Martini-Henry rifle, it was clear that the fault lay less in the horseshoe lever than in the Boxer cartridge, which is an adaptation of that unscientific arrangement in brass and iron. As the lives of our soldiers in the field were at the mercy of "cartridges which would not leave the rifle when they ought to make room for full ones," the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* did good work in calling attention to this serious state of things.

Every other country, even the realm of the despised Ottoman, used drawing cartridges which neither expand nor jam the breech-blocks of their rifles. They are not more costly than our perilous Boxer, and are waterproof, which the latter is not. "I believe there is no reason," says a writer on this important subject, "from the existence of patents or otherwise, why we should not have drawn cartridge cases of brass, or, as in the United States army, of pure copper; but even if there were, it would not stand for a moment against the fact—which can be ascertained officially by means of a question in Parliament, that the Boxer cartridge, by jamming, endangers the lives of our troops at close quarters, and even imperils the success of our operations. If the fact should, as usual, be officially denied, it can be established by overwhelming testimony from this column alone."

A peremptory order issued at Abu Kru on the 12th of February decreed that the sick and wounded, regardless of state or probable condition, should be

removed to Korti on the next day by dawn, and seemed to indicate a prospect of more fighting at an early period, for whether the column advanced or retired, the Field Hospital with its patients could not be left without adequate defence and attendants. The opportunity was accepted of utilising as bearers of the more severely wounded (including Sir Herbert Stewart, who had also a touch of fever) General Gordon's irregulars, whom it was wisely determined to send back to Korti or Dongola, and who could not be scattered or lost to the service; and thus the General freed himself of two causes of anxiety. To a commander operating in the field the wounded are always a serious care, and in this case we were fighting an enemy who knew nothing of the obligations of humanity, but would slay without mercy all who fell into their hands. "The departure of the Bashi-Bazouks," says the correspondent of the *Standard*, "places at the service of the doctors the arms and legs of fully a hundred men as dooly-bearers, and when they and their fellows are gone, with 300 men from the Heavies, the Guards, and the Mounted Infantry to look after them, we shall all feel relieved of an incubus. It may be doing these dark-skinned persons an injustice, but one cannot, after what has happened, help suspecting their fidelity, and I have assigned reasons why they might believe the Mahdi for the future to be quite as promising a master as the Khedive. The only people among them to be trusted are those who have

blood feuds with some of the Mahdi's men; but the impossibility of picking out these, makes it better that all hands should be sent about their business as soon as possible. It has certainly taken a portion of our force for the last week or so to watch them, and now we know just what we have to depend upon."

Regarding the convoy under Colonel Talbot, a correspondent wrote thus:—

"I have been able to gather a few details of the attack on the convoy which left Abu Kru on Friday with the wounded. They had got about eight miles on the road from the Nile, when they were fired upon from the scrub and long grass by a party which had been seen to follow them from Metemneh, though we did nothing to check it. Colonel Talbot at once formed square on the highest ground within reach, and fought for over an hour, keeping the enemy, whose numbers were estimated at some seven or eight hundred, at a distance, but unfortunately losing one soldier and one native soldier, and having six men rather badly wounded. The enemy never showed in the open, but seemed to have had enough of it, one part of his force falling back. Just as they went away our Light Camel Corps arrived on the scene, and unhappily they were mistaken for a party of the enemy returning. Consequently the convoy gave them a volley at 800 yards, which went just over their heads; then another at 700 yards, which hit several of Colonel Clarke's men, but without wounding any; and then the mistake was found out before a third

volley, already in the rifles, was fired, and which must have cost several lives. These accidents will occur in warfare in a wild country; but it is well no

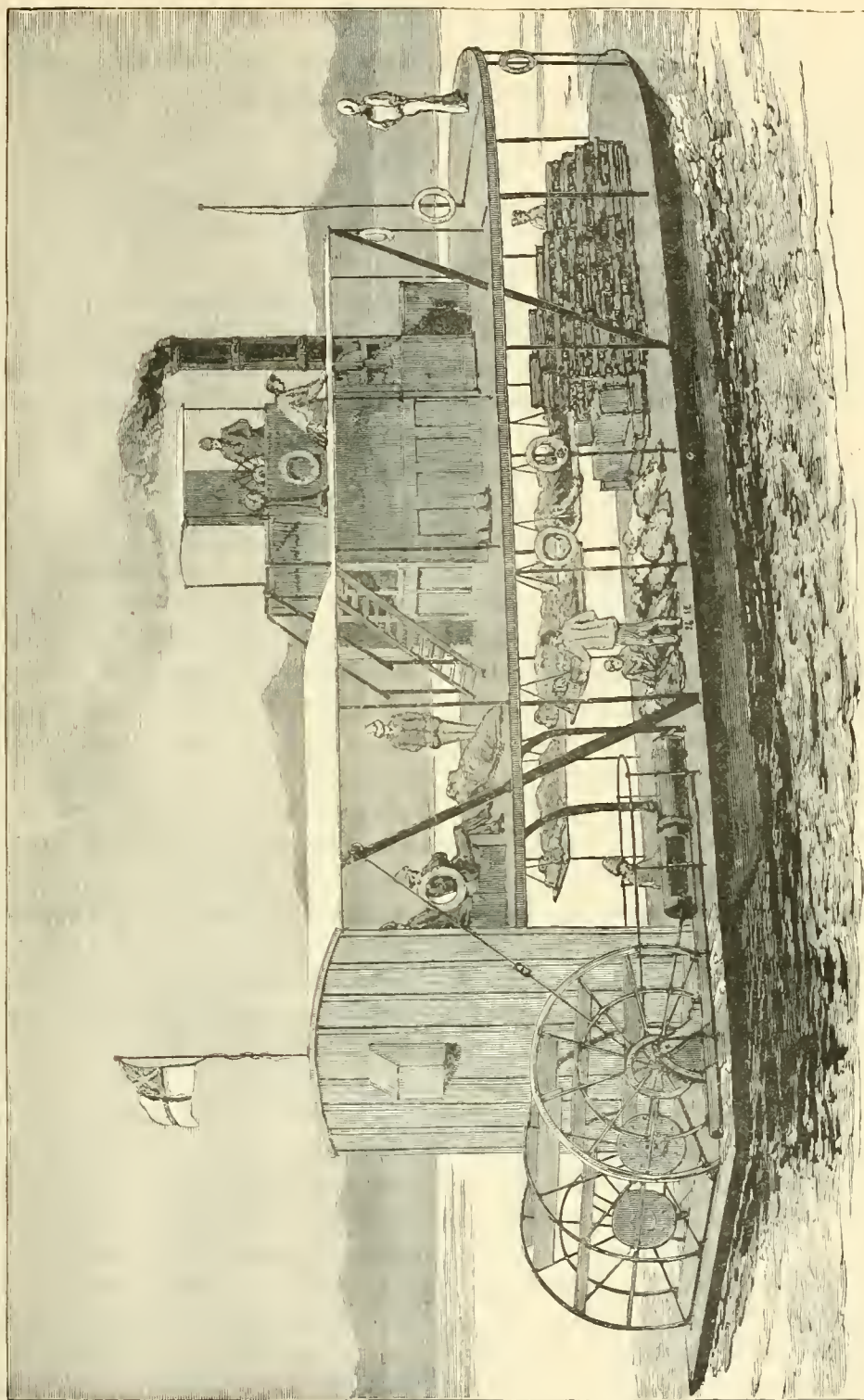
cases among the wounded suffered severely *en route*, and subsequently. They, however, were able to be conveyed towards Gakdul yesterday morning."



SURGEON-GENERAL IRVINE, M.D.,
PRINCIPAL MEDICAL OFFICER TO THE FORCES IN EGYPT.

harm was done. The loss of the enemy could not be ascertained, as the convoy—to the rescue of which we were too late in preparing to march—proceeded under the escort of the Light Camelry, and got safely here (Korti), though General Stewart and some of the worst

The enemy had not been idle in Metemneh while the column had been waiting at Abu Kru; and the former place was not so easy of capture as it had been three weeks before, the garrison having added very materially to its defences, with businesslike despatch.



THE STEAMER "YARROW" TAKING WOUNDED TO DONGOLA.

Instead of an advance on Berber or Khartoum a retreat across the Bayuda Desert was ordered, and on the 14th of February the camp and works at Abu Kru were abandoned at dawn, and the whole force prepared for its march towards Abu Klea. Gordon's steamers, the *Sofia* and *Tewfikia*, were rendered useless by the removal of part of their machinery, which the Naval Brigade carried off; several Nile boats were sunk; and vast quantities of tinned meat were abandoned, with tents, stretchers, bedding, clothing, medicines, and even ammunition, all of which could not be brought away — a painful scene of waste. At 5 a.m. the whole force fell in, in rear of the Guards' Fort, when a few boxes of stores were burned, and at six the march began in the following order, the movement being directed by Major Davidson of the Marines.

First went a half troop of the 19th Hussars; the 40 dismounted Guards; then the main body in column of route, with 1,500 camels carrying the baggage and stores on the right of the column, the Mounted Infantry being on its left, and the Sussex Regiment on its left rear. The Soudanese formed the rear-guard, with two Royal Artillery guns, two companies of the Royal Irish, and the remainder of the Hussars. A small party of the latter also moved from 500 to 1,000 yards off, covering the flanks.

The enemy at Metemneh did not notice that the camp was being evacuated, and were certainly unaware of the retrograde movement until several hours had elapsed. Even then,

they failed to make any use of the opportunity, and sent out only two or three dozen of scouts to observe what was going on. "The marches of Stewart and the going to and fro of convoys, during which many of the camels were occasionally five and six days without water and food, except the dry reed-like sabas grass of the desert, told fatally upon hundreds of the poor brutes," wrote a correspondent at this time. "The stamina was gone out of the survivors, and protracted rest, with good feeding, was necessary for all of them. The situation had admitted of neither, and with huge gaping wounds and terrible sores from packs and girths the wretched animals continued to be driven about. An awful effluvia, noxious as a pest-house, exhaled from the wounds of the miserable creatures, and has latterly filled the air whenever a camel convoy marches. It was therefore with the Generals not so much the minor question about the transport of stores, as whether camels enough could be mustered to carry the wounded and the barest sufficiency of water, food, and ammunition to enable the flying column to get back to Gakdul or Korti."

The first day's march was quiet. According to the *Daily Chronicle*, a halt was called within ten miles of the camp at Abu Klea, the men for some time past having been unused to marching, and General Buller took the utmost precautions against a night attack. A zeriba was formed and advanced sentries thrown out. Many of the men had been on duty nearly the whole of

the previous day and night, and all were very tired.

The force was only 1,800 strong, with 200 horses, and 1,179 camels. They left the graves of our slain at Abu Kru undisturbed, and the enemy were found to have buried the greater part of their dead furtively in the night. The graves at the zeriba had been attempted by carrion birds, but the dead had been lain too deep for their talons.

Regarding the sufferings of the troops, one wrote thus:—"Perhaps there never has been been a campaign when, in so brief a period, so many serious dangers have been run as by those with the flying column, or so many close calls made by the grim enemy 'Death.' Heads luxuriant but three months ago with hyacinthine locks I have now noted showing silver streaks. Never have I seen so many young heads grow grey hairs so fast."

On Sunday 15th the reveille was blown at 4 a.m., and, after an early breakfast, the column was once more on the march. About 10 a.m. a few of the enemy's scouting horsemen were visible on some distant ridges as the troops marched into Abu Klea, greatly to the surprise of the detachment stationed there.

No measures had been taken at the wells there to collect or store water; thus General Buller set parties to work at once for that purpose, and to put the place in a better state of defence; and the soldiers worked with good will, though of course ignorant of what the next move would be. One rumour was

that Buller awaited instructions, and might possibly advance to Berber, joining hands with Brackenbury's column; another was to the effect that he was waiting to give the Arabs a chance, if they wished it, of doing battle.

As the camels were exhausted, and there was a great want of water and forage, a convoy of the Guards and Heavies was immediately put under orders, to push on rearward to Gakdul, whither they were to be accompanied by the heavily-worked 19th Hussars, whose chargers were in a very sorry plight, from the same causes that affected the camels.

These troops marched on the morning of Monday, 16th February, thus lessening Buller's force by about four hundred men, but making more easy the maintenance of those who remained; and now the whole of that day was spent in the erection of little detached forts in the wady of Abu Klea, or close to it.

The Royal Irish were placed on the crest of an upland two hundred yards west of the original zeriba, near the centre of the group of well-holes. The Artillery and part of the Royal Sussex Regiment were put into a zeriba and fortlet, on the right rear of Fort No. 1, the first built. Two companies of the same corps were sent to build and occupy a fort 150 yards down the wady in the direction of Metemneh, on the front.

Two hundred yards on the left rear of Fort No. 1, the Light Camel Regiment and the Mounted Infantry were formed in square behind their camels,

with orders to surround themselves by an earthwork.

About three in the afternoon, some fifty or so of the enemy's cavalry could be seen extended, as scouts, in a line

the activity in Buller's camp, and all the earthworks were strengthened as quickly as possible, to be ready for any contingency.

Meanwhile the General sent two



MAJOR WARDROP

two miles long, approaching the wells from the direction of Metemneh. In their rear came about a hundred riflemen. When a hill on the left front was ascended, three lines of horsemen and several lines of Infantry were seen marching about half a mile in rear of the Cavalry. This sight added to

companies of the Royal Irish forward on the right, and afterwards a third company, to check the advance of the enemy in that direction. The Irish, who were keen to have a brush with them, pushed on to within 800 yards, and then sent on a line of skirmishers 200 yards farther, and as the enemy

still came on, they opened fire on them at 800 yards' range.

After some desultory file-firing, the Irish poured in three distinct volleys, the

Naval Brigade in Fort No. 1, the Arabs continued to advance with rapidity, making straight for the commanding crests and hills in front of our left.



NUBIAN.

effect of which was to drive the enemy's left away from our right and hurl it back upon the main body which was still coming on. At five in the afternoon, despite an occasional turn taken by Lord Charles Beresford with two of the machine guns, manned by his slender

Every tent was now struck and packed, and every man was at his post. The undulations of the ground gave the Arabs good cover, and they were not slow to avail themselves of it; and, in half an hour, some 500 riflemen and spearmen were seen rushing down from

the ranges two miles away on our left, to gain the hills, which were from about a thousand to fourteen hundred yards north-east of the wady.

As many more of the foe halted in rear of a low isolated ridge that rose at right angles to Buller's front. They had several horsemen, and all wore the white uniform of the Mahdi's army. Carrying their rifles at the trail, leaping and running, they came nearer and nearer, with all the air of trained skirmishers, till, creeping behind ledges of rock and piling up stones to make low walls, they soon had plenty of cover.

At half-past five, with one accord, or, as if by word of command, they opened a furious rifle-fire upon our lines, and they had sighted their weapons so accurately, that their bullets whistled, dropped, and struck everywhere in and about the position. Our men were bidden to lie down, and till the enemy's rifles got too hot to hold, those of us caught outside without cover had a very bad quarter of an hour.

The camel lines were in low ground between the Royal Irish and the Mounted Infantry. The miserable animals were, as usual, doubly tied down and left to take their chance of being wounded or killed. After darkness fell our fire ceased, and that of the Arabs slackened. General Buller had his quarters in No. 1 Fort, which was only fifteen yards square, and within which were 100 men, with a large pile of ammunition, consequently the sleeping accommodation may be said to have been somewhat limited.

Eight Hussar horses left at the wells, and those belonging to the staff, were placed for safety in a trench on the west side of this fort. All lights were forbidden, and no firing was to take place by our men unless they were attacked; so, without shelter or supper, all lay down to await daybreak. Though the night was cloudy and starless, and the darkest the troops had yet seen in the Soudan, the enemy kept up a well-sustained fire; and how, in the obscurity, they contrived to do so, was a puzzle to our soldiers.

About midnight rain fell, and the north wind blew keenly. As the night wore on, the Arabs crept to within six hundred yards of the position, which resulted in greater safety to the troops, as their bullets, instead of dropping among them, buzzed away through the darkness overhead.

Towards morning the coldness increased, and the enemy's fire became irregular and weak, but their leaders could be heard shouting to them to keep it up. General Buller had double sentries posted, and he, Lord Charles Beresford, and the other officers, were on the alert all night. There was but one alarm, at 8 p.m., through some of the Royal Irish firing in a blundering way at a native sentinel near their post. The crack of their rifles, and the uproar that followed, made every man on the ground grasp his rifle and rush to his post. Some of the outsiders lining the ditch at Fort No. 1, rushed into that work pell-mell, but were instantly ordered back to their stations, and a guard with fixed bayonets was placed

in the opening to prevent a recurrence of the rush.

The experiences of the column on the night of the 16th February were very similar to what it had undergone a month before, when first it came among the hills of Abu Klea. If the enemy had brought guns, it was evident that Buller would have to abandon his ground, or attack them at great disadvantage. His first instructions, we have said, were to take Metemneh and march on Berber; but events had moved fast elsewhere, and plans and possibilities less than a week old, were beyond execution now.

There was a general longing in the column for a full regiment of cavalry. "Had there been one, with the horses in good condition," wrote a correspondent, "not a small force, a squadron broken down by overwork and hardship (chiefly want of forage and water), the Mahdists at the battles of Abu Klea and Abu Kru, and in many skirmishes, would have fared badly in attempting to occupy the positions they did. That cavalry are of great use in the Soudan—nay, almost indispensable, to enable our slow moving infantry to cope with the lithe and thoroughly mobile forces of the natives—the dismembered 19th Hussar Regiment, small as the numbers of that command with the column are, has amply proved. Had the 19th mustered even 500 strong, instead of 130 carbines, or thereby, I am sanguine enough to suppose our casualties in at least two instances, would not have been so great. This regiment (the

19th Hussars) has part of its men with the flying column, part with Earle's column, part at Suakim, and part elsewhere."

With daylight on the 17th of February the Arab fire became heavier, but when dawn was fairly in, two of the screw-guns were brought into action, and some rounds of shell and shrapnel were burst over the dark heads that were seen popping up above the little stone shelters they had built on the sides of the hills. Like our own troops, they had been busy with these overnight. The Royal Irish and the Royal Sussex too, had heaped up earth on their parapets. As the morning wore on, the Gardners were trained against the enemy, causing them to duck out of sight to avoid the storm of lead that swept over them; but neither our shells nor bullets put down the Arab fire.

If suppressed at one point, it swelled up more fiercely from another; and if ours was silent for a moment, its concentration and vigour were renewed; yet, according to General Buller's despatch, between the evening of the 16th and dawn of the 17th, we had only two soldiers killed, four officers and ten soldiers wounded.

As the day advanced the north wind increased in strength, filling the air with whirling clouds of arid sand and dust, that darkened it like fog. A morning toilet was a luxury not to be thought of at Abu Klea, but fires had been lighted, for the men required food, even while bullets were flying. The Arabs made no attempt at an assault, and

seeing that there was no chance of a general engagement until supplies and camels came back from Gakdul, General Buller resolved to wait for them, and send 104 of the Light Cavalry Camel Regiment to meet or escort them.

Colonel Brabazon was put in com-

rear. Colonel Brabazon was entrusted with despatches for Lord Wolseley, official and private, and moved out of camp in a westerly direction, under an Arab fire all the time.

Keeping down in a small hollow in rear of the position occupied by the



THE GARDNER GUN USED IN THE SOUDAN CAMPAIGN.

mand of this force, and told, if possible, to bring in 600 camels laden with grain and water, as the water at Abu Klea was now of the consistency of pea-soup. The men were mounted upon camels, and took with them fifty others as remounts in the too probable case of break-down. It was expected they would have to fight their way back, the enemy having now worked their way far round on Buller's left

Royal Irish, they proceeded about four hundred yards, and sought the shelter of a crest, to form for the march. On quitting the camp, Brabazon had three camels and a man wounded. It was decided to proceed by some low ground on the west, and then directly westward. The clouds of dust and the dull leaden sky aided in concealing the movement from the Arabs then posted on all the hills to the north-east,

General Buller at the same time helping the departure of the detachment by a heavy fire on the Arabs.

Captain Pigott's company of the Mounted Infantry was advanced seven hundred yards in front of the fort of the Royal Sussex, down the hollow

could not be driven out of a funeral pace; and every few minutes there was a halt to enable some soldier to remove his kit and saddle to one of the fifty remounts, his own camel having fallen exhausted, and left there to be torn and devoured, perhaps be-



THE GARDNER GUN—LOADING.

way, to protect the watering parties and more remote wells. This position enabled Pigott to take the Arabs nearly in reverse, and his men fired well and steadily, driving them to cover apart from their low stone breastworks. As the camels given to the Light Corps were in an indifferent state at starting—as late as noon—their progress was provokingly slow, as the poor animals

fore death, by the foul birds of the desert.

“Watching our ground like hawks,” wrote one of the party, “we stole along the hollows, going by an old Arab track on which we luckily struck, up across the dividing ridge, and down into the plain. By 3 p.m. we were safely out upon the open desert, without having a shot fired at us, and we now considered

ourselves safe. Still going onward, the Lights got upon the main caravan route. Marching till 9 p.m., they reached and passed Gebel-es-Sergain, where they bivouacked for the night. Next morning they were off by sunrise, and got into Gakdul, a distance of fifty-two miles in a straight line. Just beyond Gebel Noos, Major Gould and fifty of the Lights, were met on their way to Abu Klea with a small convoy of water and grain. These, by General Buller's orders, were—as a precautionary measure—turned back. Leaving the troops near the last-named hill, I rode ahead with Major Gould on camel-back, getting into Gakdul with the despatches at 4 p.m. These, and my own, were afterwards sent on by a special messenger to Korti."

From the latter place, Sir Evelyn

Wood had come to look after his lines of communication. A portion of the West Kent Regiment had come in the same afternoon, and the detachment heard for the first time of the fight with the column, the death of General Earle, and also of the high excitement in Britain on the news of Gordon's betrayal and death.

Two returns given at this time show the extent to which our troops were suffering from the sun, exhaustion, and low fever. The Guards Camel Corps left the camp at Korti 305 strong, and by the middle of February they could not muster 150 serviceable men for duty at the front. The Royal Marine detachment, though partly acclimatised at Suakim, mustered 104 men. On the 20th of February only 52 men were fit for duty.



FERRY-BOATS ON THE NILE.

CHAPTER II.

THE RETURN TO GAKDUL.

Major Wardrop's Reconnaissance and Ruse—Arab Reconnaissance—Buller Reinforced—Soudanese Prisoners—Short Rations—The White Flag—Return of Major Wardrop—Arrival at Gakdul—Death of Stewart.

AFTER about forty-eight hours of harassing work and incessant skirmishing, General Buller, on the 18th February, thinking that the whole army of the Mahdi was in motion against him, sent out Major Wardrop with instructions to ascertain, as accurately as might be, the actual position and strength of the enemy, of which he was still, to a certain extent, unpleasantly ignorant.

The duty was a perilous one, but, had it been a forlorn hope, there would have been no lack of volunteers, for the soldiers were somewhat irritated by the want of rest at night. Major Wardrop, however, selected only one officer, Lieutenant Robert Tudway, of the Essex Regiment, who had already done much good service with the Mounted Infantry in this campaign, and three troopers specially chosen for their nerve and steadiness.

Stealing out of camp, apparently quite unnoticed by the enemy, they were soon lost to view among the rocky and uneven ground. Riding cautiously through a valley, the little party of five turned the hilly ground from whence had proceeded the rifle fire which had so galled Buller's column all the previous night, and after a time they found themselves fairly in rear of the enemy's position. The major took a good look round, and

satisfied himself that the Arab force was by no means so formidable as had been supposed, and he and his comrades would have ridden back as quietly as they had ridden out had they not been perceived by the enemy, whose total strength was now not much above 1,000 men.

When discovered Major Wardrop was quite equal to the perilous emergency. He and his four companions fired a couple of volleys, and then rapidly extended themselves out at some forty yards or so from each other, and then all five advanced in line, firing as rapidly as possible, with a keen sense of enjoyment at their own risk and rashness, and the ruse proved completely successful. That part of the position was held by about 100 of the enemy's riflemen, all of whom fled with precipitation, in the full belief that five British columns were advancing upon them from five different points with the intention of annihilating them.

Those in camp had now a respite for a time, but later in the afternoon the Arabs dragged a small 4-pound howitzer to the summit of the ridge on the left front, and were seen making their preparations amid frantic gesticulations and noisy hubbub, and they speedily opened with shot and shell.

Fortunately they made but poor

practice, most of the missiles going wide of Buller's position, amid the laughter and audible comments of the men. However, as it was feared they might improve with practice, Buller brought his camel battery and one of Lord Charles Beresford's Gardner guns

away altogether. Buller had now time to estimate his casualties, which, under all the circumstances, were wonderfully few, amounting to only three men killed and twenty-one wounded.

The enemy's loss was afterwards found to be very considerable. That evening



LIEUTENANT R. J. TUDWAY.

into action, so the match became at once an unequal one. Our gunners plumped a number of shells right among the enemy, killing and mutilating many of them, and afterwards a few well-aimed cannon shot struck their gun, smashed a wheel, and dismounted it.

Meanwhile the Mounted Infantry had been smartly engaged, and effectively too, for as the afternoon wore on the Arab fire became more and more intermittent, and eventually died

the troops had their supper at leisure, and the night was passed in peace. On the 19th all remained quiet at Abu Klea, and nothing was seen of the enemy, thus the troops were at liberty to attend to various matters neglected hitherto, such as cleansing, improving, and strengthening their camp. But towards sunset some excitement was caused by a report that the enemy were in sight, and a few came in view on the summit of a ridge, which was about 2,000 yards distant.

It was supposed that bodies of spearmen and riflemen might be hidden behind the rocks and boulders, but says the *Daily Chronicle*, "was ordered to give them a shell or two to assist their studies. The range was a long



FOLLOWER OF THE FALSE PROPHET.

only eight horsemen were in view against the sky-line, and, though evincing no intention of advancing, they were evidently reconnoitring the position with care. "Lord C. Beresford,"

one for the Gardner, but there were some good shots among the bluejackets. Only three rounds were fired, and not one went wide of the mark. One shell burst among the group, killing one of

the horsemen; the others at once cleared off, and we have seen nothing of them since."

A native came into the camp in a most exhausted condition, begging for water, which was at once given to him. He was a slave, and had been in the service of one of the tribes now garrisoning Metemneh. He was closely interrogated, but no information of the slightest value could be extracted from him.

On the 20th Buller had a welcome addition to his force in the shape of a portion of the Royal Sussex Regiment and the Light Camel Corps, under Colonel Lawley, with a convoy of stores, which were greatly needed. During the march from Gakdul they had seen nothing of the enemy till they were drawing near Abu Klea. Colonel Lawley had ordered a halt for the purpose of grazing the camels, where a patch of grass was found, when suddenly a party of armed rebels were observed watching their movements.

Some of the Camelry made a dash at them and captured six men, who made no attempt at resistance, but threw down their Remingtons and begged for mercy. They declared most positively that there was no strong force anywhere near Abu Klea; that there was a camp about two miles distant, with 600 men in it, all of whom had recently come from Metemneh. This camp had been chosen with judgment, and was situated on rising ground at the upper end of a rugged and rocky valley. It was roughly fortified, and armed with one gun, brought from Metemneh.

The prisoners were unanimous in stating that some of the Mahdi's forces had come to that place from Khartoum, and that the men who had harassed our camp on the 16th and 17th were all from Metemneh. The six had evidently come from that quarter, as all their cummerbunds were proved to be made of hospital sheets marked with the broad arrow, part of the old stores abandoned by the column.

These prisoners admitted that they had originally belonged to the Soudanese contingent of Hicks Pasha's army, and served in that series of battles which ended in its destruction. They saved their lives by desertion, and had since served the Mahdi. From a portion of Buller's position, the camp to which they referred was visible, and a white flag was seen fluttering on it. It was not, however, a flag of truce, but a company standard attached to a long spear.

"As far as I can learn," wrote the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, at this date, "General Buller's discretion has not been fettered by the despatches which he received yesterday, and he is still free to make a dash upon Berber. Whether he will do so will depend a good deal upon circumstances, and especially upon the result of Major Wardrop's mission. The officers will endeavour to make friends with local tribes, if any remain in this neighbourhood, with a view of persuading them to send supplies, of which we are very short, and becoming shorter every day. Probably they will be able to send us from Gakdul a sufficient means

of transport, if it is decided to continue our retreat to that place; but it will be a very different matter if we are destined to march to Berber. The route is a trying one, crossing bleak, rocky hills, and wearying sand deserts. But, after all, it is not so much farther than Gakdul, and the line of march would be so directed that we should always have the immense advantage of being within one day's march of the Nile.

. . . . It is now almost entirely a question of transport. All depends upon our acquiring 1,000 fresh camels. The poor brutes who have shared the fortunes of this column have had hard times, and are faring as hardly even now in camp. Necessarily they are on very short rations—even our own, to say the least of it, are not very luxurious—and they are dying fast with our limited supply of water. Only one bucketful can be spared twice a week for the camels; most of them that survive are, in consequence, in the poorest condition."

The Wells at Abu Klea, however, served the column better than was expected, thanks to careful management, and the daily labour of deepening them and keeping them clean. The forts on the hills were now completed, and excellently placed. Not one of them could have been carried by an Arab assault, and practically they commanded every avenue by which an enemy could approach the camp, in front or flank.

On the 21st February the white flag was still flying on the Arab camp, and General Buller decided that it was

worth some risk to find out what it really meant, and accordingly directed Captain Pigott, with a few of his Mounted Infantry, to ride down the valley towards the fort. He started early in the morning, and rode with extreme caution in view of the possibility of an ambush, an apprehension which, however, proved to be groundless; and as the enemy made no sign, his little party reached the camp without an exchange of shots.

It was found to be completely deserted, and had all the appearance of having been so for some time. Attached to the colour-staff was found a letter, without date or signature, stating that two Lieutenants of the Mahdi desired to communicate with the General commanding the British army. Captain Pigott at once took the letter to General Buller, who dictated a reply to the effect that he could not enter into any communication with those officers without knowing what was their object; and that they would have to inform him what they had to propose, and by what means they could bring it before him.

With this answer Captain Pigott rode back to the camp, but on the way suddenly came upon a party of the enemy posted on high ground, from whence they opened fire upon him, but without effect. It was supposed they knew nothing of the flag of truce or the letter; but, at all events, they ceased firing when one of Pigott's men displayed a white handkerchief. The appearance of treachery put an end to the negotiations, and Pigott returned to the British camp, while our scouts

reported that the enemy were seen in motion towards Metemneh.

They appeared to be retiring thither leisurely, and in small parties, without

make another attempt to parley with the enemy, and sent Major Kitchener, with a small escort, for that purpose. The latter had a brief colloquy with



SPECIAL UNIFORM OF OFFICER AND PRIVATES IN THE CAMEL CORPS.

any attempt at military formation, and the troops began to flatter themselves that they had seen the last of their troublesome neighbours, a feeling that deepened into certainty when the night and the greater part of the following day passed in peace.

General Buller now determined to

them, but nothing came of it, and it was supposed that in their hill camps they suffered much from want of food and water, as, to procure these, they had to tramp all the way to Metemneh. During the same evening, Major Wardrop, who, after an adventurous survey of the adjacent country, had



• PRAYER IN THE DESERT.

gone to Gakdul, now returned with despatches for General Buller, containing orders to fall back on that place.

So ended the hope of a dash at Berber, and the troops were not seriously disappointed, as without fresh camels it would have been impossible, and the Major reported that in no case could the required numbers be procured.

On the 22nd the enemy made themselves apparent during the day, but at very long range. Towards evening they became bolder, and moved northward in force, evidently to ascertain the strength and composition of a convoy that was approaching the camp from Gakdul; but their way was barred by a strong chain of out-pickets and scouts, so they drew off.

The convoy came safely in, and started on their return next day, with thirty wounded officers and men, most of them in a bad way; but though everything was done to make their rough journey as bearable as possible, it was evident that most of them would suffer greatly before reaching the Wells of Gakdul. "I decided," wrote the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*, "to accompany this convoy, interrupting the journey by a brief visit to the scene of the first battle (Abu Klea), which presented a horrible spectacle. The desert, for nearly a mile, was strewn with the bodies of the slaughtered Arabs. On our approach great numbers of carrion birds rose lazily from their sickening repast. They continued to hover around, however, till our departure. The corpses had already been shrivelled by the great

heat and the dry air to the proportion and semblance of mummies, with this difference, that they lay twisted in every variety of contortion. In many instances the white bones, divested of their covering by the foul birds, stared up at the beholder.

"Truly a sickening sight, and one to be remembered with a shudder. I am glad that our brave fellows remain undisturbed in their desert graves, a fact which, I trust, will be some small comfort to their sorrowing friends at home. Having seen the convoy well on its way forward, some of us returned to camp to await the final start north of the column."

It was necessary to hasten the departure of the latter, in consequence of increased signs of the enemy in front; and ere long it was clearly known that they were on the march for Abu Klea, 6,000 strong. From the adjacent hills the staff could plainly see and estimate the strength of the rebel column, which had with it several field guns and many banners displayed. As they came from the direction of Khartoum, no doubt was entertained that they were the first long-expected instalment of the victorious warriors of the Mahdi—a sight that quickened our own movements.

Preparations were hurried forward, and at seven in the evening the retrograde movement began. The march was at first a delightful one; the air was cool, the moon shone out in all her tropical splendour, and no halt was made till Gebel-es-Sergain, in the desert plain, was reached.

On the 24th February the march was resumed, till a halt was made in the valley or rocky defile of Abu Sayle, when, at a distance of eight miles, the convoy with the wounded could be seen in front.

Little time was given for rest, the march being resumed shortly before midnight. The clothing of the troops was now in a deplorable state, and scarcely a pretence of uniform was to be seen anywhere but in the ranks of the Royal Irish, whose hideous khaki equipment had been more recently supplied to them. But even they were badly off for boots; and what it is to be without a sole to one's uppers, those had reason to know (wrote one) who had to tramp over that country of wiry grass, acacia thorns, and Nubian sand-stone rubble. "Yesterday" (22nd February), he continues, "when the Roman Catholics of the old 18th knelt at mass—the only chaplain here is the veteran Father Brindle—one could see that at least one sole was off more than ten per cent. of the pairs of boots. And the Royal Irish are not the worst off by any means, for some of the other corps, as one man put it, have but two whole pairs of boots among three men. So much for Government contracts."

During a halt at the end of the Abu Sayle defile, the pickets gave the alarm that a considerable force of the enemy was coming on; but these proved to be only a few scouting horsemen watching the retreat. The scare was not without its use, as it proved the celerity with which the column prepared for the defensive. The ridge on which

it halted and encamped was entrenched and a zeriba was constructed. The behaviour of the troops was admirable, and General Buller hourly won their confidence and regard by his cool and collected demeanour.

On the 26th the column came safely into the camp at Gakdul, and with reference to the retreat Lord Wolseley wrote thus in his despatch:—

"The manner in which the movement from Gubat to Gakdul has been carried out, reflects the greatest credit upon General Buller as a leader, and upon all ranks under him. Every retrograde step is regarded by uncivilised races as a sign of weakness and fear, and to withdraw troops in the face of a savage enemy is neither an easy nor a grateful task. Sir Redvers Buller has, however, done this with little loss, and in a way which has won the confidence of all who served under him."

In his reports to Lord Wolseley, Sir Redvers Buller acknowledges the services of Major Wardrop for threatening the enemy's rear, and says:—

"I wish expressly to remark the very excellent work that has been done by the small detachment of the 19th Hussars, both during our occupation of Abu Kru and during our retirement. Each man has done the work of ten, and it is not too much to say that the force owes much to Major French and his thirteen troopers."

The transport of the wounded across the Bayuda Desert was mainly effected by the Turkish and Egyptian soldiers who had joined the British force when Gordon's admiral, Khasm-el-Moos (who was now made a pasha), came to Abu Kru.

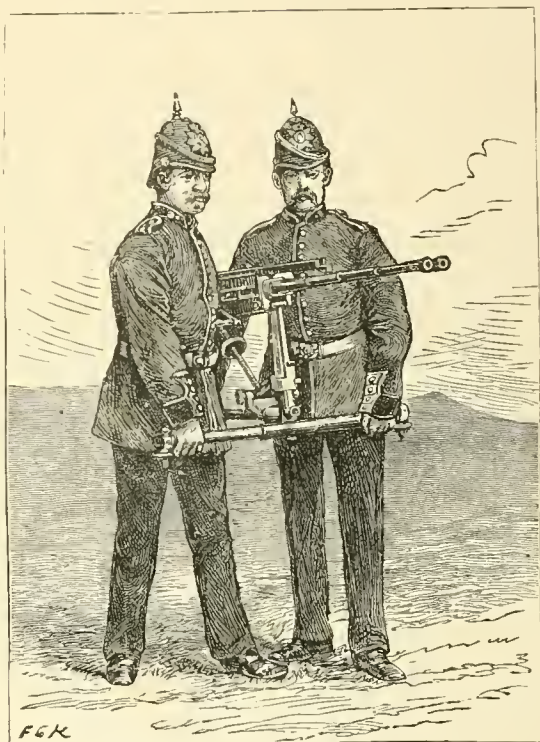
On the first march to Abu Klea, then to Gakdul, and finally to Korti, these bearers displayed the utmost patience and perseverance, and Lord Wolseley fittingly recognised their

services when they reached the headquarters camp.

So thus ended the expedition across the Bayuda Desert, which had for its object the relief of Khartoum, and the "smashing up" of the Mahdi. After

the forces which Gordon's heroic defence had detained for ten long months.

The strength of the enemy in Khartoum at this time was reckoned at 10,000 men, with all Gordon's cannon, and a million of rounds of ammunition.

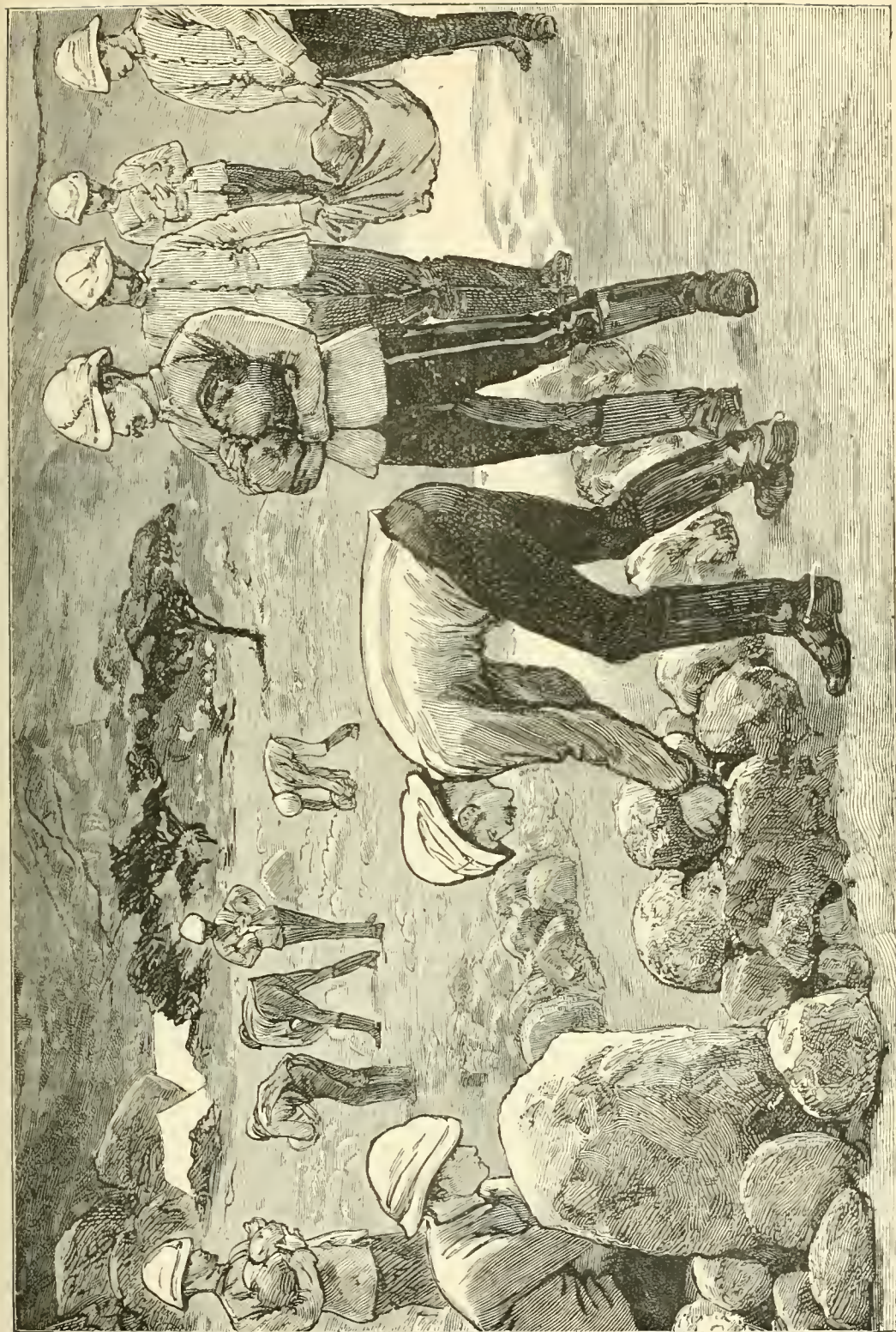


THE GARDNER GUN—PREPARING TO "SIGHT."

making the most splendid exertions—after fighting two pitched battles against apparently overwhelming numbers—after reaching the Blue Nile, and getting within rifle-shot of the beleaguered city, our undaunted soldiers had to retreat, and solely because they were too late. The capture of Khartoum gave the Mahdi immense prestige, with an excellent base for operations, while enabling him to employ elsewhere

By the 28th of February the wounded sent to Gakdul by General Buller were dying fast. A score of graves were added to the lonely "God's Acre" without the camp. Among the deaths were those of three poor soldiers who, being slightly wounded, traversed the desert on foot to Gakdul. "Once in, they simply and silently lay down and died."

Just outside Gakdul Sir Herbert



MEN OF THE 19TH HUSSARS FENCING THE GRAVE OF SIR HERBERT STEWART AT GAKDUL WELLS.

Stewart expired in his litter. The medical stores had run very low, even when he was on board the steamer at Abu Kru. Carbolic acid had become exhausted, and the medical officers were driven as a substitute to sheep-dip!

The deceased General, a Stewart cadet of the Scottish house of Gallogway, was born on the 30th June, 1843, so that he died in his forty-second year. He was a son of the Rev. Edward Stewart, and of his wife Louisa Ann, of Muckcross, in the county of Kerry. In his twenty-first year he was appointed ensign by purchase in the 37th Foot, and in 1866 was adjutant of the corps. In 1868-70 he was aide-de-camp to the Major-General commanding in Bengal. In 1872-3 he served there as Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General, and in the latter year joined the 3rd Dragoon Guards, and was Brigade Major of Cavalry during the Zulu War.

For several months in 1882 he was on the staff of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. In that year he was despatched to Egypt, where he was present in all the battles, and at the capture of Cairo. He was appointed extra aide-de-camp to Her Majesty, and made C.B., with the medal, clasp, and order of the Osmanieh. In 1877 he married Georgina Janet, daughter of the late Admiral Sir James Stirling, by whom he had two sons, Geoffrey and Spencer. In the autumn of 1884 he embarked for the Nile to serve under Lord Wolseley; and when the intelligence of his receiving that wound, which proved mortal, reached Britain, it excited the sympathy of all classes,

and the Queen telegraphed to him, through Lord Wolseley, promoting him to the rank of Major-General.

His death cast a universal gloom over the troops, though the doctors had pronounced that the character of his wound rendered recovery hopeless. He was buried in the little graveyard near the reservoirs. The scene was a very impressive one. The troops formed a procession in the valley, headed by the firing party, and the band of the Royal Sussex Regiment. The pall-bearers were Majors Gould and Byng, Lieutenants Lord, Dawson, Douglas, and Browning, and Captain Rhodes. Colonel Talbot, of the Guards, read the burial service, "and there was not an unmoist eye among all those present when the brave soldier's remains were consigned to their last resting-place amid the desert sands."

The men of the 19th Hussars raised a large cairn to his memory at the entrance of the Gakdul valley, and they also built a substantial stone wall around his grave, with a headstone carved with his name and date of death.

Around him are buried many who had died of sickness, for enteric fever, due to exhaustion, bad quarters, and poor feeding, was becoming a common cause of death. Every day added to the number of graves, over which the men's comrades, with loving hands, raised mounds of stone as a protection from wild animals. Some they adorned with rude crosses bearing the name and regiment of the deceased, with the addition—if a Roman Catholic—of the letters R.I.P. (*Daily Chronicle*.)

CHAPTER III.

FROM GAKDUL TO KORTI.

Gifts to the Sheikhs—Durbar at Korti—Posts in the Desert—Gordon's surviving Troops at Korti—Concentration of the Forces there—Hardships of the Retreat—In Danger at Gakdul—The "Cat" in the Soudan—The Australian Contingent—General Order to the Soldiers and Sailors of the Expedition—Benbow's Reward.

WHEN his headquarters were at Korti, a town of Dongola sixty miles eastward of the city of that name, and situated on the left bank of the Nile, Lord Wolseley, on the 19th February, received tidings of the column under Brigadier Brackenbury, reporting that the river had been crossed, as already detailed, and that in about ten days he expected to occupy Abu Hammed.

Soon after, Salleh, the most powerful sheikh of the great Kabbabish tribe, on his arrival at headquarters from Mahtul Wells, which are twenty miles south of Debbelh, was, by order of Lord Wolseley, presented with a handsome sword and robe of honour by Major Turner and Zohrab Bey. These gifts were well deserved, as Sheikh Salleh had promptly supplied us with many camels and other means of transport. The ceremony took place in the tent of the Mudir of Dongola, and at the same time lesser honours were accorded to the sheiks of the Sorabi and Hawawir tribes, who had also been useful in supplying the Expedition with transport and food.

On the 24th of February a grand durbar was held for the purpose of the investiture (already briefly described) by Lord Wolseley of the Mudir of Dongola with the insignia of St. Michael and St. George. The Sheikhs of the Kab-

babish, the Sorabi, and Hawawir tribes were present, while a guard of honour was furnished by the old 50th, or West Kent Regiment, on the occasion of this somewhat grotesque ceremony.

The brevet of installation was read by an interpreter in the Arabic language, and Lord Wolseley placed the collar of the Order round the neck of the somewhat mystified Mudir, who stood in front of the headquarters tent, where the British colours were flying.

Addressing the Mudir in the floridly Oriental style deemed suitable on such occasions, as "Thou brave and valiant one," Lord Wolseley (states the *Daily News*) said through the interpreter:—"Her Majesty, my gracious Sovereign, Victoria, Queen of the two kingdoms of Great Britain and Ireland, Empress of India, having learned the true facts of your zeal and bravery in the service of your Government in cutting short the advance of the rebels upon these regions, and of your untiring diligence in furthering the affairs of the Soudan Expedition, in which we are now engaged, has commanded me to represent her high person in conferring upon you the rank of Emir, Commander of the Knight Companions of St. Michael and St. George. I have great pleasure in handing you the brevet bearing Her Majesty's sign

manual, and another document which dispenses with the observance of the rule requiring the recipient of the rank to appear in person before Her Majesty to receive the brevet from her noble hands. After thus fulfilling the duty devolved upon me by my sovereign, I, in my own name, offer you praise and thanks for your energetic and untiring activity in fulfilment of your weighty

Lord Wolseley to convey to the Queen thanks for the honour she had conferred upon him.

At this time the native population at Korti brought supplies in freely to headquarters, and appeared on most friendly terms with our soldiers, and had no apprehension of any march northward by the Mahdi. Lord Wolseley informed the Mudir that the late



SAND-GROUSE SHOOTING IN THE SOUDAN.

trust, and congratulate your Excellency upon the favour you have obtained from Her Mightiness Victoria, my Sovereign. May she ever be victorious, and may length of days be granted to her and his Highness the Khedive, your Sovereign. Praise be to the Divine Majesty at all times ! ”

After this, perhaps necessary, bombast, the band of the West Kent struck up, and the guard presented arms. The Mudir was attired in the full uniform of an Egyptian general, and delivered a short speech, in which he begged

General Gordon had written letters speaking of him in high terms, and of the services he had rendered ; he also presented him with one of the gold decorations which that ill-fated officer had made as presents to those who had distinguished themselves at the defence of Khartoum.

When the Sheikh of the Kabbabish tribe was invested with his robe of honour, he said that the best troops of the Mahdi were engaged against us at Abu Klea, and that, after their slaughter by Buller's column, it was

doubtful if they would ever attack us again, as his followers would disperse to their homes with the plunder of Khartoum, two surmises in which the sheikh was mistaken, as future events showed.

But about this date the *Standard* records that "the Mudir of Dongola and the natives of this neighbourhood

tracts were entered into; horses were bought at every available centre, and the Mudirs of provinces even were ordered at once to send in the first instalment of 2,000 camels.

On the 25th of February it was reported at Korti that the spies of the Mahdi, and numbers of robbers, were secreting themselves among the long



THE DINGY IN WHICH COLONEL STEWART AND MR. POWER LANDED NEAR BERIL,
SHORTLY BEFORE THEIR MURDER.

(Korti) still continue to disbelieve in the fall of Khartoum. This persistency on their part is singular, as the natives have all along been well informed of what was going on; and had Khartoum fallen at the date generally supposed, the fact should have long since been known to them."

Every other day convoys of sick and wounded officers and men were arriving at Korti from the front.

The authorities at Cairo were now busy with preparations on a large scale for the new Expedition, and large con-

reedy grass on the hills between the Howeiyat Wells and Gakdul; and that a guide who was bringing one of the Mounted Infantry with despatches from Gakdul to headquarters had been seized by them; but the soldier retired some distance, halted, and from his saddle fired nine telling rounds, till observing more of the robbers closing in, he put spurs to his horse and galloped off to Howeiyat. These robbers belonged to the Hassaniyeh tribe, and it was feared they would prove very troublesome.

On the 27th General Buller, in

obedience to orders, started from Gakdul for Korti, with a strong escort. On his way he was desired to map out five equidistant positions on the route, which was about a hundred miles in length as the crow flies. These were to be placed in a state of defence, to serve as dépôts for the troops when retreating to the rear.

Transport was so defective now that it was evident nearly all the men would be compelled to march across the desert on foot to Korti, as the camels would be mostly used for carrying stores and water for these equidistant dépôts. But the men would be able thus to retreat gradually, and without unduly distressing themselves.

The dépôts nearest Korti were to be supplied with water from that town; and it now seemed that there was no doubt of the prolonged retention of our troops in the Soudan, news which was not received with much enthusiasm; and the chief questions now were, How could the army be fed during the summer, and where could it be encamped to suffer the smallest possible risk from the coming tropical heat?

It was believed that the retention of our troops in that fearful desert during the hot season would cost hundreds of valuable lives.

"I am not alone in this belief," wrote a correspondent; "those who know what the scorching heat of this desert is like when the tropical sun pours down in all its intensity, predict that our soldiers will die like flies. There has been no sign yet of the rebels following us up. There is, however, just a possi-

bility that they may do so, trusting to obtain their water supplies from the 'pockets' in the hills. The farther the rebels move from an adequate water supply, the less formidable they become. Even at the best, the small pools on the hills can supply only a limited number for a short time. If they saw a chance, doubtless they would harass us; but up to the present I have seen none of the enemy near the camp. Whatever is done in this quarter (Gakdul) must of necessity resolve itself mainly into a question of transport."

The Kabbabish tribe, which hitherto had been carrying stores for the troops at Gakdul, under contract, now suddenly refused to extend their journeys at any price, and it became apparent that if an autumn campaign was persisted in, not less than 6,000 camels would be requisite for each column of the army. It was known that green food was plentiful enough in some parts of the desert, and that camels will last longer, of course, if not stinted in food and water; while to achieve perfect success it would be necessary to have several efficient steamers on the upper reaches of the Nile; and it would be idle to reckon on finding Gordon's shot-riddled steamers intact, if an advance was made to Metemneh again.

Meanwhile Sir Evelyn Wood was to remain in command at Gakdul, but soon after he returned to England. That there was then no intention of abandoning the desert route was evident, though a concentration was in progress at Korti. The troops were being echeloned along the entire route, while

batteries and other depôts were being formed at the Wells of El Howeiyat, and other points, which would certainly not be done for a retreating column. There was every reason to believe that now the enemy were suffering from a deficiency of transport, though they were less dependent upon it than the British troops.

A medical statement was now prepared of the total losses of the desert force, from the time it left Korti to its return to Gakdul, in killed and disabled from wounds or sickness. This total amounted to thirty officers and four hundred and fifty men, a heavy percentage indeed in a force which did not exceed two thousand of all ranks.

On the 26th February news came to Korti from Handab that a large party of Arabs were raiding in that neighbourhood. The Soudanese troops of the Mudir of Dongola were despatched against them from Berti, and after a smart skirmish drove them back. The loss of the Arabs was severe, but unknown, as they succeeded in carrying off all their dead.

It was now announced that the Mahdi had forbidden the use of the Koran, substituting some books of his own, a very improbable circumstance; but it was added that he had issued strict injunctions that his troops were not to charge the British, but to fight them from a distance. "If they do this," he told them, "God will destroy their enemies."

After the arrival of General Buller, with Lord Fitzgerald, at Korti, Lord Wolseley held an inspection of the sur-

vivors of General Gordon's troops, under Captain Gascoigne. After a parade in line, they were formed in hollow square, that he might address them.

He said he was very much pleased to see them. He congratulated them on the pluck and courage they had shown, and warmly thanked them for the good and humane work they had done in the transport of the wounded across the desert.

He told them that all the promises as to pay and advantages which had been made to them by their brave leader, Gordon, would be faithfully observed, as the British always kept faith; adding that more armies were coming from Suakim and Egypt, and that the Soudan would be held by these troops till the Mahdi was crushed and Khartoum re-taken.

On his speech being translated to them they cheered loudly, and Nusrî Pasha said in reply that "all the soldiers were broken-hearted by the death of Gordon Pasha, who was adored by them, and they hoped the British would yet avenge his murder and crush the Mahdi."

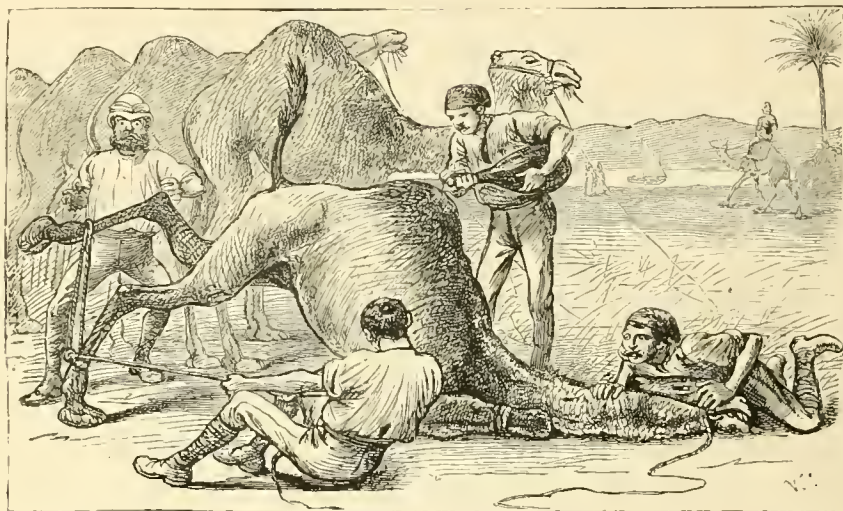
News now came that the Hassaniyeh tribe had looted a convoy of thirteen camels near Gakdul, and that a body of marauders had attacked another British convoy near the Wells of Howeiyat, and killed twelve men.

Tidings of General Brackenbury's column were anxiously looked for at Korti; but by the 1st of March great difficulty began to be experienced in inducing messengers to carry des-

patches, the destruction of property by the British troops, in avenging the murder of Colonel Stewart, having caused intense hostility on the part of the tribes between headquarters and Abu Hammed.

A change of intentions now began to be indicated on the part of the authorities, when, just about the time

heat being most distressing," wrote one who was present. "We reached Gebel-el-Kelb, some twenty miles from Gakdul, on the 2nd inst. Somewhat to our surprise we found an excellent supply of water at that place, infinitely superior, in fact, to that of the famous Wells of Gakdul. Colonel Talbot, seeing the importance of the place to



DOCTORING A SICK CAMEL.

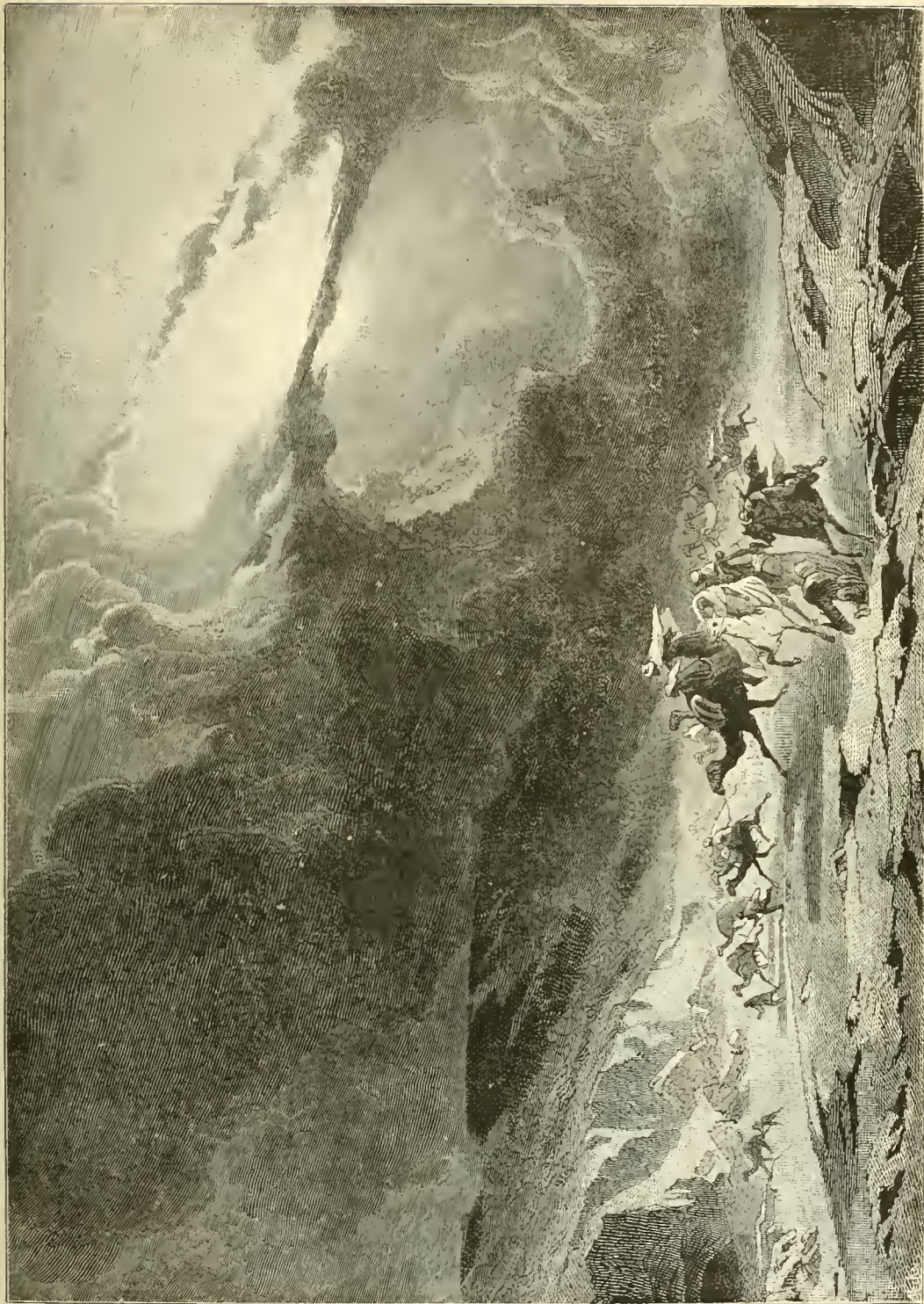
General Buller left Gakdul, it leaked out that the latter post was to be abandoned, with all the intervening posts, and that the whole forces were to be concentrated at Korti, prior to going into summer quarters, and General Wood issued an order to the effect that Gakdul was to be evacuated on the 4th of March.

The first to depart were the Naval Brigade, under Lord Charles Beresford, taking with them four guns.

The march across the desert proved one of great toil to the troops, "the

our retreating troops, has thrown up light earthworks, and otherwise fortified it, with a view of defending the wells against prowling bodies of the enemy, who might attempt to render them useless to our men. Colonel Talbot left a small garrison at Gebel-el-Kelb, and proceeded with his convoy towards Korti, taking with him the Heavy Camelry, the Naval Brigade, and two guns."

The Wells of El Howeyiat, fifty-five miles from Korti, were reached by this detachment on the 4th March.



SANDSTORM IN THE DESERT.

"The Khamsin will, I am afraid, add greatly to the sufferings of our men in this retreat," says the writer before quoted. "It is a hot southerly wind, which generally commences to blow about this season of the year, and, as a rule, lasts quite fifty days. Its effects on the human system are very distressing, producing a sense of languor and physical weakness. Animals are equally affected—even the hardest camels."

While Colonel Talbot was at El Howeiyat, tidings came that the Hassaniyeh tribes were gathering to dispute his progress, and the retreat generally of the whole, near the El Kalah Wells, sixteen miles distant; that they had been joined by a hundred expert riflemen from Berber, and were expected to operate from the direction of the Merawi road. This news was heliographed back, in the hope to put Sir Evelyn Wood on his guard against a surprise, and make arrangements for giving the enemy a warm reception, should they appear.

"The last stages of our journey," wrote a correspondent, "were most trying, the heavy desert road, and the fierce heat of the sun, exhausting even many of the hardy Kabbabish camels. Some of our fellows could hardly stagger along, and there were very few who did not suffer terribly. On Thursday afternoon I determined to leave the column, and make a dash for Korti. Towards evening I started, and when I last saw them, the troops were toiling on, the poor men and animals equally exhausted. That night I had another feverish attack,

but was bound to push on, as I had scarcely any water with me. Ultimately I reached here (Korti) in safety, but thoroughly exhausted, having passed two nights in the desert, and having been (latterly) without a drop of water for twenty hours."

Under date March the 1st, at Korti, the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* wrote thus:—"You must spend a week or two upon the desert, living in a perpetual dust-storm; choked, baked, with nought to slake the naturally insatiable thirst which such a life engenders except soapy water, to realise the delightful rebound of feeling and comfort afforded by a return to the banks of the flowing Nile."

Tents were now erected at Korti for the reception of the troops coming in from Gakdul, Abu Halfa Wells, Megaga, and elsewhere, and also for Brackenbury's column, which was expected to be on its way to headquarters. As then disclosed, the military plan appeared to be the concentration of all the forces composing the Expedition (except those in Suakim) at Korti.

It was Lord Wolseley's wish, if by dint of the most liberal pay, the Kabbabish tribe, Gordon's Soudanese, or any other natives, could be induced to occupy advanced posts at the Megaga Wells, Merawi, and a station on the desert near Debbah, to hold them as scouts to intervene between our troops and the enemy, and so secure the roads leading to the Nile, while our own troops were to be massed at a strategic point so as to protect the province of Dongola from invasion.

Korti was eventually to be quitted, and an entrenched camp formed where the dry and healthy desert sand had rolled down to and bordered the river; the soldiers were to be hutted for the summer in cabins of reedy grass. It was hoped and announced that they would be able to get through the tropical summer without much sickness, if the enemy did not compel exposure; and it was urged that good water and wise sanitary arrangements would minimise the death-rate. "Still," wrote one, "summer in the blazing Soudan is not to be contemplated with free-and-easy indifference to the total change from ordinary camp life. What will be done when the cool days come round again in September and October next is too remote for speculation. The questions, however, continually asked at Korti were, Will the troops in the autumn attempt to go to Khartoum, *via* the Nile in whale boats, or will the British public, long before then, see them shifted to Berber, and holding the terminus of the Suakim-Berber Railway?"

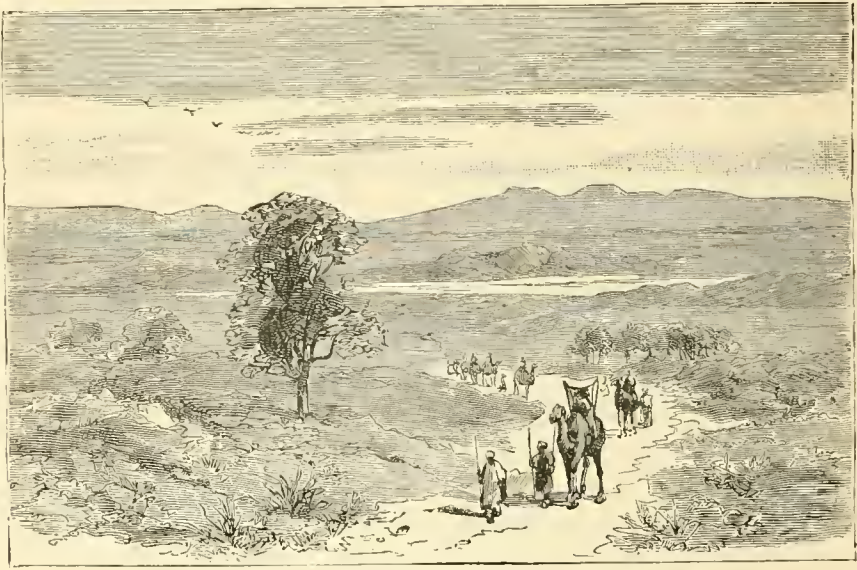
The advanced column did not quit Gakdul a day too soon, as the place was fast becoming unhealthy, and the men fell sick in large numbers. On the 27th of February a convoy with no less than 107 sick and wounded had been despatched to Korti—the third in one week; so General Wood hastened the work of evacuation as rapidly as could be expected, by the aid of camels from Megaga, to get the whole force out even by the 2nd March.

The men were moved to Megaga, thence to El Howeyat and Korti, the line regiments—the West Kent, Royal Irish, and Royal Sussex—being the last successively to leave the base. The change from Gakdul, after its stifling atmosphere and the frightful odour from hundreds of dead camels lying in every direction, did the troops infinite good; and every energy was now bent towards getting the force together and healthily encamped before the sun came nearer the equator and the weather became unbearably hot.

"At Gakdul, and at those places in the desert where black glistening rocks abound, the heat during the day is already scorching," wrote a correspondent, under date Korti, 2nd March, 1885. "Even here in the shade, under the trees and by the bank of the river, for two or three days past, the thermometer has been ranging from noon till 4 p.m. between 90° and 95° Fahrenheit. The doctors look forward (privately) with apprehension to a summer's residence of the troops on the Upper Nile. There is already a good deal of sickness, and a general loss of elasticity and tone is observable on all sides among the men. Soldiers, like everybody else, if overworked, and if their strength be overtaxed, suddenly give way, and what is called the 'fighting vim' and bounce leave them. There is now scarcely any longer to be seen that elated keenness to have a brush with the Arabs. The men who toiled so vigorously at the ropes and oars, dragging the whalers against the heavy stream, have become 'stale' and

want rest, or, better still, change. Camp life is always unwholesome, and how much so it will be in the Soudan I fear to conjecture. That the relief of Khartoum has failed solely and simply because of the Government's dallying, and ultimately forcing the Expedition by an almost impracticable route, passes denial. Even had all

all sides among officers and men there were universal dismay and burning indignation at the catastrophe. The opinion was that we had better have lost one-half our number. The toils and dangers of these splendid soldiers had all been undergone for nought! There was no question of politics about the state of feeling, for I am glad to



PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE SUAKIM-BERBER RAILWAY—THE DESERT NEAR ARIAB.

gone well, it would have been near the end of March before the whalers could have reached Khartoum. The return, at so late a season of the year, of the garrisons as well as of our own men, must have led to a heavy mortality bill.”—(*Daily Telegraph*.)

This writer says that a portion of a previous report was struck out of his telegrams. It was to the effect that the news of Gordon's death and betrayal caused our soldiers at Abu Kru to be horrified and exasperated. “On

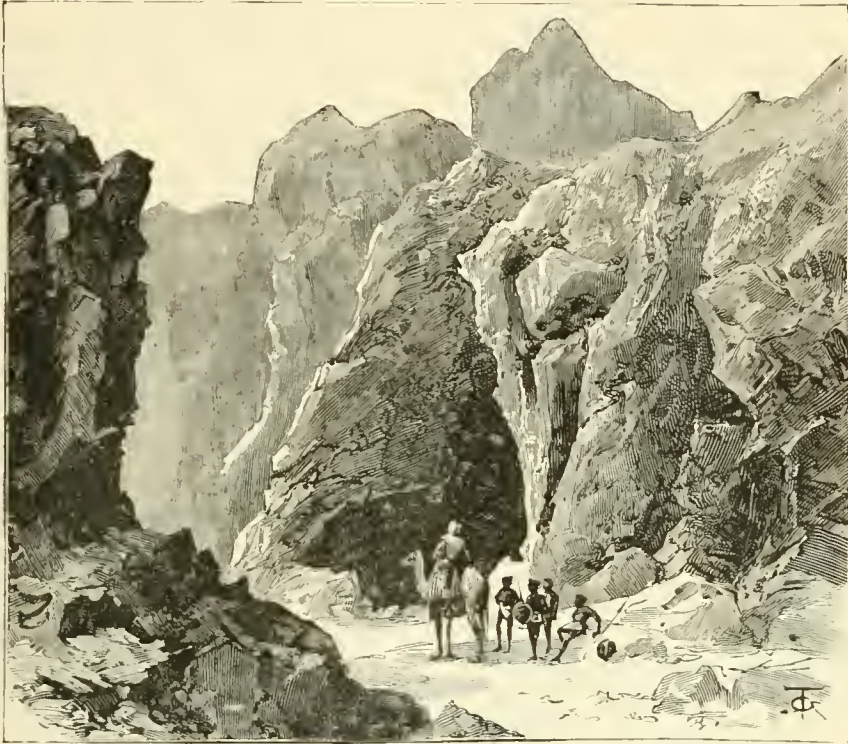
say our army are all Britons first and chatterers after. For that black day, very few of those who formed part of the Nile Expeditionary Force will ever forgive the home officials who are responsible.”

It was now decided that the British encamped at Korti should remain until the autumn of 1885, when aggressive operations would be resumed against the Mahdi at Khartoum and Osman Digma at Suakim, though the weather was getting hotter and hotter, and

several cases of typhoid fever had occurred. It was also decided to extend the Soudan Railway, and two battalions of Egyptian troops were despatched to commence its construction, while the necessary plant and

this was done, the portage of the Second Cataract would alone remain to be encountered.

About this time the increasing insolence of demeanour of the native population in Egypt towards British



PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE SUAKIM-BERBER RAILWAY—RAVINE NEAR HARATRI.

rolling-stock were ordered from Great Britain.

It was to stretch from a point beyond Sarras, to which there was already a graded line to Akash. Instead of the new line being laid by the bank of the Nile near Ambigol, it was to pass through the desert, that the heavy work of cutting the rocks might be avoided; and Lord Wolseley contemplated a further extension of it to Ferket, and if

soldiers, which had attracted much attention, culminated in a savage assault upon two of our Hussars, who were passing unarmed through the village of Matarieli (near Abassiyeh), the ancient Heliopolis, a few miles north-east of Cairo. They were attacked and severely maltreated. As this was not the first time such an event had taken place, and the village had a bad reputation, it was resolved

that summary punishment should be inflicted on the guilty, without the usual delays and frivolous formalities of Egyptian civil tribunals.

Accordingly the Provost Marshal, with a company of our Military Police, rode out to Matarieh, and on approaching the village, broke into a gallop, and taking the inhabitants completely by surprise, formed an armed cordon round it. Several who attempted to escape into the orange groves were overtaken and driven back. The sheikhs of the village were summoned, and ordered to produce the men guilty of the outrage on the two Hussars.

They, of course, professed ignorance of the whole affair; but a watch was set, and they were told that unless they produced the men they would themselves be severely flogged. This threat quickened their intelligence, and they pointed out four men as having been engaged in the maltreatment of the Hussars; and after a most animated chase through gardens and over housetops, they were captured, and two were found to be Soudanese. The four were identified by the Hussars, and they were at once stripped, tied up to a tree in front of the mosque, and were then, in presence of the whole inhabitants, soundly flogged—first with a stirrup leather, and then by a kourbash, well laid on by the Military Police.

They were then cast loose, with a warning that the police would in future shoot down all who might attack British soldiers. "This wholesome vindication of British authority," wrote

a correspondent, "cannot at the present time be too highly recommended. It is the first instance which has yet occurred of the British authorities setting their foot down, and its effect will be most beneficial."

A letter from Massowah, in the *Mubashir*, Arabic paper, published at this time, stated that the fall of Khartoum would cause a change in the attitude of Abyssinia towards the Mahdi. Up till this period there had been a pretty constant stream of trade between that country and Khartoum, in connection with which about three thousand Abyssinians had been living in the city.

These subjects of King John were now at the mercy of the Mahdi, who, moreover, by the fall of the city, was put in possession of all the territory between the Blue and White Niles, and thus became an immediate neighbour of Abyssinia. This circumstance, it was predicted, would lead, if the Mahdi's power lasted, to fierce disputes between him, as a fanatic Mussulman, and the King, as a bigoted Christian. It was, therefore, considered as by no means unlikely that an Abyssinian army might, within three months, cross the Blue Nile and try conclusions with the followers of the False Prophet.

On the 22nd of the preceding month, the Vicar Apostolic of Central Africa, one well acquainted with the Soudan, in a letter from Cairo, warned Great Britain of the serious danger of under-rating the difficulties and dangers the projected Suakim expedition would

have to encounter. "Even supposing," said he, "that the plan to construct a railway from Suakim to Berber is successfully carried out, and Osman Digna defeated to boot, only a portion of the difficulties will have been surmounted, as the British force will have, at Berber, to meet a foe of enormous numerical superiority, and animated by the fiercest fanaticism."

On the 3rd of March Khasm-el-Moos brought to Korti from Metemneh a small body of black troops, and the same day was signalised by one of the most important and remarkable features in the war, the departure for the Soudan of the New South Wales contingent, an event possessing deep historical interest, as the first occasion on which Australian troops shared in the defence of the Mother Country or the Empire. From the date that the offer of the colony was accepted to the hour of the departure of the contingent, public enthusiasm was maintained at its utmost tension in Sydney, and the number of volunteers reached six times the required strength of the force, while there was a continuous flow of contributions to the patriotic fund, which, by the 3rd of March, amounted to £45,000.

The troops were reviewed by Lord Augustus Loftus, Governor of New South Wales, in presence of 50,000 spectators, and special services were held for the volunteers in the Anglican and Catholic Cathedrals, sermons being preached by the Primate and the Archbishop.

On the 3rd of March the streets

forming the route from the barracks to the Circular Quay, a distance of two miles, were lined by masses of spectators. The troops were escorted by 600 seamen and marines from the ships of war stationed at Sydney, and accompanied by the Governor, the Ministry, and the chief officials of the Colony. Loud cheers and good wishes were heard on every side, and on reaching the Quay the men formed square, and were thus addressed by the Governor:—

"Soldiers of New South Wales: I have considered it my duty, as the representative of Her Majesty, to say a few words to you at this solemn moment, before your embarkation. For the first time in the great history of the British Empire a distant colony is sending, at its own cost, and completely equipped, a contingent of troops, who have volunteered, with an enthusiasm of which only we who witness it can judge, to assist the Imperial forces in a bitter struggle for the suppression of unspeakable cruelty, and for the establishment of order and justice in a misgoverned country.

"Countless as have been the occasions on which the blood and treasure of Britain have been poured out freely to protect the feeble, to shield the defenceless, and to maintain rights, there has never been one in which humanity has been more deeply interested in the triumph of her arms than the cause which you have heroically resolved to uphold by your valour.

"You will be greeted in Egypt by the ready welcome of thousands of chivalrous soldiers who have never yet looked upon such an action as yours. The eyes of our gracious Queen will be upon your exertions; and in every part of the world where our flag floats, men, women, and children will pray for your success.

"Soldiers! you carry in your keeping the honour of this great colony, which has made such splendid sacrifices in order to send you to the front, with an equipment of which the nations most practised in war might be proud. You will have the glorious privilege of helping to maintain the honour of the Empire, and in your ranks are members who are voluntarily leaving the paths of fortune, worldly advantages, the comforts of home, and the sweetness of domestic life, for hard service in a bloody war, in which already many brave men have been stricken

down. You are doing this to show to the world the unity of the mighty and invincible Empire of which you are members.

"Your country charges itself with the dear ones you leave behind; and all that generosity, tenderness, and gratitude can do to care for them, and to succour and console them, will be a labour of love to the nation."

Iberia, which took 600 men, the remaining 200, with the horses and stores, being conveyed by the *Australasian*. Enthusiastic cheers arose from the crowds on the quays, and, accompanied by a perfect fleet of steamers, the ves-



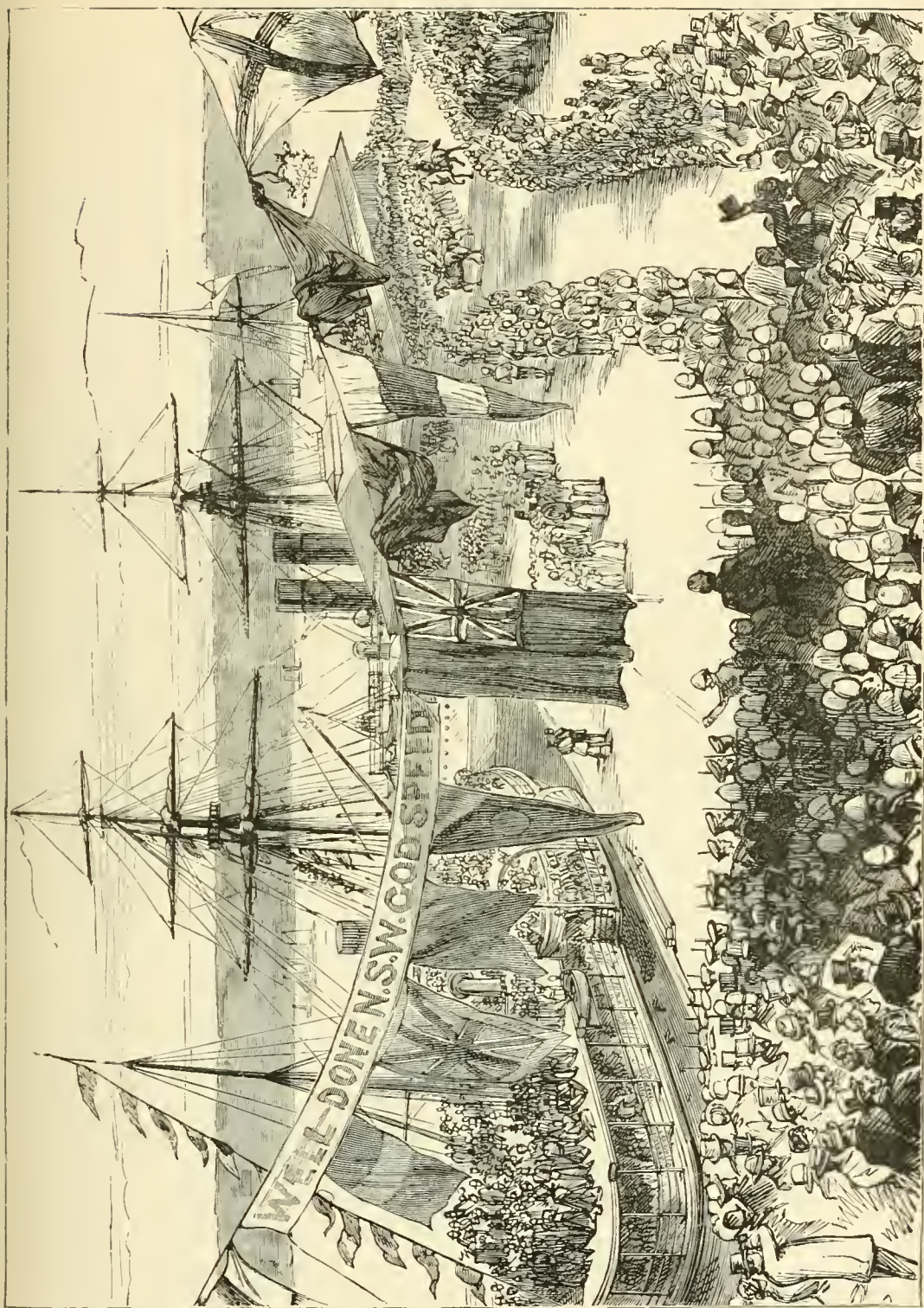
AT SUAKIM: REBEL OIVINO HIMSELF UP WITH HIS WIFE AND FAMILY.

On bidding the contingent finally farewell, His Excellency said: "Our earnest hope is that it may be your glorious privilege to share in the triumph as in the service, and that you will come back to us crowned with Great Britain's gratitude, as you are now encompassed by her sympathies."

The contingent then marched on board the transports, the Infantry and most of the Artillery embarking on the

sels sped on the way to the shores of Upper Egypt.

When the remainder of Gordon's Black troops, under Khasm-el-Moos, came to Korti, they were so overjoyed on seeing the lights of the camp, that they celebrated their arrival, in the usual African fashion, by discharging all their muskets in the air, which brought our outposts under arms, and caused general excitement. He



DEPARTURE OF THE AUSTRALIAN CONTINGENT FROM SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES.

reported that the Sheikh Suleiman Wad Gamr, the murderer of Colonel Stewart, was, with his followers, at a point about one day's march south of Kirbekan, and that he had with him only three pieces of cannon, one of which was broken; and the Arabs who survived the battle of Abu Klea were asserting that there the British opened the square on purpose to let them in, for the purpose of slaying them all, a statement confidently believed by the natives at Metemneh.

The interview of Khasm-el-Moos with Lord Wolseley was a somewhat protracted one, according to the correspondent of the *Morning Post*. When congratulated by the General on his new honours, Khasm kissed his hand, and expressed profound sorrow for the fall of Khartoum and the death of General Gordon, whom they always revered, and expressed his earnest hope that, by the aid of God and the British troops, they would yet overthrow the Mahdi, and restore peace by suppressing the revolt.

Lord Wolseley replied, "That it was the fixed determination of the British Government to overcome the power of the Mahdi at Khartoum, and impressed upon him to rest assured that this decision once arrived at, would not be changed. The General reiterated his assurance that whatever General Gordon had pledged the word of Britain to, would be strictly and faithfully carried out, and expressed his hope that they would all be in Khartoum by the end of the year."

Lord Wolseley then proceeded to

discuss the question of Arab auxiliaries, and Khasm-el-Moos promised to give his cordial assistance in the work. His lordship then inquired as to the rumours which had reached Korti as to the advance of the Mahdi and his army from Khartoum towards Abu Kru. Khasm replied that he had been informed that shortly after the fall of the city the Mahdi did make arrangements to advance, but was dissuaded by his council, and, instead, sent some of his emirs as far as Gubat. Lord Wolseley then asked if the latter would likely come across the Bayuda Desert, and whether they would likely carry on their operations during the hot weather, or wait for a cooler season.

Khasm-el-Moos replied that the hot or the cool season made not the slightest difference to the Arabs; but that their present difficulties arose from the want of proper arrangements for such an advance, as a desert march required elaborate preparations beforehand with regard to food and water. Lord Wolseley then inquired as to the ammunition which the Mahdi had obtained in Khartoum.

Khasm said that though his forces had in their possession enough of gunpowder, and there was a sufficient number of men in the arsenal to refill such cartridge cases as they could collect, there was no one with them who could make percussion caps for the cartridges so refilled. They had always come from Egypt, and none had arrived since the time of Abd-el-Kader, four years before, and lead, Khasm-el-Moos added, was very scarce.

Lord Wolseley in conclusion remarked: "It has been said that the British Government should not have sent me up the Nile, but ought to have despatched the force by the way of Suakim to Berber."

To this observation Khasm-el-Moos answered emphatically: "If the British Expedition had not come up the Nile the province of Dongola must indubitably have fallen into the hands of the emirs of the Mahdi, and the route to Egypt would thus have been open to him at any time."

On the 4th of March the temperature at Korti was 104 degrees in the shade. Two of the staff-surgeons were suffering from enteric fever, and one of them, Dr. Turner, died on the 5th.

The news having been brought to Korti, March 6, that a party of robbers were hiding between Megaga and Gakdul Wells, Colonel Barrow started off with a detachment of Hussars for the purpose of discovering their whereabouts, and putting a stop to their depredations.

Colonel Barrow and his men concealed themselves near the camping-ground occupied recently by Colonel Clarke's column on its way to Korti, and at daybreak on Tuesday they saw a party of about thirty appear and begin searching for plunder. The Hussars at once sallied forth and attempted to cut off the robbers, but the ground was too rough for operations on horseback, and the troops had to dismount and use their carbines. They succeeded in shooting two, but the rest, who knew the district well, managed to escape.

Captain Verner now arrived from Gakdul, and reported that Lord Charles Beresford, with the Naval Brigade, Colonel Clarke, with the Heavies, and Major Hunter, with the Artillery, would reach Korti on Sunday. General Dormer and his staff—namely, Captain Holmes, Brigade-Major, and Captain Rhodes, aide-de-camp—now established their summer quarters at Ambigol. General Dormer was to command the troops stationed there and at Korti.

On the 7th of March two movable columns were organised to be in readiness to march in any direction, and on that day Lord Wolseley issued the following general order to the soldiers and sailors who took part in the Nile Expedition:—

"Camp, Korti, March 7, 1885.

"The Queen has watched with the deepest interest your doings, and has desired me to express to you her admiration of your courage and self-devotion.

"To have commanded such men is to me a source of the highest pride. No greater honour is awaiting me, please God, than to lead you to Khartoum before the year is out.

"Your efforts to save General Gordon have been unsuccessful, but not through your fault.

"On the river and in the desert you have endured hardships and privations without a murmur, and in action you have been uniformly victorious. You did everything to save your comrade, but Khartoum fell through treachery two days before the advanced troops arrived.

"A period of comparative inaction may now be expected. This army was not formed with a view to undertaking the siege of Khartoum, and for the moment you must content yourselves with preparations for an autumn advance.

"You will, I know, face the summer heat, and the necessary but less exciting work now to be done, with the same courage and endurance you have hitherto shown.

"I thank you heartily for all you have done in the past.

"I can wish nothing better, I can ask, I think,

no more of you in the future, than the same uncomplaining devotion to duty which has characterised your conduct during the recent operations.

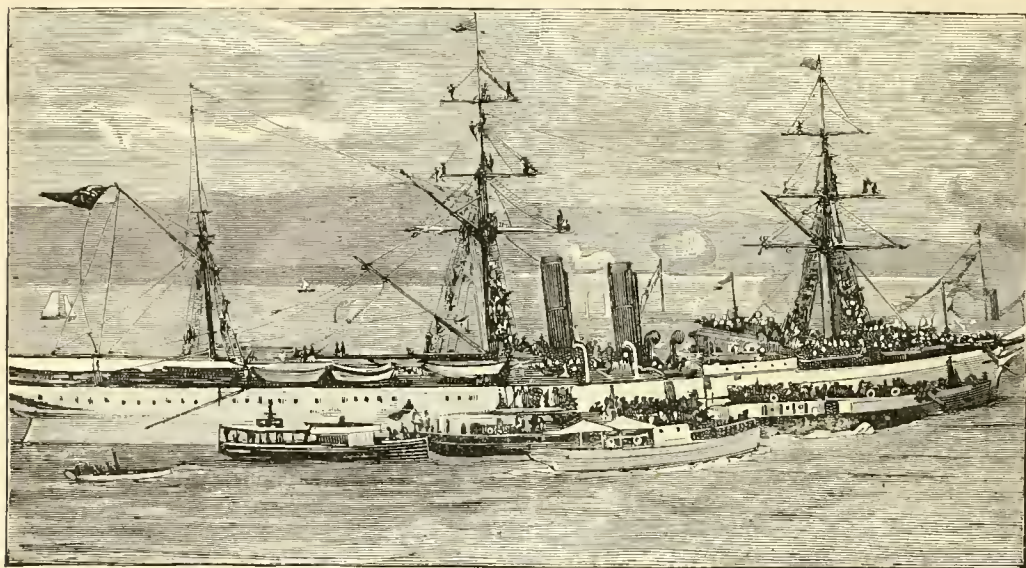
“(Signed) WOLSELEY.”

The Naval Brigade as a homogeneous body was no longer now to exist. The men were to be drafted to various points along the Nile, from Abu Dom

lass, and seventy rounds of ammunition, in many cases having to tow an obstinate camel.”

On the following day Lord Wolseley inspected the brigade, thanking it for its services, and on the 9th it was finally broken up in the manner stated.

On their last parade, his lordship



THE TROOPSHIP "IBERIA" LEAVING SYDNEY.

to Dongola ; thus, during the summer, it was evident they would have more work to do than the troops, as they were to have entire charge of the water traffic ; and Lord Charles Beresford resumed his original functions as Naval Aide-de-camp to Lord Wolseley, to whom, in his final report, he wrote thus of his brigade :—

“On the 7th of March the brigade returned to Korti, having marched from Metemneh without one falling out, a creditable performance considering the state of their shoe-leather, and the fact of their having to carry rifle, cut-

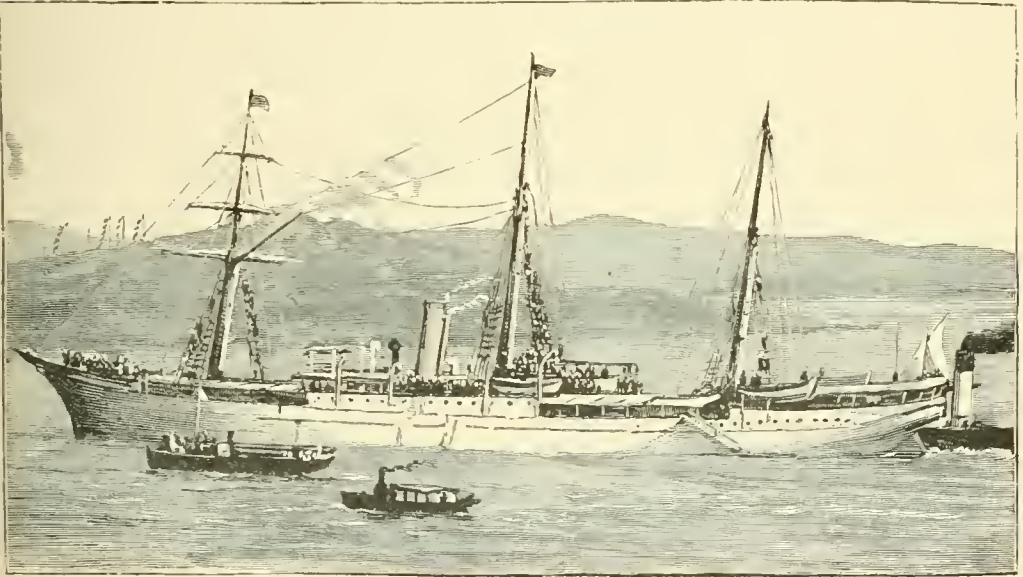
selected for special mention Chief Engineer Henry Benbow, R.N., whose splendid courage and resource, during the memorable trip to rescue Sir Charles Wilson and his shipwrecked comrades, were brought under his direct notice by Lord Charles Beresford. He warmly thanked and praised Mr. Benbow for his brilliant feat in repairing the boiler under the heavy and continuous fire of the enemy, and, as a testimony to his merits, presented him with his own silver cigar-case, amid the honest plaudits of the seamen.

It was now announced that eventually the Naval Brigade would be reformed and greatly increased by picked gunners and seamen sent from Britain, and that it would form an important part of the Khartoum Expeditionary force. It was also stated that Lord Charles Beresford was again to command, with Captain Frederick R. Boardman, R.N., of H.M. *Salamis*, as second in command.

Not only had the officers of the Naval Brigade fully justified all the eulogiums of which they were then the subject, but the men also had distinguished themselves by the great pluck and

energy they had repeatedly shown in the many arduous enterprises in which they had taken part. This force had proved of immense service throughout the campaign, and had borne a large share of the burden and heat of the day. It is gratifying to know that the brilliant exploits of its gallant commander found their counterpart in the deeds of the brave men whom he so efficiently led.

Three days before the Naval Brigade was broken up Brigadier-General Brackenbury's column marched into the camp at Korti.



NEW SOUTH WALES TROOPSHIP "AUSTRALASIAN."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RETURN OF BRACKENBURY'S COLUMN.

The Descent of the Nile—The Crossing at Abu Dom—Camp at Ambigol—Concentration at Korti—Departure of the Canadians—The Mahdi and his Resources—Bad Bread—The Casualties in Egypt—Blockhouses.

GENERAL BRACKENBURY'S command, having completed the punishment of the Monassir tribe for the murder of Colonel Stewart and his companions, was ordered not to proceed to Abu Hammed, which is at the southern end of the great desert, but to fall back and encamp at Merawi—to retire for the general concentration of the force. He left Salamat on the 27th of February.

On the 1st of March his boat-column was at Berti, en route to the base, having successfully descended three rapids, in the process of which three whalers had to be abandoned; but the men and stores in these were saved, and transferred to other boats.

The route from Salamat to Berti was found to be very difficult, the country being of the roughest and most difficult nature, much resembling the Shukook Pass, though more open. On the 28th of February the column crossed a great wady, with rocky sides, which a few brave men might have held against a very superior force.

A few spearmen were seen on some of the Nile islands, but no opposition was offered to the column, though the country people were aware that the movement was a retrograde one; and no attempt was made either to hinder Brackenbury's march or harass his rear.

All the villages passed through were found to be still deserted, and the grain crops in the abandoned fields were seen to be ripening prematurely owing to the want of rain. It was supposed that much of the crops might be saved when the villagers returned from their hiding-places, the chief of which was Abu Hammed, four days' journey distant across the desert.

General Brackenbury had the Gordon Highlanders, the Cornwall and Staffordshire Regiments with him in the whale-boats, the last half battalion acting as the rearguard of the rest. A few dervishes were seen on the rocks near Kirbekan, where they shook their spears defiantly, but seemed to be without firearms; so the boats proceeded quietly on their way to Abu Dom, the General accompanying the boat-column.

On the 28th of February Colonel Butler reached Merawi from Berti with the Hussars, the Egyptian Battery, the Egyptian Camel Corps, and the Transport Company, having kept touch with the infantry in the whale boats. The land route along the right bank of the Nile proved to be by far the best way for cavalry advancing from Merawi to Abu Hammed; and it was intended that this line should be adopted in the event of a further advance against Berber from Korti.

During the preceding forty days, the cavalry of Brackenbury's column did some very hard work, having to march six hundred miles, at a daily average of fifteen miles; their horses were, however, in fair condition, though there was a certain amount of lameness, owing to nails and shoes running short, but still all were fit for service.

The whale boats had travelled in a direct line to Merawi 250 miles, but had covered a far greater distance by water, owing to the many windings of the river and the frequent crossing and re-crossing of the stream, selecting channels, and avoiding, when possible, rocks and rapids. The result of our Nile experiences proved, that even the most formidable series of cataracts in almost the lowest state of the river can be surmounted by British-built boats manned by our soldiers.

But, for all practical purposes, the Nile above Dongola and its shores are unmapped and unknown. The channels and the proper pilotage of the river had to be discovered yard by yard as the flotilla advanced, and thus the exploration of the Nile ahead had to be done by the cavalry, and hence an excessive amount of work was thrown upon that branch of the service and the Camel Corps of the advanced party. "The conduct of both these arms is reported to have been most excellent, and, whatever may have been said on previous occasions of the looseness of the ties between British and Egyptian soldiers working in a common cause, nothing could have exceeded the harmony which has characterised the rela-

tions between Major Flood's squadron of the 19th Hussars and the Egyptian Camel Corps under Captain Marriott. The officers who have had most opportunity of seeing the work done by the Egyptian Camel Corps are of opinion that their numbers should be very largely increased in any future operations that may be carried on."

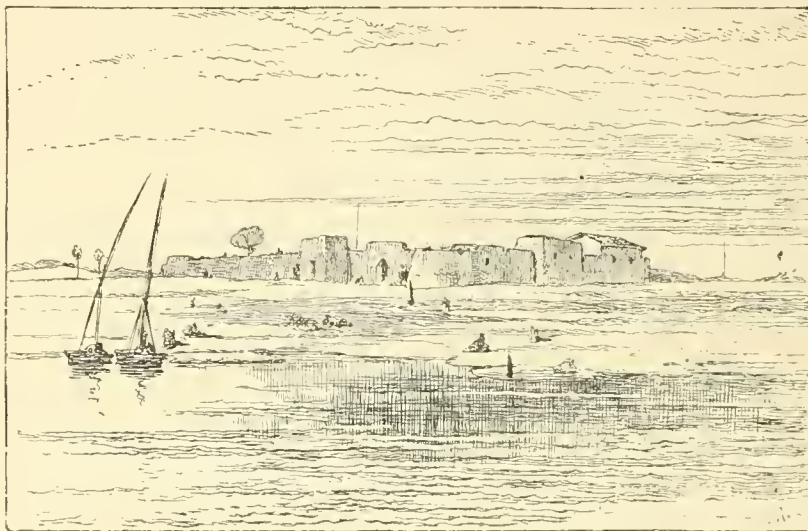
The Egyptian Battery also rendered excellent service, and earned the warmest commendations from General Brackenbury. The camels of both these corps and of the Transport returned from Salamat in the best condition, although the ground over which much of their march lay was declared almost impracticable for animals of any kind. The General had an ample opportunity of judging the physical features of the country, as every mile he advanced brought into stronger prominence the great advantages won by striking at the enemy in rear of their entrenchments at Kirbeka; for, if we had made a direct attack then, and merely dislodged them, they could have fallen back upon the terrible defiles of the Shukook Pass, which they had carefully prepared for a resolute defence, and in that narrow labyrinth of rocks our losses would have been most serious.

To General Brackenbury the Canadians proved of immense service in the descent of the more dangerous cataracts, and his loss by drowning was only three soldiers—marvellously small when the perils and difficulties of these unknown rapids are taken into consideration. South of Berti, the natives of the

Bacta villages had returned to their homes and were seen at work in the fields, from whence they greeted the troops with demonstrations of welcome as they passed. The Mudir's troops had also returned to Merawi, and crossed from the right bank of the river to Abu Dom, on the 5th of March.

The camels and horses were all got

On the afternoon of the 5th General Brackenbury held a parade of all the troops of the river column for inspection. Although after the hard work of the previous few weeks the troops looked somewhat ragged in appearance, every man on parade was in splendid condition. After the customary inspection General Brackenbury made a



FORT AT DEBBEH, ON THE NILE.

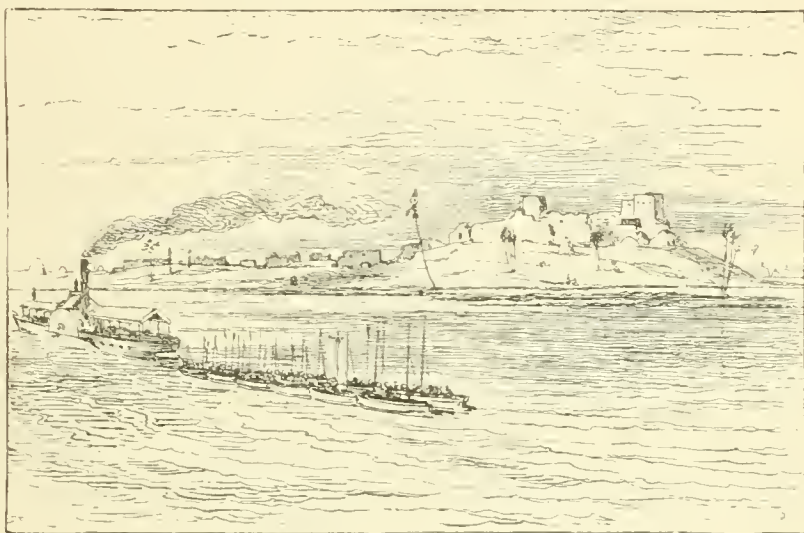
across by swimming them, and Brackenbury had the whole forces established on the left bank, though they experienced much difficulty, owing to a strong wind which prevailed and filled the air with such blinding storms of dust that it was almost impossible to make head against it. As the main body of the column was to go on to Korti, Colonel Butler took command of the post at Abu Dom, having with him Major Sandwith as staff officer, Major Slade as intelligence officer, and Captain Pirie as orderly officer.

cheery speech to the brigade, in the course of which he warmly thanked officers and men for their splendid behaviour under unaccustomed and trying circumstances. They would shortly separate for the purpose of going into their summer quarters, and he had called them together before they broke up, in order that he might have the opportunity of expressing his acknowledgments for their past services. "The way in which this brigade has worked," concluded the General, "will be mentioned in his-

tory." The officers of that force had interesting accounts to give of their voyage down the cataracts, particularly at that of Shaggiyeh, a portion of the Nile deemed impassable even for small boats. The entire course was full of perils, and the danger of wreck was ever present; but the risk was forgotten in the interest and excitement occa-

majestic river, and then leaped down the falls one after another, said that the whole scene suggested the idea of a gigantic steeplechase by water.

The steering of these boats between the countless rocks and islets was admirably done, but one serious mishap occurred. A whaler of the Staffordshire Regiment, with wounded, as it



HANNAR, ON THE NILE, THE REPUTED BIRTHPLACE OF THE MAHDI.

sioned by the peculiar circumstances of the voyage.

The 300 whale boats, with their soldier crews, nearly all in scarlet tunics, swept down the Nile in seemingly endless line at the rate of seven miles an hour, sometimes gliding easily with the current in comparatively smooth water, and then swooping down a rapid with a fall of several feet at terrific speed. Those who, like the cavalry, from the banks watched the progress of the boats as they swept steadily over the calm flow of the

neared the Gerendid Cataract, swung round and came to the fall broadside on by some mischance or mismanagement. It capsized in a moment, and three poor fellows were swept away before they could be rescued, but the rest were saved. Altogether the experiences of this voyage appeared to have made a vivid impression, which would not easily be effaced from the memory of those who took part in its perils and excitements. The natives along the banks supplied the column freely with fresh food as it advanced

down the Nile, and rumours were heard that the Mahdi had instructed his emirs to prevent the tribes from harassing the British troops now, as he must eventually be victorious, and the sun would finish his battles for him.

On the 8th of March, Brackenbury's column came into the camp at Korti, and was sent, almost immediately, for summer quarters, to Tani, a small village four miles north of Ambigol, where he was ordered to construct a fortified camp. "They ought to make themselves fairly comfortable," wrote a correspondent, "as much of the country near Tani is under cultivation, and they will be able to obtain a good amount of grass and other fodder in the immediate neighbourhood. I was rather struck with Tani when I passed through the place last December, as it presents a pleasing contrast to the monotonous architecture of the average Nile village, in that it boasts of a romantic-looking castle, of apparently most venerable age, and a number of Arabic rock-cut memorials."

On the same day the Heavy Camelry, under Colonel Talbot, came into Korti. The men marched in, looking thin and worn, yet in good health and spirits; but the camels had suffered terribly. Of all those that went forward with the Heavy Brigade six weeks before, only four came back with them now.

On the 10th of March, the Guards, two companies of the Mounted Infantry, and two of the Sussex Regiment came in from Gakdul, so the work of concen-

tration proceeded rapidly; and the Canadian boatmen remaining with the force were ordered to leave for Canada. They stated that they were willing to re-engage for service next autumn, provided they received double pay.

General Brackenbury's return seemed to indicate the close of active operations at that time upon the Nile, along which preparations were rapidly made for quartering the troops; while it was thought that in another quarter General Graham would ere long give a good account of that most troublesome person, Osman Digna, and open the first stages of the road from Suakim to Berber.

It was now evident that unless the Mahdi ventured upon offensive operations in the direction of Dongola, that the work of the Nile and desert columns was over until September, an interval in which the patience and endurance of both officers and men would be severely tried. "I have not been allowed to telegraph the information," wrote a correspondent, under date Korti, 8th March, "that, at least as regards the desert column, the universal opinion is hostile to a war of revenge; and, so far as I have been able to test it, the view of the river column is identical. Nay, I may go further, and say that there are not to be found, among the troops now on the Nile, half a dozen officers who are not opposed to the continuance of operations without the formulation of some definite and distinct policy to which the operations are to lead up. If to hold Berber is necessary to ensure a quiet Nile valley, let it be known; if to hold Khartoum,

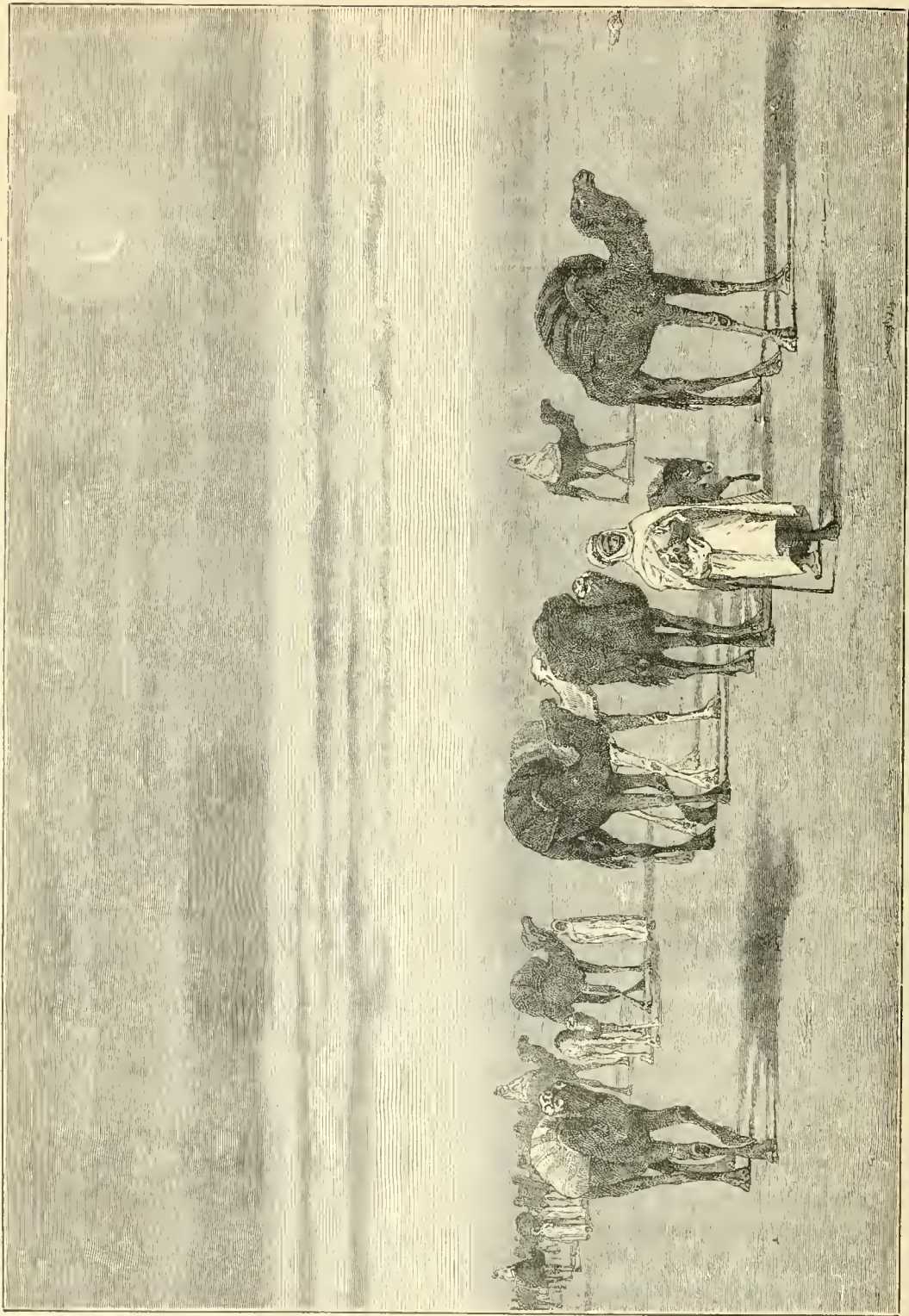
let us say so. But to go and take Berber and Khartoum, with the idea of letting the latter into the hands of the Mahdi again, or of any other hands than those of British officers, is scouted as absurd. Every army likes to have some idea of what it is fighting for, and assuredly a tangible object is more than ever necessary in the case of troops exposed to such a climate as that of the Soudan in summer. The romance went out of the expedition with the fall of Khartoum and the death of Gordon; and there must be substituted for it some object, the accomplishment of which will make life worth living for the next four or five months."

With this view of matters, Lord Wolseley would have to consider precisely what the Mahdi possessed in the way of military resources and material strength; and the following figures are beyond question, though at variance with one statement made at Korti by Khasm-el-Moos. The Mahdi took from Hicks Pasha seven Krupp guns, six Nordenfeldts, and twenty-nine excellent brass-rifled pieces, called mountain guns (though not of the class known to us by that name), with 500 rounds of shot and shell per gun. Of these he had thirteen arming the defences of Khartoum. From Hicks he also took 17,000 Remington rifles and 1,000,000 of ball cartridge. At Khartoum he took 12 guns mounted on the lines, mostly Krupps, and 6 Nordenfeldts. He got also 20,000 rounds of gun ammunition, and 2,000,000 of cartridges. When the

city fell, Gordon had in it 2,000 black regulars, 2,000 Bashi-Bazouks, 2,000 Shaggiyehs, and 600 of the people drilled, besides 1,500 whites. Eliminating the latter, the strength of the Mahdi was now increased by 6,000 well-trained fighting men.

If it was assumed that against Gordon, and against the Desert and Nile columns, he had expended all the ammunition taken from Hicks, he would still possess 20,000 for his artillery, and 2,000,000 for his Remington rifles, which had been increased in number from 17,000 to 40,000. Thus he had certain arms and ammunition enough to arm 30,000 men with 60 rounds each, and perhaps double that number. "We must not permit ourselves," wrote one on this important subject, "any illusions, therefore, that the enemy is likely to run short of ammunition for two or three engagements. No doubt he was getting short before he secured Khartoum; but now—! And the worst of it is that, as the firing at Abu Klea twice showed, his men handle their weapons right well when in cover. If all these facts are not duly appreciated in Britain, at least *liberavi animam meam*."

In addition to the state of their boots, the troops had to complain of the quality of their bread, which was not made of the best flour, and was not even good of its sort. It was the poorest English flour, and "so old that the strength has gone out of it," according to a report, "and we can't make bread without mixing it with a large proportion of Russian flour." It was not so bad as



EVENING IN THE DESERT.

the flour which, according to the evidence before the committee in 1883, stood up like hard plaster of Paris when the sacks were opened; but the bread made of it became blue-moulded

July, 1882, to March, 1884, the figures stood thus:—

There died of wounds 46 British troops, and 17 of the Naval Brigade; there died from other causes, 766 British



FELLAH MAIDEN.

in twenty-four hours, and though not poisonous, it was neither nice nor digestible, and became an accessory to some of the ailments under which the poor soldiers suffered.

According to a return, issued on the 11th of March, of the loss of life, number of wounded, and number of invalided of our army during the British occupation of Egypt, from

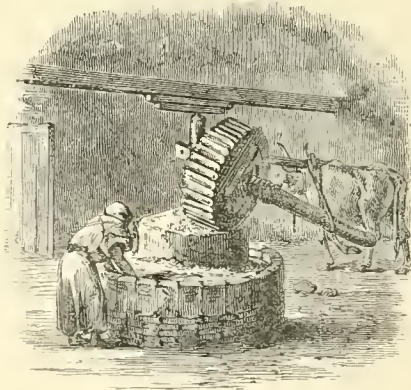
troops, and 96 of the Naval Brigade, and 9 of the Indian contingent. There were also invalided home from other causes than wounds, 3,939 British soldiers, and 417 of the Naval Brigade, and 49 of the Indian contingent. The totals killed were 205 British soldiers, 15 Naval Brigade, and 5 Indian contingent. Of wounded there were 677 British, 223 Naval Brigade, and

15 of the Indian contingent. One Indian was reported missing at Cairo on the 1st of October, 1884, and was never heard of again. At the bombardment of Alexandria (continues this return) 5 were killed and 27 wounded; at Kassassin, 16 killed and 162 wounded; at Tel-el-Kebir, 76 were killed and 387 wounded; at El Teb, 35 were killed and 155 wounded; at Tamai, 107 were killed and 116 wounded; while 16 were killed and 68 wounded under the general circumstances classed as "miscellaneous."

Among the troops now coming to the Soudan were detachments from volunteer corps. The field telegraphists of the Army Reserve (late 24th Middlesex Rifles) were equipped at Aldershot for the Soudan. Including the detachment of the postal corps,

then *en route*, and that at the front, the number of men supplied by it for the Expedition numbered one officer and forty-seven non-commissioned officers, rank and file. The Government sanctioned the application for the strength of the corps of field telegraphists to be augmented to 100, the recruits to be drawn from London, Edinburgh, Manchester, and elsewhere.

Two blockhouses, or bullet-proof sentry boxes, constructed by Messrs. Martin, Wells, and Co., were shipped at Woolwich for the Soudan. Each house was made of seasoned oak, 12 feet at the base and 20 feet high; each had two storeys, and 24 loopholes. Some of the hospital huts were also forwarded for Suakim, each to accommodate thirty patients.



LIME MILL.

CHAPTER V.

IN SUMMER QUARTERS ON THE NILE.

Losses at Kassala—Olivier Pain—Letters from the Mahdi—Destruction of Cavalry Horses—Story of a Slave Girl at Korti—State of the Troops in the Nile Camps—Our Posts on the Nile—Arrest of Zebehr and his Son.

MEANWHILE, among the Soudan fortresses, Kassala, which, at the end of 1883, had a garrison of 1,259 men, was making perhaps the most vigorous defence, on the 2nd of February, 1885, experienced a severe defeat at Koleia, involving a loss of twenty-six officers, and six hundred and thirty-two men, a serious aggravation of the situation in the Soudan, and recalling the characteristic words of Gordon to the Ministry, "I leave to you the indelible disgrace of not saving Kassala, Berber, Sennaar, and Khartoum!"

After a brilliant success had been obtained by the garrison over the Hadendowas but a short time before, it was hoped there would be no occasion for anxiety about Kassala, as the troops had escorted a convoy of provisions safely into the town, which is 280 miles distant from Suakim.

On that occasion the correspondent of the *Standard* wrote to the effect that:—

"However brilliant is the success which the garrison of Kassala have won over the Hadendowas, it can only temporarily relieve the pressure upon the besieged town, and it is feared that its effect will be altogether neutralised when the news of the fall of Khartoum, which had not at that time reached the neighbourhood, becomes known."

This prediction turned out to be correct. The news of the fall of Khartoum restored the spirits of the Hadendowas, and neutralised the defeat they had recently suffered; and when the brave garrison of Kassala, relying on the effect of their recent victory, made a sally on the 2nd of February, they suffered a crushing defeat, and now began to despair. For a year they had by that time made a noble resistance, and defended the inhabitants, thirty thousand in number, against their enemies; but seeing that not a soldier had been put in motion to rescue or succour them, and that they had been deserted by those from whom they had a right to look for help, they might well lose heart, and follow the examples of the garrisons of Tokar and Khartoum by fraternising with the Mahdi, and adding to his strong and well-armed forces.

As spring crept on it was evident that help could come to them only from two sources, Italy or Abyssinia; and it was thought that interest and duty would urge John, king of the latter country, to save Kassala.

A despatch of the 7th March, from Massowah, stated that the Mahdi, who was threatening Keren and Massowah, was about to send emissaries to the latter place; but Colonel Saletta, the

Italian Commandant, took precautions to prevent their entrance.

Early in this month we began to hear for the first time prominently of the Frenchman, Olivier Pain, whose fate made such excitement further on in the year at Paris; and a letter received by M. Henri Rochefort, from

Frenchmen, and it is affirmed that it was agreed to place the sum of twenty thousand pounds in the hands of a certain personage whose name was not given, but who is said to have undertaken to have it safely conveyed to the Soudan. The money was to be provided as soon as intelligence was re-



THE BAHR-EL-GAZELLE.

one of his friends at Cairo, gave a kind of explanation of that adventurer's presence in the camp of the Mahdi.

The object that this French Socialist had in view in going to the Soudan was—according to this letter—the liberation of those unfortunates whom the Mahdi held as prisoners. It stated that, before he left Cairo, a meeting was held at the house of one of the leading members of the French colony there. Those who attended were all

ceived from M. Olivier Pain that the Mahdi had consented to ransom the prisoners.

It appears, however, that the Frenchmen who met thus secretly at Cairo were not animated by the philanthropic idea of paying the ransom of the prisoners themselves. On the contrary, immediately M. Pain applied for the money, they were to advance it, but at the same time were to telegraph to the leading French journals to open a subscription to pay the ransom of the

prisoners, and to assist them after their release.

The *Mubashir* at this time published two reports. One was to the effect that the Mahdi had given orders to remove his headquarters from Omdur-

sent a letter to his General at Metemneh, Nur Augar, thanking him for the bravery he had displayed against the British. Simultaneously he had sent him 5,000 dollars, and appointed him commander-in-chief of all the troops



ABYSSINIAN VILLAGE.

man to Metemneh, whither he would go with his household and staff before the season of rain set in, which is the second week of May, lasting till the middle of August, by which time he meant to have a bridge of pontoons across the Nile at Shendy, and both places strongly fortified.

The other was that the Mahdi had

between the Sixth and Fourth Nile Cataracts, and ordered him to attack Korti; but the want of camels and other beasts of burden made him resolve, when the time came, to take the greater part of his troops along the Nile to that place.

The following is an extract of a letter from the Mahdi to Khasm-el-

Moos, when on board one of the steamers near Metemneh:—

“ You are aware that we have been trying to save you; but you are trying to destroy yourselves. You sent to summon the British, but should the British come and take you with them to Europe, Rome, and Constantinople, remember that we shall have the victory, as promised by our Prophet.

“ If you live you will see the power of the Mahdi spread over all Europe, Rome, and Constantinople, after which there is nothing for you but hell.”

When the Light Camel Corps came into Korti, under the Earl of Airlie, the men were marching on foot, the greater part of their animals having perished; the few that survived were laden with baggage.

A detachment of the 19th Hussars, in command of Lieutenant Douglas, came into camp. They had marched on foot from Gakdul, having no other means of locomotion. Their horses were either killed in the battles of Abu Klea or Abu Kru, or had died from exhaustion during the march to and from Metemneh. The Hussars had lost over forty horses.

The cavalry were distributed between Abu Gus and Abu Fatmeh, the object of this arrangement being to facilitate the gathering of forage for the camels and horses; for it seemed to be now distinctly understood that when autumn came, the expedition would once more move up the river.

Great things were expected as the result of the Suakim-Berber railway. It was supposed by some that it would exert a powerful influence in pacifying the Soudan; but there were not wanting those who predicted it would be a failure, and that the gauge which had been adopted was a wrong one.

On the 9th of March, accounts, through spies, came to Korti from Khartoum, stating that the Mahdi was suffering from fears of treachery among his followers; that he had doubled his guards, and gone to visit his father's tomb on Abba Island, 130 miles up the Nile, where, he declared, he received his first mission from heaven.

Then followed reports that the Hassaniyeh tribes were mustering at the Wells of El Kalar. They were not numerous, but sufficiently so to give trouble; moreover, they were persistent marauders, and had already rendered the Gakdul route unsafe to convoys without strong escorts.

On the 11th, the Heavy Cavalry, under Colonel Wolseley, left Korti, in whale boats and nuggars, for Abu Fatmeh, while the Guards and Sussex Regiment were ordered down the river to their summer quarters between that place and Debbeh, according to the correspondent of the *Standard*.

On the same day some Arabs, supposed to be those mustered at the Wells of El Kalar, or dervishes from Bir Sani, made an armed raid into the fertile valley of El Ghazoli, near Abu Dom. As it was a market day, the inhabitants, who are of the Shaggiyeh tribe, were nearly all away at Tangussi, a village some miles distant, so the raiders made a clean sweep of all the cattle and other booty they could collect.

On the night of the 13th March some natives entered the cemetery beside the camp at Korti, and, to the indignation of the troops, broke down all the crosses erected over the graves.

On that day a messenger returned from Berber with a letter to the military authorities from a high official of that place, stating that the people had returned from Gobuch, a village on the opposite side of the Nile, whither they had been sent to oppose the British, should the latter have advanced from Metemneh or Abu Kru. The rebel troops in Berber the letter stated to be only 3,700 men, with 1,000 Remington rifles and four pieces of cannon. It added that all the late Government officials were loyal to the Khedive, but could not escape. The inhabitants had heard of the liberal treatment of all natives by the British troops, and were tired of the rule of the Mahdi; and Mohammed Kheir, with his troops, had returned to Berber on the withdrawal of our Nile column.

Soon after a report was received at Korti that Abu Shama, a sheikh of the Beni Shaggiyeh tribe, who had property in that place, and who fought against the Mudir of Dongola in the preceding year, had been deprived of his command at Nasri by order of the Mahdi, and had all his goods confiscated for not having killed a messenger sent by General Gordon to the British headquarters in December. The man had been brought to Nasri in one of Gordon's steamers.

On the 17th of March General Francis Walter Grenfell left the camp to inspect the line of communications as far as Assiout, and was directed to assume the command of the Egyptian army at the end of the month; and General Sir Evelyn Wood was to com-

mand the troops quartered between Merawi and Dongola.

A slave girl in the bazaar at Korti was recognised by one of Gordon's soldiers from Khartoum, and, on being questioned, her story proved a strange one. She was the purchased slave of an Egyptian officer in the army of Hicks Pasha. After the latter's army marched into the interior, she remained in Khartoum, and dwelt there as the servant of the widow of Gorvenini Bey, who was killed with Hicks. When the town was captured she was robbed of all she possessed, and was carried off to the camp of the Mahdi at Omdurman, where she was sold as a slave to a Kabbabish Arab, who re-sold her to her master at Korti. She added that all the women and children were carried away for sale after the fall of the city, none but men being slain, and that the army of the Mahdi was now drawing its supplies of corn and food from Ghedarif.

The special correspondent of the *Morning Post* wrote thus of the troops at Korti: "When the altered circumstances, since the Mounted Infantry marched out on the Desert Expedition, are taken into consideration, the aspect of affairs is wonderfully cheerful. The lively tone manifested among all ranks of the force is a most encouraging feature to note at the present time. Scarcely a single word of grumbling or discontent is heard, although, besides those who have been wounded while fighting in line, there are a good many officers, as well as men, in hospital from illness. Most of these are suffering

from enteric fever, and it is not a very easy matter to account for the prevalence of this particular disorder at present. Except for about three days a fortnight since, the weather has not been remarkably hot; the water of the

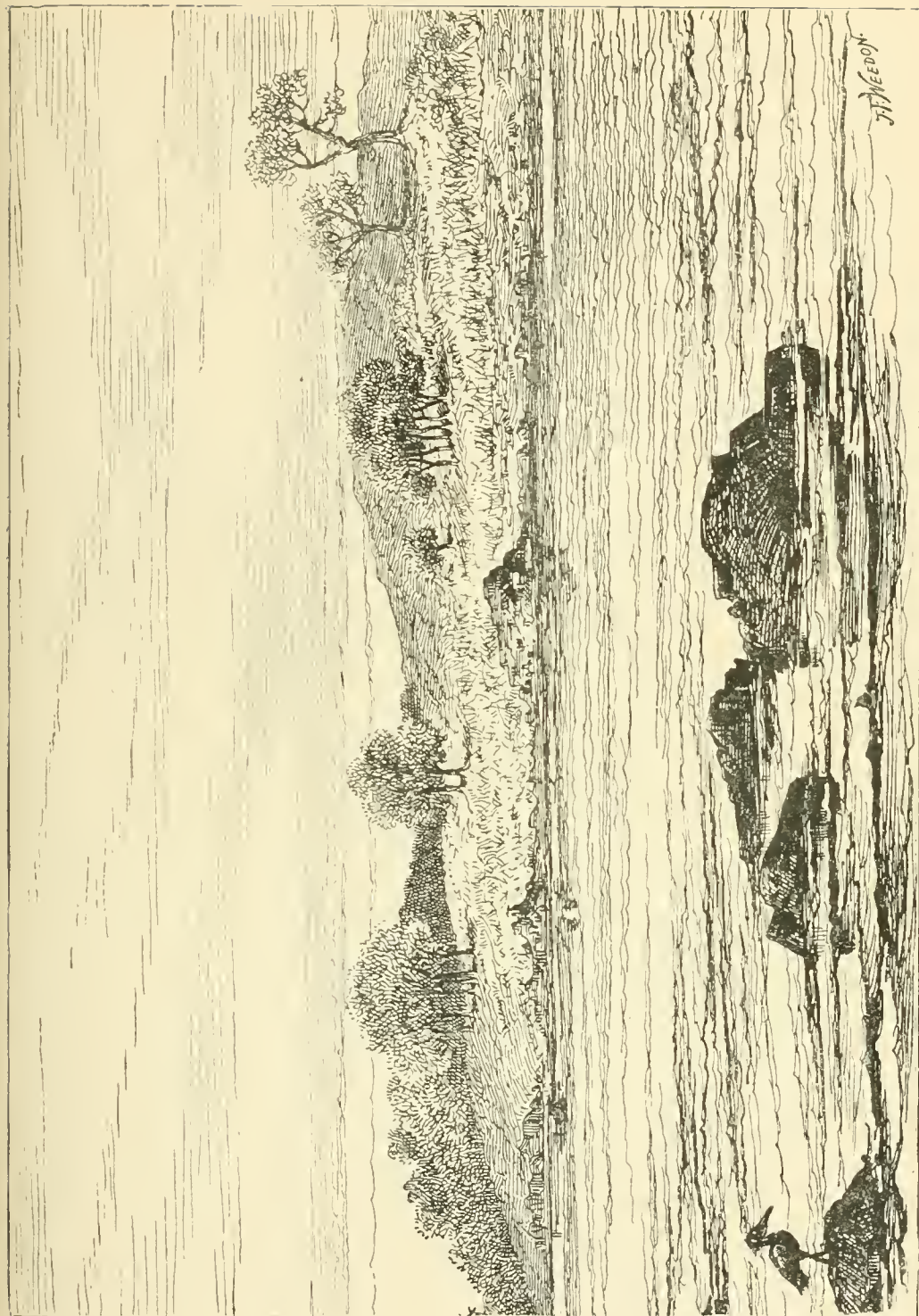
entire force. General Brackenbury's troops are now at their new camp at Kurot, below Debbah; General Dörner's men are in camp at Tani, where huts are being constructed as rapidly as possible with mud, rubble, and grass matting.



PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE SUAKIM-EL-LIBER RAILWAY—VIEW BETWEEN KOKREB AND ARIAB.

Nile is good, and the camp is well placed in a position which is shaded and dry. It seems probable that exhaustion and anxiety of mind have been the chief causes of the troops having suffered in this way. During the months of hot weather the whole force will be inactive, and it may be looked upon as certain that many more will have to go into hospital, possibly as large a proportion as 25 per cent. of the

Similar works of shelter for the troops are being prepared at Abu Dom, on the left bank of the Nile, opposite Merawi. This is Colonel Butler's camp, and is now our most advanced position. The river is still falling, and the navigation is daily becoming more difficult. The stern-paddle boat is proving to be of immense value as a means of transport, as she can steam safely owing to her light draught, up and down the



THE NILE AT THE HEAD OF THE GERENDID CATARACT.

(From a Sketch by the late Colonel Coventry.)

river, between Korti and Abu Fatmeh. The ordinary pinnaces, on the contrary, are constantly running upon the many sandbanks which impede the navigation. All the remaining sick and wounded, who are in a fit condition to move, are sent down the Nile as quickly as possible."

The last batch of invalids left soon after under the care of Surgeon-Major L'Estrange.

On the 23rd of March Lord Wolseley reviewed the 19th Hussars, and afterwards addressed them, warmly praising both officers and troopers for their services generally, and the gallant way in which they had performed their arduous duties, and endured the hardships of the desert. He added that the ill-fated Sir Herbert Stewart had told him, after the battle of Tamai, the regiment was the finest he had ever seen, and their recent bearing had convinced him—Lord Wolseley—that this was true. After the review he took his departure to Dongola with his staff and the officers of the Intelligence Department.

Under date the 19th of March, a soldier in the Scots Guards wrote to his relations in Edinburgh thus, after leaving Korti for New Dongola:—

"A great many changes have taken place since this day two months. Two months ago we gained the Nile after two hardly-contested battles, only to find ourselves too late! Now we find ourselves on the Nile again, but only to wait till the hot season is over, and then to do our work over again. Every one here is in very low spirits, except those who were not at the front; they are hoping now for a slap at them in the autumn. You would have thought us a curious lot marching from Abu Halfa Wells. Every man had bad boots; some had no tops to them, while the most had the soles worn

through; some marching with their feet outside their boots, while others, again, myself among them, contrived to make a pair of sandals and tie them to the soles of our boots, which managed to bring us down as far as Korti on foot. Our trousers were almost as bad, all patched over with red and yellow leather. A sergeant of Marines who tries his hand at rhyme, says of us in a song, 'We are a ragged regiment now;' and in another he calls us 'The Shoeless Brigade.' It was a stiff march, but it was from the centre of the desert to our old friend the Nile. We left Abu Halfa on the 4th, and arrived at Korti on the 9th, having one day's rest on the way—that was ninety miles in little over four days, and on one pint of water for twenty-four hours. Lord Wolseley inspected us on the 11th, and, in his remarks, mentioned that he would make the regiment up to its strength again, ready for the autumn advance, and then we might look forward to 'a short and brilliant campaign in the autumn.' Very good look-out indeed! And we have not even got our old consolation—'it is all for Gordon.' We came down the Nile in the Nile boats (whalers), leaving Korti on the 12th, arriving here on the 16th. I believe we stay here for the summer. We are not allowed into the town, so I cannot say what it is like."

With the arrival of the Mounted Infantry, the return of the desert column to Korti was completed. The most advanced post, we have said, was Colonel Butler's, at Abu Dom, with the Black Watch as a portion of his force. An equally advanced post was Handab, to be held by the troops of the Mudir. In descending the Nile were three stations within a few miles of each other, Korti, Ambukol, and Tani; the first-named to be held by black troops, under Commander Baker, R.N., whose knowledge of the country and acquaintance with the language well qualified him for such a command. There a strong earthwork had been thrown up, which, if garrisoned by resolute men, might defy any attempt at capture, by Arabs at least. Ambu-

kol was to be held by the Mudir's troops; but at Tani, three miles farther down, was the movable column under General Dormer, ready to take the offensive at any moment, should the occasion require it.

Tauï, seven miles from Korti, is healthily situated on a bank of dry sand, some feet above the Nile, of which it commands a fine view for several miles. A lofty conical hill a mile distant from Dormer's camp afforded an extensive view over the desert, and on the summit of it he had posted an outpicket.

Debbeh was, perhaps, in point of strategical importance, the greatest in the whole line, and would have been held by a strong British force, ready for offence or defence, had not a long occupation of the fort there, and even the surrounding country by the troops of the Mudir, rendered it so foul and unsanitary as to make it impossible for any European troops to be quartered there with comfort or safety. Thus it was left to the soldiers of the Mudir, while General Brackenbury pitched his camp at Kuros (or Kurot), three miles further down the stream.

Like that of General Dormer, this column was composed of troops representing the three arms of the service, well provided with transport, and ready to assume the defensive, or change its ground, at a moment's notice. These two columns commanded the desert routes, terminating respectively at Ambukol and Debbeh; and as these are the points at which the main thoroughfares of the desert strike the Nile, the

importance of holding them in force—not only in case of an advance of the enemy, but also as a means of obtaining intelligence from the interior—could not be overrated.

Colonel Colville and Major Kitchener, who were both well acquainted with the customs and language of the country, represented the Intelligence Department with these columns, and all were assured that any news that might be gathered of what was happening in the solitude of the desert, or on the upper reaches of the river, would be obtained by them and thoroughly sifted.

Abu Gos, near Old Dongola, but on the left bank of the river, was commanded by Colonel Wolseley; while at Handak and Bakri, the Mudir's troops, with half the Light Camel Corps, respectively kept up the chain of posts. The last station of the troops in this part of the country was Haffir, in a fertile and well-cultivated district above the Cataract of Hannak, opposite Tombos, and there the Heavy Camel Regiment, which had suffered most severely in recent conflicts, was to pass the summer months.

This brief outline shows the various points at which the troops were posted. Each camp was under an officer of experience, assisted by a more or less numerous staff, and the erection of huts was proceeded with rapidly.

And now to take it, as nearly as possible in chronological order, we may glance elsewhere at an event which made some stir in Egypt at the time—the arrest of Zebeln Pasha by a party of British troops at Alexandria on the

14th of March, 1885, and his committal on board Her Majesty's despatch vessel *Iris*, under sailing orders; an arrest due to grave suspicions of treason. A little later his son was also captured and placed on board the same ship; and it was expected that some serious complications might arise, as the Se-

March, the police succeeded in laying hands on Zebehr's correspondence with the rebels, including many letters from the Mahdi, the sons of Hussein Pasha Khalifa, and other insurgent chiefs—all proving incontestably his intimate and uninterrupted connection with the rebels, a fact which had



SKETCH IN LARNACA, CYPRUS.

noussi agent, at whose house Zebehr was residing, was a French *protégé*.

At midnight two of his friends, and his steward, were likewise placed on board the *Iris*, which at once got up her steam for sea. Much excitement was roused among the natives by these arrests, the legality of which they somewhat uselessly questioned. It had been noted that Zebehr, during his long and frequent visits to Alexandria, had always, when there, resided with the agent of the powerful Senoussi fraternity. On the following day, 15th

come to be suspected despite his most solemn assurances to the contrary. The Central News correspondent added that "the prisoners would be conveyed to Cyprus, and kept there under a British military guard, as it is almost certain if they were confined in Egypt they would find some means of communicating with their friends, and the whole object of arresting them would be thus defeated. The arrests were made under no civil law, but through military necessity. I learn that Lord Wolseley himself arranged it. The arrests have

been in contemplation for some time past."

That obnoxious print, the Cairo *Bosphore*, had immediately in its

of the matter; and it was now supposed that if any bad news came from the front, Cairo would be proclaimed in a state of siege. The following is



EGYPTIAN WATER-CARRIER.

columns a most inflammatory article, full of bitter invectives and inaccuracies, foremost among which was a statement that the Khedive, having been consulted prior to the arrest of Zebehr, refused to sanction it. This was alleged to be absolutely false, as the Khedive had no official cognisance

the version of the affair as given by the correspondent of the *Times*, at Alexandria:—

"Very many months ago I drew attention to the position of Zebehr Pasha, whose loyalty, or the reverse, to Egypt, was fairly open to argument, but whose power for good or evil in

the Soudan was unquestioned. In these circumstances the Government may have exercised a wise discretion, or the reverse, in refusing to send him there. But when once such a slight had been offered to him, it did not admit of a doubt that it should have ordered his arrest. In consequence of information received from Lord Wolseley, and at his suggestion, this step has now been taken. What amount of proof exists is doubtful, but it was generally believed that he has been long in communication with the Mahdi. General Lennox, who was on a visit to Cairo, was suddenly sent back. The secret was well kept. The military police waited near Zebehr's house, at a *café* opposite, and yesterday he was arrested as he was coming out.

"He appeared surprised, but offered no resistance, and was taken on board the *Iris*. . . . The measure strikes the observer as singularly energetic on the part of a Government whose few acts of energy have not generally proved well-judged; and seeing that the Egyptian Government apparently exists solely to pull our chestnuts out of the fire, it is a pity that it was not so used on this occasion. It is at least singular that the British authorities, who refused to try Arabi, a prisoner of war, should arrest and deport Zebehr without formal inquiry."

Another account stated that the arrest was made in consequence of some information that General Brackenbury's column had found among the enemy's effects a correspondence which compromised him; and this was the

man whom, little more than a year before, General Gordon recommended so warmly as his successor at Khartoum—the king of the Soudanese slave-traders! A sketch was then published of him, and from it the following extract is taken:—

"Zebehr, whose real name is Zebehr-Rahama-Gyimme-Abel, although a captive, has had more influence in the Soudan than any Governor-General since Gordon's time. He was the chief of the great band of armed slave-hunters who, spreading southwards from Khartoum, established their zeribas, or fortified stations, far down into the heart of the Niam-niam country. In 1869 Zebehr possessed no fewer than thirty of these stations. His power rivalled that of Ismail, and it was in order to crush a dangerous rival, rather than from motives of humanity, that the late Khedive despatched Gordon to the Soudan to wage war against the slave-hunters. The following description of Zebehr's headquarters on the Bahr Gazelle is given by Dr. Schweinfurth, who visited the slave-hunters' king in 1871:—

"Zebehr had surrounded himself with a court that was little less than princely in its details. A group of large well-built huts, enclosed by tall hedges, formed his private residence; within these were various state apartments, before which armed sentries kept guard by day and night. Special rooms, provided with carpeted divans, were reserved as antechambers, and into these all visitors were conducted by richly-dressed slaves, who served

them with coffee, sherbet, and tchibouk. The regal aspect of these halls of state was increased by the introduction of some lions, secured, as may be supposed, by sufficiently strong and massive chains. Behind a curtain in the innermost hut was placed the invalid bed of Zebehr. Attendants were close at hand to attend to his wants, and a company of fakirs sat on the divan outside the curtain, and murmured their never-ending prayers.'

"In 1869, Ismail," continues the sketch, "had despatched a pasha with some troops to keep watch over Zebehr. The latter, whose zeriba was the headquarters of the wholesale slave trade—as many as 2,000 small slave-traders gathered here every year—resented the residence of troops, and, taking advantage of some dispute, contrived to kill them all, including their commander. From that time Zebehr was virtual king of the Southern Soudan. His ambition growing with success, he conquered Darfour, and was made a pasha; but as he was not made Governor-General of Darfour, he went to Cairo to plead his claims before Ismail. He took £100,000 with him to bribe the pashas; but Ismail refused to allow him to return. He lived in honourable captivity, receiving £100 a month, at Cairo, and pulling the wires of all rebellions in the Soudan from that day to this. A picturesque figure is Zebehr—tall, spare, and excitable, with lions guarding his antechamber, and his court filled with armed slaves—smart, dapper-looking fellows, supple as antelopes, fierce, unsparing, the

terror of Central Africa; while around him gathered in thousands infernal raiders, whose razzias have depopulated vast territories. Superstitious, too, is Zebehr—for in his campaign against Darfour he melted down 250,000 dollars into bullets, for no charm can stay a silver bullet—and cruel and relentless as death itself. A word from him raised the Soudan in revolt against Gordon in 1878; and it was only after some fierce fighting that Gessi Pasha succeeded in breaking the back of the revolt. After hunting the slave-raiders like wild beasts, he captured and shot eleven of their chiefs, including Suleiman, the son of Zebehr. Hence the blood-feud between Gordon and Zebehr, which led the latter to refuse to accompany the former to Khartoum. The slave-dealers were killed in hundreds by natives whom they had plundered. Zebehr's letters were found, proving that he had ordered the revolt; but no action was taken against him, and he continued to live in luxury at Cairo. When Baker Pasha was organising his force to relieve Tokar, he asked that Zebehr might go with him at the head of a Black contingent. Zebehr raised his Blacks, and then the Anti-Slavery Society protested against his appointment as 'improper and dangerous in the highest degree.' Sir Evelyn Baring pleaded for Zebehr, but Lord Granville was inexorable. He wrote:—'The proposed employment of Zebehr Pasha appears to her Majesty's Government inexpedient both politically and practically as regards the slave trade.'

When Gordon went to Cairo he was assured that the then British ministry would not do anything to save the Soudan. Then it was he said, "Zebehr is the man to govern at Khartoum." He had an interview with Zebehr, in which the latter waxed hot and furious, and violently refused to have anything whatever to do with General Gordon.

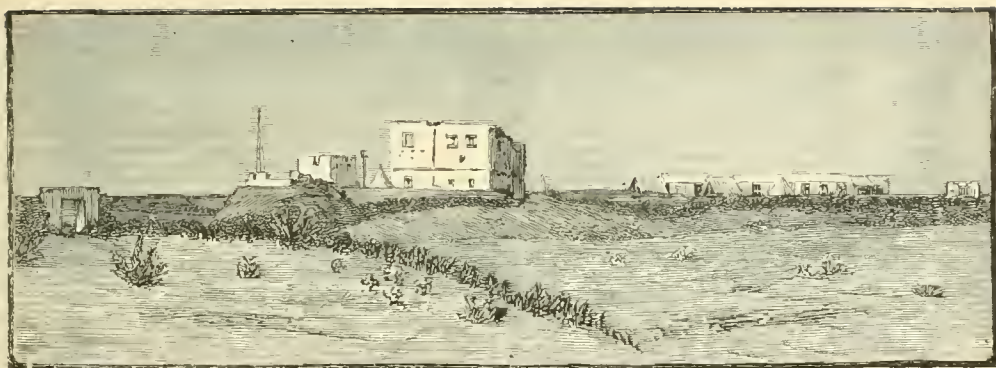
According to the *Rassegna*, an Italian paper, Zebehr's friends, the Senoussi sect of Mussulmen, which has its centre in Tripoli, were the most formidable among the allies of the Mahdi, and even the source of his religious movement.

But we may have more to record of Zebehr again.



ARAF WITH GREEN TURBAN.

(Highest type of Mohammedan.



PORTS CARYSFORT AND EURYALUS, SUAKIM

CHAPTER VI.

AFFAIRS AT SUAKIM, MASSOWAH, AND KASSALA.

Description of Suakim—Defences of the Town—The Italians take Massowah—General Graham to Command—Objects of the New Campaign—Kassala and its Siege—Arrival of General Davis—Night Attacks—Defence of Kassala—Death of Lient. Askwith—Arrival of the Indian Contingent—Hut Barracks—The Enemy's Movements—Osman Digna and General Graham—Arab Assault by Night—Osman's Standard-bearer—Extra Precautions at the Camp—The Suakim-Berber Railway—Arabi in Ceylon.

SIR GERALD GRAHAM'S despatch, dated at Alexandria, May 30, 1885, contains this description of Suakim:—

From the sea coast, Suakim, a sandy plain, rises gently in a westerly direction to an elevation of a few hundred feet above the sea level in a distance of ten to twelve miles, when it meets the foot of the mountains which bound it on the west. These mountains are of volcanic or metamorphic formation, and in many of the passes there stand up huge water-worn boulders of granite.

In the immediate vicinity of Suakim, towards the north and west, the country is fairly open for a mile or two, but beyond this radius, and south-west towards Tamai, the bush is thick. The scrub is chiefly composed of the prickly mimosa, growing sometimes to the height of six or eight feet, and of small shrubs in belts,

following the shallow beds of the numerous watercourses or "khors," which carry off, in a north-easterly direction, the water flowing to the sea from the mountains during the periodical rains in summer and autumn.

The slope of these watercourses or khors is rarely deep or abrupt, except at special points, as, for example, the Khor Ghob, near which Tamanieb and Tamai are situated. This great khor is from 50 to 200 yards wide at the bottom, and from 20 to 60 feet below the general surface of the ground.

To appreciate properly the operations and the work of the troops in this campaign, it is absolutely necessary to bear in mind, not only the nature of the country, but also the style of warfare practised by the enemy, which consisted of long-range firing from cover, combined with desperate hand-to-

hand assaults from the bush, through and under which they could steal upon our troops unheard and unseen.

The defences of Suakim had now taken a final form. When on the ground, the Indian contingent were to form a camp on the extreme left, and the Guards another on the extreme right of the town, forming the outermost points of a semicircular advanced line of defence. These camps were connected by a curved line of redoubts 400 yards apart, and 1,800 yards distant from the inner semicircle of block wall surrounding the town itself.

All the Indian, and, it was proposed, all the colonial troops, were to be encamped to the south of the town, and the British troops to the north-west.

A soldier-servant was stabbed to death one night in the very centre of the headquarters camp, and the nearest sentry only discovered the incident by the victim staggering out of the tent wounded and bleeding. Yet the murderer escaped.

Early in February the hired Italian transport *Gottardo* arrived at Suakim from Massowah, where, on the 5th of that month, the Italian admiral on board the war ship *Garibaldi* had hoisted the Italian colours. In face of the determination of the Italians to occupy the town, the Egyptian authorities attempted no resistance, but contented themselves by handing in a stringent protest maintaining the rights of the Sultan—rights which seem doubtful, as in the seventeenth century Massowah paid tribute to Abyssinia, in the eighteenth belonged to the Sherif of

Mecca, and in 1814 to Mehemet Ali. These were, however, recognised by the Italians, who allowed the Turkish flag to float alongside that of Italy; but a battalion of bersaglieri and a battery of artillery were landed, and the town formally taken possession of. There was no excitement whatever among the population; while the captain of the French gunboat *Renard*, which had been watching Massowah, on seeing the proceedings of the Italians, at once steamed away to the Isle of Perim, which is the nearest telegraph station, to send the news to Paris. But the action of the Italians in the Red Sea had the tacit approval of Great Britain.

The former had no intention of interfering with the civil authorities at Massowah, but merely meant to occupy the forts conjointly with a small Egyptian garrison there. The occupation of the town by the Italians would have, it was thought, a decidedly good effect throughout the Eastern Soudan, and would materially strengthen our influence and position in that vast province, as the natives are scarcely able to discriminate between the different nationalities of Christendom.

Great interest was felt at Suakim among the British troops there, as to Lord Wolseley's answer to the Government proposal to open up the route from that place to Berber, and all were longing for action.

On the 20th of February Sir Gerald Graham was appointed to the command of the troops to be collected at Suakim; and his instructions of the same date from the Secretary of War directed him

to organise a field force, and to make such transport arrangements as were possible, to secure the most pressing object of the new campaign—the destruction of the power of Osman Digna.

He was directed to arrange for the military occupation of the Hadendowa territory lying near to the Suakim-Berber route, so as to enable the contractors to proceed with the railway which it was proposed to construct between Suakim and Berber. “In the Secretary of State’s letter of February 27th, 1885,” wrote Sir Gerald Graham, “my attention was again drawn to the necessity for rapidly constructing this railway. The direction of the works was to be entirely under my orders; their details and execution being in the hands of the contractors.”

It will thus be seen that there were two distinct phases of the campaign contemplated after organising the force and its transport, namely, 1st, the destruction of the power of Osman Digna, and the clearance of the country for the line of railway; 2nd, the construction of that line, and the location of troops for its protection at selected points where the scorching heat of summer could be best endured.

About this time it was stated in telegrams that Osman Digna’s forces were massed at Tamanieb and Hasheen to the number of 20,000 men, and that a great victory had been won by the struggling garrison of Kassala, aided by the Shukrie tribe, over the formidable Hadendowas, and Osman was said to have slain on the spot the bearer of the bad news.

Faruj Bey, then commanding in Kassala, was a veteran officer who had served in Mexico with Marshal Bazaine, and was a trusted friend of General Gordon. With his black troops he surprised the camp of the Mahdi’s followers, under Sheikh Moossa, between Filik and Kassala, killing some 2,000 of them, and capturing a great store of the munitions of war. Moossa was slain.

Our friendly Arabs, under three sons of Mahmoud Ali, and 100 of the Amara tribe, now left Suakim in the Egyptian gunboat *Jafferialah*, for Sheikh Barghut, and soon after returned with 250 head of cattle, having killed sixty of the enemy and three camels.

The gunboat had been attacked by the Mahdists, who were beaten off by her machine and Armstrong guns. Osman Digna did his utmost to execute a night attack on Suakim, but H.M.S. *Dolphin* kept the electric light playing round the camp and position nightly, deterring such attempts, while Osman could not forget the damage done on more than one occasion by her long-range guns. One night, however, the enemy did actually approach within eight hundred yards of the Water Forts, and levelled to the ground some works which had been constructed during the day.

On the 24th of February H.M. troopship *Humber*, having on board Brigadier-General John Davis and 200 men of the East Surrey Regiment, arrived at Suakim. About the same time H.M.S. *Cygnets* arrived from Agig and reported that the Hadendowas had entirely disappeared from that neigh-

bourhood, thus confirming the intelligence that they had all joined Osman Digna, 200 of whose men made their appearance one morning on the hills near the town, evidently reconnoitring with a view to ascertaining if there were any signs of an intended advance.

troops as they arrived should occupy the following positions :—

The headquarters of the Brigade of Line Regiments to be encamped between the Water Forts and the lines of the 49th Regiment; while to the Cavalry, Artillery, Camels, and Hospi-



OCCUPATION OF MASSOWAH—HOISTING THE ITALIAN FLAG.

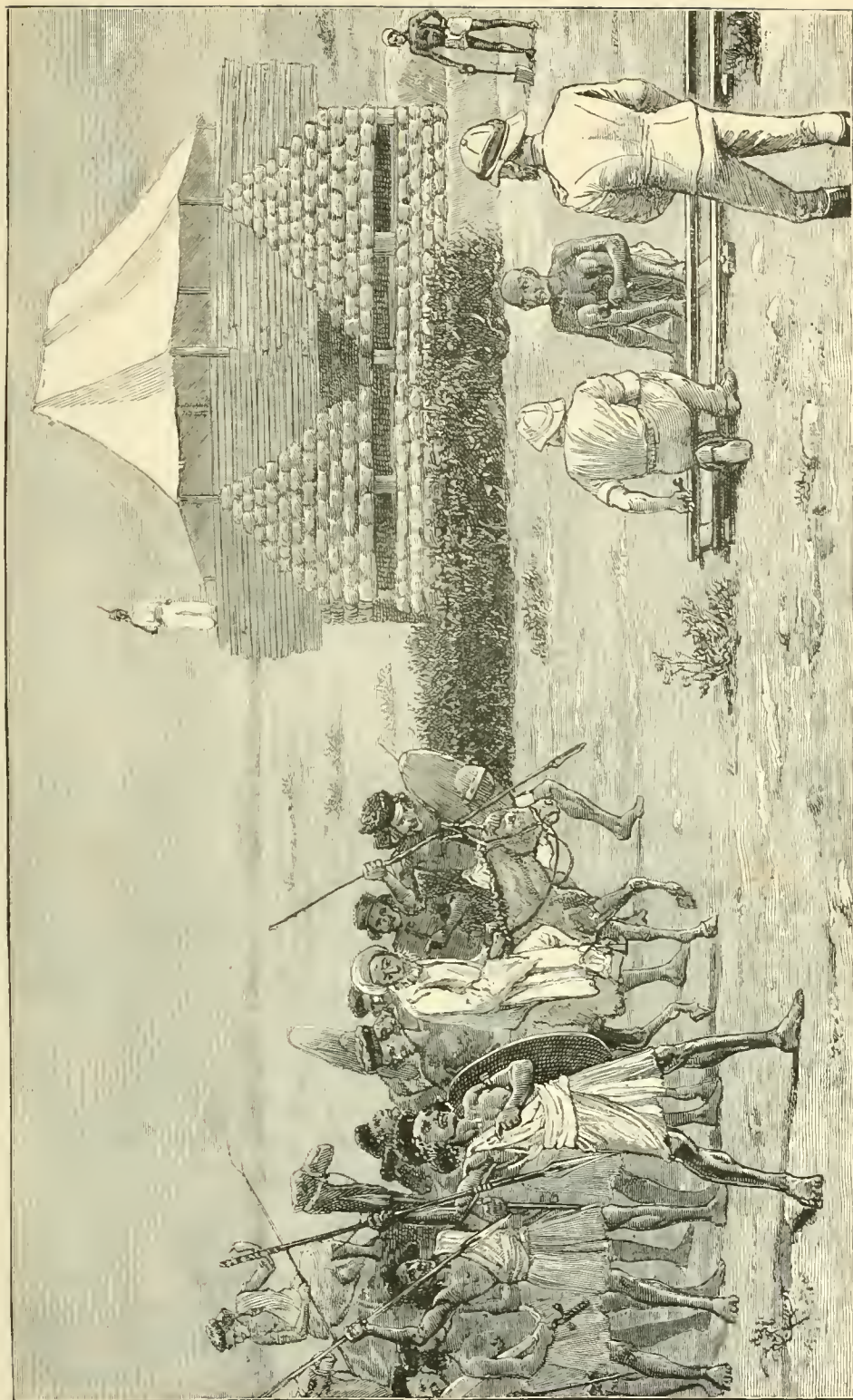
General Davis now assumed the command of the troops in absence of General Fremantle, who had gone to Cairo, where a new corps of Mounted Infantry under Captain Freeman was being formed for service at Suakim.

The advanced detachment of the Surrey Regiment was placed under canvas on the right flank of the Water Forts, and it was ordered that the

tal Corps were assigned positions in rear of the infantry lines.

The Brigade of Guards was to encamp on the line of the railway extension, beyond the lines of the Marines and 49th Regiment, their ground to be protected by the newly-constructed sandbag redoubts.

The Indian contingent was to be posted on the ground formerly occupied



RETURN OF FRIENDLY NATIVES TO SUAKIM AFTER A SUCCESSFUL ATTACK ON THE ENEMY.

by the troops of General Graham's Expedition in the preceding year; while the railway navvies and coolies were to be placed near the cemetery on the plateau northward of the channel by which the harbour is approached.

Although Osman's people, since the arrival of the first reinforcements, had now relinquished their practice of coming down nightly and opening a rifle fire upon the town, they still exhibited wonderful pluck and audacity in creeping down the gullies, night after night, and attempting to destroy our defensive works in the course of erection, after the parties employed in their construction had been withdrawn. One night they succeeded in refilling a half-dug trench of the unfinished Egyptian work, and next night they would have been equally successful in the case of another unfinished redoubt which was being constructed by the Marines, had not Major Morris, who was in command of the working party there, prevented them by an ingenious stratagem. Aware that the Arabs kept a vigilant eye on every movement, an hour before sunset he marched a body of his men into the works as if to hold them for the night. After darkness fell he withdrew his men singly, leaving behind dummy sentinels, made up of sandbags, to scare the enemy. The ruse succeeded, and the works were found untouched when day broke.

"These incidents," said a writer, "although without the slightest practical importance, are yet worth recording, as showing the enterprise and pluck of the Arabs. Knowing as they do

every foot of the ground, they are able to creep stealthily, with their noiseless footfalls, through our pickets, and upon dark nights it is impossible for our men, however vigilant, to detect them."

Many of our troops, now on their way to the littoral of the Red Sea, were ordered, it is stated, to proceed direct to Trinkitat, as it would be the basis of the advance on the road to Berber; and orders were sent to India for 3,000 additional camels for the Soudan; and these heavy demands on Indian resources were generally condemned at that time, in view of the critical state of affairs beyond the Indian frontier, towards Afghanistan.

Osman Digna having beheaded the bearer of the evil tidings from Kassala, the Beni Amers, the murdered man's tribesmen, sent him a message that they intended coming to Tokar to avenge his death; whereupon Osman seized and chained thirty head-men belonging to a neutral section of the Beni Amers, and held them as hostages against the fulfilment of the threat. But it was felt that however brilliant the success of the Kassala garrison near Filik, it would only relieve temporarily the pressure upon the besieged town, as it was feared that its effect would be altogether neutralised when tidings of the fall of Khartoum, which had not at that time reached the neighbourhood, became known. Moreover, the troublesome situation of the garrisons was considerably increased by the sudden and unexpected occupation of Massowah by the Italian troops, unless

the latter followed that occupation promptly by other measures.

Captain Herbert Charles Chermside, of the Royal Engineers (called Major and Colonel by various newspaper correspondents, though his local rank was Major), Commander of St. Michael and St. George, was then Egyptian Governor-General of the Red Sea littoral, and had entered into negotiations with the friendly tribes to furnish a great convoy of provisions, stores, and ammunition for conveyance to Kassala on the first opportunity; but the unexpected appearance of the Italians at Massowah increased the difficulties, as he could no longer speak with the authority of Britain as a paramount power. His measures for the relief of that splendid garrison were therefore at a standstill.

Kassala is the second city in the Soudan, and having then a population of at least thirty thousand souls, it was the keystone of the line of frontier strongholds, Senheit, Amadab, Ghira, and Gallabat, all of which were still resisting the power of the Mahdi. Kassala had by the time we write of been completely isolated for twelve months, and its garrison, increased to three thousand regular Egyptian troops and two thousand irregulars, had maintained a heroic defence, quite equal to that of Khartoum while animated by the presence of Gordon and opposed to a savage enemy.

Their supplies of provisions and ammunition were known to have been running short for a long time; and so great had the pressure become, that a short time before this, Major Chermside

was prepared to despatch a reinforcement of six hundred men to the city. The commandant sent to beg him not to do so at present, as it was beyond his power to feed them.

Under such circumstances even such a victory as that he had won over the Hadendawas would do little to alleviate the position of the garrison; and it was already seeming evident that without prompt and efficient assistance the defenders of Kassala would share the terrible doom of those at Sinkat, Tokar, Berber, and Khartoum.

It was becoming clear that the relief of Kassala could be accomplished only by one of two alternatives. If, as was then said, a portion of our new Expedition landed at Trinkitat and occupied Tokar, a flying column could be sent south to scour the country, disperse and suppress the Hadendawas, while reopening communications between the border strongholds and the sea; or Italy would have to recognise the new obligations she had incurred, and, as master of Massowah, send a relief column to Kassala by way of Senheit.

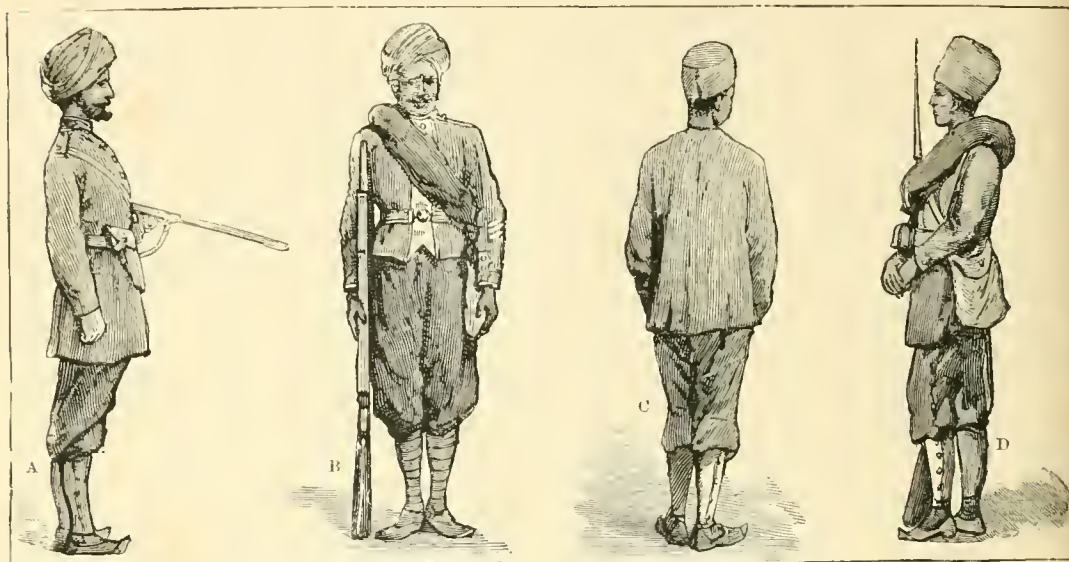
The Italian commander sent 600 men as far as Bailur, and it was understood that another force was to be sent to Assab, a town on a bay of the same name, thirty-six miles south-east of the former place, and which has been erroneously identified with the *Saba* of the Axum inscription.

On the 3rd March the *Condor* arrived at Suakim harbour. She brought later news from Massowah. The Kassala garrison had not lost courage, although

they might have lost hope, for they had again sallied out and fought another battle with the Hadendowas near Amfiali. They retrieved their late disaster by winning a brilliant victory over the Arabs.

It was to be feared that these efforts were but the last struggles of despair,

Considerable gloom was now thrown over the camp by a deplorable accident that occurred, owing to the trouble which the natives gave by their nightly destruction of those works which our troops constructed under a scorching sun by day. It was resolved to give them a severe lesson, and accordingly



SOME TYPES OF THE INDIAN CONTINGENT FOR THE SOUDAN.

A, Native Officer, 17th Bengal Infantry; B, Sepoy, 17th Bengal Infantry; C, Fatigue Dress, 17th Bengal Infantry; D, Fighting Kit of the 17th Native Infantry.

for the Emir of Kassala wrote to say that the whole population were now reduced to the direst straits, and that unless relief speedily arrived they must succumb to famine.

Ninety thousand pine sleepers were now ordered at Cairo for the Suakim-Berber railroad. On the 3rd the 15th Sikh Infantry arrived safely, but the steamer *Sceptre*, a hired transport, with a contingent of camels on board, went ashore on some dangerous coral reefs off the port, and sustained serious damage.

two small mines were sunk outside the line of the advanced redoubts. Towards these they came as usual, intent on their destruction; but although they passed over the mines, the latter, from some unexplained reason, failed to explode.

Lieutenant W. B. Askwith, of the Royal Engineers, who had special charge of the mining operations, went out to make some alterations in the arrangements for explosion, and while so engaged, the mines—from some cause that

could never be discovered—went off, and he was blown to pieces. His remains were, however, collected, and interred with military honours, the General, the Commodore, and every officer off duty being present. The loss of this young officer was greatly regretted. He was remarkable for his

General Graham had not arrived, and probably no battle would be fought before the middle of the month.

About this time there was a little fighting in front of Suakim. One morning a band of the enemy appeared within range of the camp of the Berkshire Regiment. Simultaneously their



LIEUT. W. B. ASKWITH.

(From a Photograph by Brown, Barnes, and Bell, 12, Baker Street, W.)

zeal and activity, and took part in all the arduous and useful work which had been performed by the Engineer corps since the departure of General Graham's last Expedition.

The Sikh Regiment which landed was a body of men in the finest condition, and displaying splendid physique. They were received by General Davis, who complimented the officers upon their appearance. They expected immediate fighting, and were disappointed when informed by the Brigadier that

movements were desisted from the redoubt on the Hasheen Hill, and a couple of rounds from one of the Krupps there put them to flight. The officers in this work now reported that from it they could see that Osman Digna was forming strong entrenchments and other earthworks in the vicinity of Hasheen, though the mass of his men were moving towards Tamai.

General Graham was now at Cairo, where he was suffering from an abscess in one of his ankles, the result of an

accident he met with at Aldershot camp. Absolute rest was ordered for him for about ten days, and he was unable to attend the great military dinner given in his honour by General Stephenson, commanding in Cairo, which city, however, he left for Suakim on the 9th of March.

On the same day the 2nd Battalion of the Scots Guards arrived in the hired transport, *Pembroke Castle*, and were played into camp by the band of the 49th. Their tents were pitched in rear of the Coldstreams, and in their red serge tunics they outshone the khaki jackets of the latter.

At Cairo considerable excitement was now caused among the British officers of the police by the proposed appointment to the post of a sub-inspector. A short time before this all the British cadets, although thoroughly conversant with drill, and having acquired a certain knowledge of the language in the course of a year's service, had been discharged on the score of economy; and it was considered extraordinary that Nubar Pasha should propose to appoint, as an extra officer, a man ignorant alike of English, of Arabic, and of the elements of drill, his sole qualification being that he was a foreigner, and possessed great political influence.

The British circle at Cairo received a shock at this time when tidings came that Mrs. Valentine Baker, who was a favourite with them, had died of typhoid fever at Assouan, and been buried at Luxor. Considerable sympathy was felt for the luckless Baker

Pasha, who within six weeks had lost both his wife and daughter.

Suakim harbour was fast assuming a crowded and busy aspect.

On the 5th March Brigadier-General Hudson, commander of the Indian contingent, arrived with his staff and a portion of the 17th Bengal Native Infantry on board the Indian Government steamship *Clive*. In short, in the early days of March the troops began to arrive in quick succession, and by the 12th of that month General Graham had landed a force of 10,482 officers, non-commissioned officers, and men. The work of disembarking the animals, supplies, and stores, the formation of camps, the completion of defences, the arrangements for the water supply, the general organisation of the force in every branch and department, was heavy and unceasing. A week before the above date there were only two or three officers of the Commissariat and Transport Staff, and very little transport; but a considerable accumulation of supplies, officers, and men, however, soon began to arrive from home, also came's from Egypt, Berbera, and Aden. The Government of India furnished large numbers of camels, with efficient drivers, organised in divisions under transport officers, and thoroughly equipped.

The organisation and allotment of 10,000 animals and 7,000 transport men, collected from various sources and nationalities, and of the general supply establishments for so large a force, was necessarily a work of great magnitude; but by the 18th of March both supply

and transport arrangements were fully completed.

The main difficulty of the coming campaign it was evident would be want of water. Here and there a well of brackish fluid might be found, and with labour the supply could be developed and increased; but such operations require time, and for a force moving quickly are impracticable. Thus it became a regulation that the water to drink would have to be carried for the entire force, and this entailed the employment of a large number of transport animals, which also required water to drink, whether that water was carried for them or derived from the scanty local supply obtainable at any halting-place.

A native woman who came into Suakim in the second week of March stated that there was a great scarcity of food in the camp of the Arabs at Tamai; that the sight of ships daily arriving in the harbour filled them with anxiety and alarm, and that the Amara tribe would probably desert Osman Digna on the first favourable opportunity. But the latter seemed to be preparing for eventualities, as about the same time a spy reported that he had sent all the women, children, and cattle into the mountains.

Hut-barracks for Suakim were now shipped off at Woolwich. These were formed of rough deals, and were somewhat similar to those in which our troops spent the Crimean winter of 1854-5 at Balaclava. These were afterwards re-erected on Woolwich Common, and ever since have formed

a permanent camp there. The huts for Suakim were rectangular edifices, about 40 feet long by 20 feet broad; the floors laid on joists clear of the ground; the windows were glazed, and each hut was furnished with a stove, together with the usual barrack-room furniture. There was also a portable hospital, which folded up like a pocket-map, and could be entirely carried in one waggon. There was some doubt at first as to the effect of a hot climate upon it, but, with this reservation, says a correspondent, "the commodious and handsome pavilion which it forms is pronounced exceedingly well adapted for a base hospital."

On the 9th of March a party of Osman's men fired into the camp of the Berkshire Regiment^t and wounded three men. On another occasion they crept near the Sikhs and shot a sentry. "The audacity of Osman Digna's followers grows daily," said the *Standard*. "Last night a handful of these reckless Arabs, whose bravery commands admiration, made their way, under cover of the darkness, to the camp of the Berkshire Regiment, and actually succeeded in wounding three of our men with their spears. In an instant the camp was alive, and a volley was poured into the enemy, who fled on the first alarm. One of their number was seen to fall, but a subsequent search proved that his body had been carried off. The various camps, which are ranged in a semicircular form, are now strongly entrenched, and, after last night's experience, a guard of the strictest character has been commanded

and provided. I learn that the wounds which were inflicted on the three men of the Berkshire Regiment are of a very serious character."

On the 9th of March the Egyptian troops received a general order to leave

with gold, the people of Suakim were greatly impressed by their appearance. "Indeed," said a writer, "the sight of this fine body of cavalry, as the turbaned horsemen, with their flashing lances and fluttering pennons, cantered



MOUNTED INFANTRY SKIRMISHING AT SUAKIM.

Suakim. Probably the commanders deemed them unreliable in action. On the following day the Grenadier Guards arrived in the Oriental steamer *Australia*, and nightly again the rebels harassed our sentries, on the 9th stabbing three Sikhs, one mortally, and on the 12th causing several casualties.

On the landing of the 9th Bengal Lancers (late 1st Hodson's Horse), in blue uniforms faced with red and laced

across the desert, their picturesque figures standing out against the glow of the western sky, was striking in the extreme, and excited general admiration. I heard many expressions of regret that we had not two or three regiments of Indian horse here a twelve-month since. Had they been here Osman's hordes would never have rallied, and the present Expedition need not have been undertaken."

Two nights after there was another *alerte* or scare in camp, when a body of Arabs, above sixty or so, crept near the General's headquarters. What

The troops were getting now considerably exasperated, and a few hours after our scouts gladly and actively pushed forward in several directions to



BENI AMER WARRIORS OF ABYSSINIA.

their precise object was seemed uncertain, but their presence was discovered before they could perpetrate any mischief. A slight skirmish ensued, but it was soon over, as the guns of the *Sphinx* quickly swept the ground, yet Colonel Gordon's groom and horse were severely wounded by spear thrusts.

obtain a clearer idea of the enemy's position, and, if possible, of their intentions.

They found them posted at Tamai, and, so far as could be judged, fully 7,000 strong. Smaller bodies were also seen in other directions. At Handoub there was a force of 2,000, and at Hasheen of 1,000, of these daring men.

The line to be taken by the intended railway was now distinctly indicated. This was the caravan route, passing through a part of the country which was inhabited by friendly natives; and the military operations would have been greatly simplified had Osman Digna's position and headquarters lain on this line. As it was, it seemed evident that our advance must be on Tamai, which lies in a south-westerly direction from Suakim; and when the task of overcoming him was accomplished, and the country cleared for the construction of the railway, a new advance would be made in a north-westerly direction.

"Early in March," says General Graham, in his despatch of 30th May, "the enemy had occupied the line of Tamai, Hasheen, and Handoub, south to north; but the main strength of their force was at Tamai, where about 7,000 men were reported to be concentrated. Handoub was subsequently evacuated by the enemy, and Hasheen became a position of some importance, as it threatened the right flank of my advance on Tamai. Screened by the bush and mountains, the enemy were able to reinforce this point from Tamai, and it was from here they sent parties to creep through the bush and harass our camp. During the first period, up to the advance on Hasheen on March 20th, the troops were subjected to continual night alarms. The enemy showed great audacity at this period, creeping through the advanced posts unseen, in small parties, attacking isolated sentries, stragglers, &c."

Subsequent to the brief reconnaissance which we have detailed, and which was made by the Lancers, three Bedouins belonging to the Amara tribe, a portion of which were friendly to us, arrived in camp at Suakim, bearers of a letter from Osman Digna to General Graham. The former now chose the time, when the British troops were being poured by thousands into Suakim, to solemnly warn their commander not to venture a step beyond his defences.

Osman's letter began by recalling the chief events of the Soudan war during the two preceding years. He recounted the defeat and annihilation of the armies of Hicks Pasha and Baker Pasha, the captures of, and slaughters at, Sinkat, Tokar, and Khar-toum, with the retreat of Lord Wolseley, whom, he affirmed, the valour of the Mahdi had driven back to Dongola. After recounting these triumphs of the Faithful, he omitted all mention of the battles of El Teb and Tamaniéb, but announced the fall of Kassala as imminent, and that the power of the Mahdi in the whole Soudan would soon be thorough and complete.

After this, he solemnly warned General Graham not to venture beyond the walls of Suakim, as certain destruction awaited him; his whole army would be driven into the Red Sea, none being spared save those who embraced the Mohammedan religion, and became soldiers of the Mahdi.

At the same time he sent by the three Arabs a letter to Mahmoud Ali, chief of the friendly Amaras then in

Suakim, ordering him to return at once to his allegiance to the Mahdi, whose victories now proved, beyond all question, the divinity of his mission, and threatening him with a terrible death should he continue to reside among infidels. He added that the British were doomed, for that 7,000 dervishes had arrived, and that he would "wipe Suakim from the face of the earth."

After this it could not be doubted that Osman Digna meant fighting, and was determined to oppose a desperate resistance to our advance and the intended railway; and it was certain that—to use General Gordon's phrase—Osman Digna would require to be "smashed up" before tranquillity could be restored in the Eastern Soudan, or any operations taken from Suakim towards Berber.

In reply to this letter, General Graham wrote, denouncing the barbarous war of extermination which the Mahdi was carrying on as contrary to all the teachings of Mohammed, the Prophet of Mecca. Great Britain herself was now a Mohammedan Power, and the war she was now waging was in no way a religious war, but was undertaken to restore peace and order in the Soudan. His letter concluded by recalling the victories of El Teb and Tamanieb, and he threatened Osman Digna with a still more crushing defeat unless he averted the blow by immediate submission.

The object of the British was to establish peace here, to maintain friendly relations with the Arabs, and to secure to them their just rights, provided

they lived quietly, and respected all religions.

The General then goes on to speak of the submission of the hostile tribes. He says:—

"You had better throw yourselves instantly upon the mercy of the English before it is too late. If your followers desire to accept this offer of peace, well and good. A perfect pardon shall be granted them, and they will escape from almost certain death. They should therefore instantly implore for pardon."

The Indian contingent were all now encamped on the left of the British, who visited them, especially the Sikhs, and expressed much well-deserved admiration of these splendid corps. One night was quite starless, when a strong gale blew from the desert in all directions. Under these conditions some anxiety was felt regarding the Indian Commissariat, which was left in the old camp, with 160 men, holding a large and irregularly-constructed redoubt, containing hay-trusses and grain-bags, and which would require a garrison of 1,000 men to hold it.

But the *Coquette* (screw composite gunboat) lay broadside on, ready, should an attack occur, to sweep the east face of the Commissariat Redoubt with her battery; and it was now found an awkward incident that there were in camp two sets of transport officers holding the same appointments, one appointed in India, and the other from home, superseding the former.

The stream of steamers was still pouring into the harbour from the

north and south, but owing to the excellent arrangements of Lieutenant Thomas Macgill, R.N., the harbour-master, and to the regular block system which he had established, the difficult operation of taking the great transports through the narrow channel, and bringing them to their berths alongside the quays in that small and

speaking the arrangements at the Quarantine Island, he said to Colonel Wood, R.E., "You have indeed done wonders here!"

But much surprise and some disgust were felt at Suakim when the Egyptian custom-house officials were permitted to levy duties upon the canned stores of the officers' messes, and



SINKAT.

crowded port, proceeded without a single hitch. Delays necessarily arose from the fact that the number of jetties was altogether insufficient for the large number of vessels that were then coming in; and the task of unloading could never have proceeded but for the excellent work done by the Royal Engineers in the preceding summer and autumn.

The immense value of the three jetties which they had constructed became more apparent every day, and General Greaves gave the Engineers no more than was their due, when, after in-

all felt that, under the circumstances of the Expedition, such unjust imposts should have been stopped.

At this time the scene at Suakim was described as being a very lively one. The plain round it was thickly studded with the camps of various regiments and departments. The work of landing stores of every kind went on hourly with the greatest activity; the harbour was crowded with ships, conspicuous among them being the great white-painted "troopers," and the streets were thronged with British and Indian soldiers, Arabs, and Egyptians.

A body of Abyssinian scouts (such as Captain Wylde raised in the last Soudan war) it was suggested would now be most useful, as they were accustomed to the tactics of that nocturnal warfare, which harassed our troops so

correspondent of the *Standard*, "I was awakened by cries of 'Murder!' from the tents. Five shots followed, then confusion, muffled sounds, and afterwards dead silence. A few minutes later the *Dolphin* fired five rounds, and



ARABS FISHING IN THE RED SEA.

much, as they could meet the Arabs with their own weapons, and would—when the advance against them began—be able to gain much certain information as to their position and numbers.

On the night of the 11th March, "sleeping in the open air," says the

all was quiet again. A tragedy had been horribly completed."

It would seem that a party of the enemy left Tamai the day before and passed round the rear guards or sentries of the camp, and, skirting the whole of the British force, reached, at last, the Ordnance camp, and then

mustered under cover of a tent belonging to the *Dolphin*, a screw composite sloop, Commander S. M. Wilmot. This camp was situated on the shore, a quarter of a mile south from the *Dolphin's* jetty, and open to an attack in flank. Although it was 1,482 yards distant from the nearest supports, no steps had been taken to entrench it, and it was defended only by a sergeant's guard of twenty-five men of the Berkshire Regiment. The size of the camp was sixty yards by fifty, and there were only two sentries on each face of it. The electric light of the *Dolphin* could be used to sweep the ground around it, but as it was required to search the whole of the lines of the camp, it was of slight avail; and the guns of that vessel could not be employed to cover the camp owing to the position of the greater portion of it being beyond the line of fire.

At half-past three in the morning the camp was attacked by the Arabs, supposed to be about fifty in number. In the first place they were perceived by two soldiers who were smoking outside the guard tent, and saw them on the other side of the railway embankment, some sixty paces distant. They at once gave the alarm by firing on the Arabs, the whole of whom made a rush at the sentries on that side of the camp. Privates Randall and Prior, the two men who were posted there, fought desperately hand to hand with their assailants, but after killing three they fell under the sword cuts and spear thrusts of overwhelming numbers. Private Seymour also fell,

terribly hacked, after having disabled one Arab, shot another, and bayoneted a third. Private Russel defended himself with equal bravery, but his fingers were nearly hewn off while seizing and breaking a spear; and though brought down on his knees by a blow from the broken staff, he bayoneted his opponent.

Some nine others of the brave Berkshire were wounded more or less severely, and the whole guard opposed a most gallant and desperate resistance to the odds of the enemy, who, on finding that they could not overcome the little party at the guard tent, ran "a-muck" through the camp, killing or wounding all they met. The struggle lasted seven minutes, and yet, during that time, the electric light of the *Dolphin* was not turned once upon the scene.

The enemy passed right through the camp, and then fled towards Handoub. As they crossed the line of railway the electric light fell upon them, but the *Dolphin* was unable to open fire with her machine guns because the camp intervened. Some rifle volleys were, however, delivered, and it was believed with effect, as by the light the enemy were seen to be carrying off with them the bodies of killed or wounded.

The *Condor*, gunboat, landed a party, which arrived too late to assist the defenders of the camp; but medical assistance was sent ashore from the ships. Private Saunders was found dead; Randall died a few minutes after being taken on board the *Carysfort*, and Prior died on board the *Dolphin*. Seven other serious cases were taken off to

the shipping, to be tended there, but several of the less severely wounded of the Berkshire remained at their posts. Many broken spears and poniards were found on the scene of the conflict. The Arabs carried off all their wounded and dead, save one of the latter who was found near the railway. Stains of blood marked the line of their retreat, and the numerous foot-prints in the sand showed that a large body of them, prior to the attack, had concealed themselves in a large unoccupied tent at the end of the jetty.

At daybreak they were still in sight, retiring across the plain, three miles distant, and the ships signalled at once for the cavalry to pursue them; but nothing was done until a quarter past seven, when the Mounted Infantry were sent out, too late to be of any service. Later on, as the enemy were still seen hovering about the plain, a troop of Hussars went galloping out, and after a slight skirmish drove them back to the hills. The body of the Arab found near the railway was identified as that of Abdul Ahad, the Lion standard-bearer of Osman Digna, who before the rebellion had been a dock porter. He was a man of giant strength and stature, and was, in all probability, selected as a guide from his intimate knowledge of Suakim. He was known to be a daring fellow, who had directed most of the harassing night attacks against the town. Next day the greatest activity prevailed in the camp, all the troops being set to work to strengthen their defences. "It will be difficult," wrote a corres-

pondent, "to put them in a really defensive state, owing to the positions they occupy towards each other, which prevents any firing without great danger to friends. Another telegram states that every precaution has been taken against further attacks. Redoubts and ditches have been made round all the camps, and the sentries have been trebled."

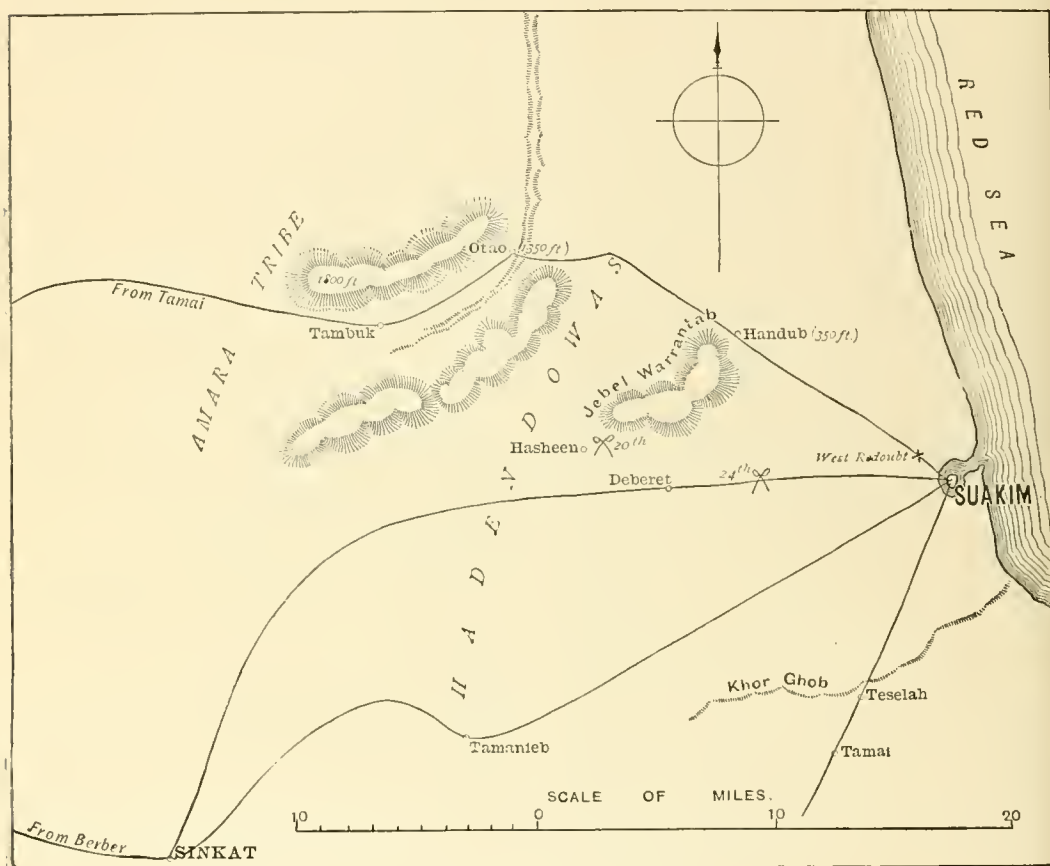
Of the Berkshire guard that night six were killed and seven wounded, three mortally. The latter were horribly slashed and mangled. The Shropshire lost two men, and another was dreadfully stabbed, and the Surrey Regiment had two killed. The Indian camp was also threatened, but General Hudson had his front well protected. Criticism on camp arrangements was forbidden to correspondents.

Another account of an attack on the 12th March is thus given in the *Daily Chronicle*.

"At one o'clock this morning the double sentries in charge of the camp of the Shropshire Regiment discovered that about a score of rebels had managed to make their way unperceived to the rear of the camp, and to penetrate inside the position. Taught caution by the cunning tactics of the enemy themselves, the sentries quietly passed the word to the guard, who as quietly turned out, and hid themselves behind the tent, where they awaited the further movements of the rebels. Very soon, however, the latter caught sight of the guard, and with prompt audacity opened fire upon them, the first volley wounding Private Jukes. Between

the Guards' tent and the rear of the camp, whence the rebels fired, were several trenches and dry ditches; but these obstacles did not deter the rebels, who, nimbly leaping as they ran, made

soon after buried in the sand. The whole affair barely lasted five minutes. Sergeant Purcell received a spear thrust in his thigh, Private Jukes had an elbow smashed by a bullet, and a cor-



MAP OF THE ENVIRONS OF SUAKIM.

straight for our fellows at full speed. The Guards fired rapidly, but not very effectively, so the enemy got to close quarters. The Shropshire men, however, proved more than a match for the Arabs, who were soon driven off, some of them evidently badly wounded.

"One of the latter fell dead, and was

poral had a narrow escape, a bullet striking the lock of his rifle as he was in the act of firing it.

"Although no more surprises were attempted, the enemy kept up a desultory firing from various points all through the night, worrying our men, and causing considerable excitement in the town. Just before daybreak, a

sentry on duty at the camp of the Scots Guards, thinking he saw an Arab approaching, challenged, and, receiving no response, fired. The man, who fell stone dead, turned out to be one of the sentry's own comrades."

It had recently been observed that the enemy displayed a singular anxiety to recover the bodies of their dead. They charged a Sikh picket no less than four times to recover the corpse of one of their men, and on the 14th of March



MOUNTED INFANTRY AT SUAKIM PREPARING TO PICKET.

Besides the men actually wounded, a sergeant of the Shropshire Regiment had a narrow escape. He was seized by the leg while entering a redoubt, but kicked the Arab over, leaped the ditch, and pulled in the plank by which the man had crossed. The most important feature in the night attack of the 12th of March was the use of rifles by the enemy, who hitherto had generally employed swords and spears only.

there was a more striking development of this sentiment, when Osman Digna made an offer of money, and a promise that the night attacks should cease, if the body of Abdul Ahad, his standard-bearer, was delivered up to him.

That night numbers of the enemy were discovered crawling all about the various camps on their hands and knees, and the desultory firing was more continuous and general than it

had been on any previous occasion. They attempted the Indian camp, but found the preparations for their reception complete. On the 15th the cavalry were out scouting without any particular result, but the camp abounded with anecdotes of the audacity and courage of the midnight assailants; and the friendly Soudanese who were employed on look-out duties near the redoubts began to do excellent service.

Next night at nine o'clock the outlying pickets sent in word that they could see several bands of the enemy creeping in their usual fashion towards our lines, so the Guards at once got under arms to receive them. Meanwhile some had crept well within range, and were seen by the Sikh picket between the Water Forts. The Indians at once fired a volley, while the fort on their right opened with its Krupp guns, which fired shell, and evidently with effect, as a subsequent examination of the ground covered by the enemy showed pools and gouts of blood, as if several had been badly wounded, but, as usual now, no bodies were found.

While the skirmish was proceeding in this quarter, our troops were engaged with the enemy almost all along the lines; but, save at two points, there was no fighting at anything like close quarters. A small body of the enemy had worked their way near the camp of the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, but were repulsed, and two of the latter were wounded.

On the noon of the following day the Arabs attempted a daring cattle raid in the face of the whole force, but

the Krupp guns in the right Water Fort and those of H.M.S. *Dolphin* compelled them to retire without their booty.

Some curious rumours which were circulated that evening in Suakim seemed to explain the new and extraordinary anxiety evinced by the Arabs of late to carry off their dead. Horrible tales were said to have reached Osman Digna of the customs of our Sikh soldiers in their dealings with an enemy, especially the slain. Among other things, he was fully persuaded that they were wont to cremate the bodies of their dead foes, and he feared that this had been the fate of the remains of his favourite and standard-bearer, Abdul Ahad.

"I learn on inquiry," says the correspondent of the *Standard*, "that there is some slight justification for the rebel fears; but they have no more substantial foundation than an idle threat made by some irascible Sikhs that they would burn the body of any rebel they might capture. The threat was bandied about the camps, whence it reached the town. It has evidently reached Osman too, which says much for his means of communication."

The total number of Indian troops in camp was now 3,000 men.

On the 17th of March the camp was reformed and extra precautions adopted; thus, for the first time for more than a week, the night passed without molestation. The camp now consisted of three sides of a parallelogram, the right resting on the sea and the left on the town, following a line, east and west, from

the garden of Osman Digna to a point midway between the Water Forts, the troops being posted in the following order:—

Facing south, commencing at the garden, were the 9th Bengal Lancers, the 28th Bombay, the 13th and 17th Bengal Native Infantry, and in rear of the 20th Hussars were the Mounted Infantry and Irish Lancers. Turning the angle and facing west were the Surrey, Shropshire, and Berkshire Regiments of the line, with the Coldstream, Scots, and Grenadier Guards. Turning the angle north were the Horse Artillery, more Mounted Infantry, the Royal Engineers, the Marine Artillery, and the Royal Marines.

On the 17th a strong force of Arab camelry and spearmen was seen in motion at the base of the hills. The cavalry engaged in scouting touched a large body of them, but, having orders not to attack, fell back—a movement which, no doubt, would be misconstrued by the enemy.

On the 19th of March General Graham ordered a reconnaissance in force towards Osman Digna's position. The Irish Lancers, the Bengal Cavalry, the Hussars, and Royal Horse Artillery were selected for this duty, which they certainly performed well. Several parties of the enemy were seen, one of some strength headed by a sheikh, but made no opposition to the movements of the troops, who returned to camp without a single casualty to report.

A good deal of grumbling went on in camp at the quality of the camels sent from Egypt. Of an entire ship-

load that came not one was sound, and nearly all were mangy; all were therefore sent back to Suez. Each of these animals cost £25, though the Berbera desert camels, magnificent animals, could be had for £20.

The first consignment of plant for the Suakim-Berber railway now arrived, together with a body of Messrs. Lucas and Aird's navvies. The line was to be of the ordinary full gauge of 4 feet 8½ inches, and its average length was to be about 280 miles. In a work of such magnitude and difficulty, to be accomplished in the face of an active enemy, nothing like an actual contract could have been entered into, and the position occupied by Messrs. Lucas and Aird was that of agents of the Government. The advance into the country and the plotting out of this wild and fantastic scheme was to be accomplished by the corps of Royal Engineers and a military force under an officer of high rank. The country through which it was to run rises gradually from the sea coast to Ariab, where it was intended to erect a fortified post of some magnitude.

As the military force advanced, the agents' navvies, having under them hired natives, were to make the needful cuttings and clearances, and lay the line in a substantial manner, at the rate of about twenty-five miles per week, if all went on favourably. As the line was laid, the constructors' locomotives were to traverse it, bringing on stores and materials. At this rate, it was hopefully supposed that this apparently unprofitable line would be ready

in about fourteen weeks, or, taking into consideration probable delays, it was expected that the railway would occupy in its completion about five months, and that troops and stores might be able to use it in autumn, or about July or August. The plant and material for its construction were to be sent out in

After the termination of the war, it was sanguinely anticipated that the line would possess very considerable commercial qualifications, and would, perhaps, lead to a trade of some kind.

About this time we read that "private information had reached Vienna, from London, stating that a syndicate,



PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE SUAKIM-BERBER RAILWAY—VIEW NEAR KOKREH.

Government ships in sections of ten miles, perfectly complete with sleepers, rails, points, and crossings. A couple of hundred of picked navvies and plate-layers were also to sail in a short time. The landing-stages which had been already erected by the Royal Engineers at Suakim would now be of vast service in the work of landing material. The route determined upon was to follow the line of several wells, at Handoub, Es Sibil, Tamai, Ariab, Bak, Abu Odfu, and Abu Takan, rather than running in a direct and more difficult line.

or company, headed by the Duke of Sutherland, had obtained a concession from the British Government for the commercial and industrial development of the Soudan." It was further stated that "the Suakim-Berber railway would not be of the light and temporary character that it had hitherto been imagined it would possess; but, after Osman Digna and the Mahdi had been 'smashed,' would be ceded to the company in question. Sir Samuel Baker would be the moving spirit of the enterprise. The company, which had a capital of



RECONNAISSANCE TOWARDS THE ENEMY'S CAMP AT HASHEEN.

two millions sterling, would undertake to keep in order the country through which the line would pass."

On the 20th of March the wife of Sami Pasha, Premier of the Cabinet of Arabi, and then an exile in Ceylon, died at Cairo.

The ill-starred Arabi, in the land of his exile, had his eyes on all that was passing in that Egypt which he had fondly hoped to secure "for the Egyptians."

The Press Association published the translation of a letter written by him at Colombo, on the 2nd of March, in which he said:—

"I grieve with a great grief over the decline of the star of England, caused by her misdeeds in Egypt and the Soudan. But God has heard the cry of the oppressed, and the voice of the blood which has been shed, and the terrible cry of the widow and of the young children, and surely He

has taken His vengeance on the covetous. Yet, believe me, the people of Egypt used to believe good of the English nation. It was they of all others that they trusted, as the foremost among the nations, and as the chief hope of those who sought to obtain their freedom; and they grieve now, seeing their belief a deception, and their trust a delusion. And what has England gained by her invasion of Egypt, and what in the Soudan? Rather let us say, what has she lost? For God knows she has gained nothing. She has lost her good name, the friendship of our Lord the Sultan, and of all Moslems. She has lost, too, Gordon Pasha, through acting on false counsels, Stewart, and Hicks, and Earle, and how many other officers, and she has lost the respect of all hearts by this war against free men in the Soudan. When will she cease to rush forward on her course to send armies of revenge on men who are themselves avenging their Egyptian brothers; on men defending their country, and who delight to drink the cup of death rather than that they should see an enemy left within its borders? I tell you fifteen millions of such as these occupy at this moment the Soudan country and Darfour, and all of them are partisans of the Mahdi, having made a convention with him unto death, and in accordance with the precepts of our noble Koran. Thus the Mahdi increases in strength with the English aggression."



ARABI FARMER.

CHAPTER VII.

ABOUT THE GREAT DESERT.

Spread of the Mahdi's Cause—The Movable Columns—The Camp at Korti—Lord Wolseley and the Canadian Boatmen—The Camel Bearer Company—The Great Desert—Hardships at Korti—Major Rundle's Explorations—Plea against the Suakim-Berber Railway—Fate of Captain Gordon—Nile Problems—The New Mahdi—Olivier Pain—Letters from the Ranks.

THE fermentation was spreading among the Mohammedans in various directions now, illustrating what General Gordon had predicted in January, 1884, that the danger did not arise from the Mahdi, or the chances of his marching northward, so much as from the influence which the spectacle of a conquering Mohammedan Power would exercise upon those Mussulmans whom Britain governed. Already had his success excited dangerous disquietude in Syria and Arabia, proclamations had been distributed in India, and placards had been posted in Damascus and elsewhere, calling upon the populace to rise and expel the Turks. Gordon had also predicted that, if the whole of the Eastern Soudan fell under the power of the Mahdi, the Arab tribes on both sides of the Red Sea would take fire. "In self-defence," he wrote, "the Turks are bound to do something to cope with so formidable a danger, for it is quite possible that if nothing is done the whole of the Eastern Question may be opened by the triumph of the Mahdi. I see it is proposed to fortify Wady Halfa, and prepare there to resist the Mahdi's attack. You might as well fortify against a fever. Contagion of that kind cannot be kept out by fortifications and garrisons. But that it is real, and that it does

exist, will be denied by no one cognisant with Egypt and the East."

Mr. A. M. Broadley, the counsel for Arabi Pasha, in a letter to the *Pall Mall Gazette* of 24th November, 1884, also predicted something of the same kind. "On the 23rd of October, last year, I was at Cairo," he wrote. "It was the Moslem festival of the Kourbán Bairám. All Pashadom seemed ablaze with decorations and ribbons, and the Cairene world and his wife hastened to do homage to the recently restored Khedive, after the manner of the ordinary Egyptian. Late in the afternoon a telegram reached the palace. Its contents could not be long kept a secret; an hour after, everybody knew that the Mahdi had obtained a signal success in the Soudan, and that the rising he headed had assumed formidable proportions. In the evening I met Dr. Schweinfürth, the celebrated African traveller, in the historical verandah of Shepherd's hotel. He told me a great deal about his Soudan experiences, and insisted strongly on the importance of the news that had just arrived, and concluded by saying, in a tone I cannot forget, 'We have not heard the last of the Mahdi; in the movement he leads I see a danger to Egypt ten times greater than anything your

client Arabi ever attempted or contemplated.' ”

The *Nusret* published the following proclamation, addressed by the Mahdi to the population of Arabia, 23rd of March, 1885 :—

“Before God and the Prophet, I declare that I did not take up the sword to found a kingdom on

Korti, while the soldiers of the Mudir held Merawi.

Of the two movable columns formed to take the field, one consisted of General Dormer's Brigade, comprising three battalions of Infantry, a troop of Hussars, and four guns, to be encamped near Debbah. The other, of similar



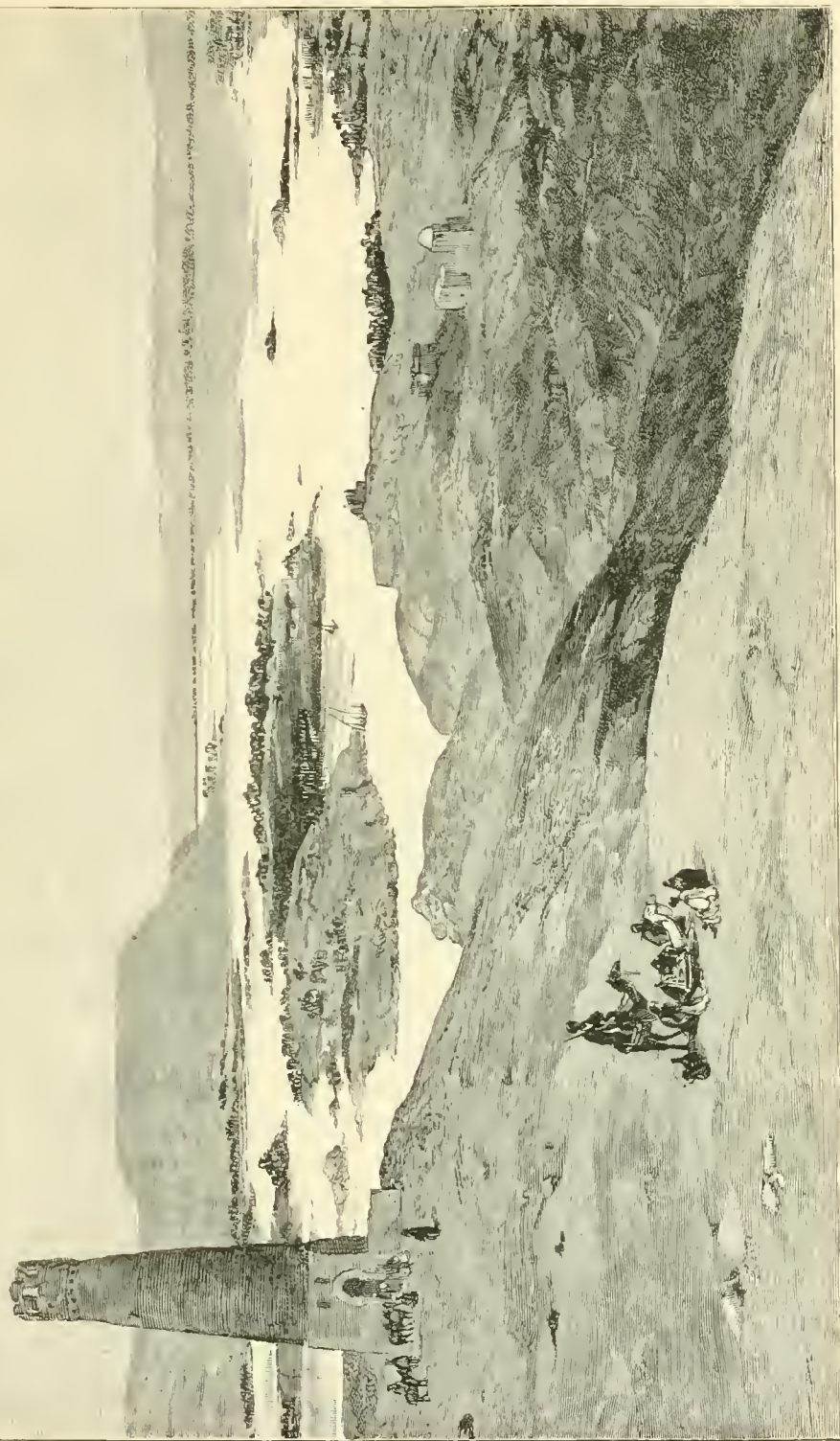
ARAB LABOURER.

earth, or to gather treasures for myself, and live in a fine palace; but to bring consolation and succour to the faithful; to deliver them from bondage; and in order that the reign of the Moslems should shine forth once more in its ancient splendour. I am, therefore, resolved to advance from Khartoum on Dongola, Cairo, and Alexandria, and in each of those cities to hand over the power and government to the Moslems. I shall march from Egypt to the Land of the Prophet, to drive out the Turks, who govern no better than the unbelievers, and I shall transfer the country, with its two holy towns, to the sons of Ismael. Be assured, O ye sons of Ismael! that in a little time I will be with you, sword in hand.”

The headquarters were now to be at Dongola, but a considerable portion of the force still occupied the camp at

strength, under the command of General Brackenbury, to be posted between the Debbah and Handak, while the Heavy Camel Corps was to be encamped opposite the Cataracts of Hamnek—a district in which, according to Lepsius, a new Nubian dialect begins—and at Derr and Korosko.

The steamer *Nassif-el-Keir* had now been stranded on a rock near Dongola, a somewhat unfortunate circumstance, as she had been of great service during the Expedition, and would have been of greater utility now that large



THE HEIGHTS ABOVE ASSUAN, WITH THE ISLAND OF ELEPHANTINE.

quantities of stores were required for the use of the forces on the Nile.

At this time the weather in the camp at Korti was very hot; the thermometer early in March rose to one hundred and four degrees, under the shade of the trees near the hospital, while the south wind felt like the blast of a furnace. Sickness began to increase, and there was an outbreak of enteric fever.

On the 7th of March there were 236 cases in hospital, and many more were expected; it was becoming evident now that the boat work had taken a great deal out of both officers and men, and the former looked more fagged than the latter, and in spite of appearances refused to believe that the army was going into quarters till next autumn, extracting some grains of hope from Lord Granville's correspondence on the subject. Several copies of the "Blue Book, Egypt 13, 1884," or "Further Correspondence respecting the affairs of Egypt," were in the camp at Korti, strange as it may seem; and these were handed about to inspire the home-sick with comfort; while even the chances of a war with Russia on the Afghan frontier were eagerly and hopefully discussed, so intense and universal was the desire of all to escape a scorching summer in the Soudan.

With respect to the correspondence referred to under date 25th March, 1884, Lord Granville wrote to Sir Evelyn Baring: "Having regard to the dangers of the climate of the Soudan at this time of the year, as well as the extraordinary risk from a military point of view, Her Majesty's Government do

not think it justifiable to send a British Expedition to Berber." Again, on the 28th of March, the Earl wrote: "For a large body of European troops, of all arms, the military authorities regard the Expedition as impossible. The objections to sending Indian troops are no less considerable."

Yet, upon April 9th following, Sir Evelyn Baring telegraphed to Lord Granville that the revolt of the Mahdi was then so trumpery that 500 determined men could put it down. "Regret is freely expressed on all sides by the officers here," wrote a correspondent at Korti, "that this was not done, and that the troops, instead of wasting their strength and time in toiling up the Nile, were not sent forward, in November last, from Suakim to Berber," which the *Daily Telegraph* advocated as the easiest, safest, and quickest route.

Before leaving Korti for Dongola Lord Wolseley publicly thanked the Canadian boatmen for their unflinching and gallant behaviour in the whalers, and their loyalty. But the latter sentiment probably never entered the thoughts of nine out of ten of them. They were influenced less by loyalty than the desire for military distinction, and that craving for adventure which brought so many thousands of Canadians into the ranks of the American armies during the great Civil War.

Few deserved or won higher praise at Korti than the Camel Bearer Company, for their conduct when conveying the sick and wounded for more than two hundred miles through a scorching desert, almost void of water. Many of

the wounded were borne that distance in hand-stretchers by Gordon's black troops, whose behaviour was most admirable.

We have referred so often to the Desert, here and elsewhere in the Sudan, and even in Lower Egypt, that it may be now time to give some description of such a waste.

At the line where the irrigating waters of the Nile end the desert begins, and its limit is said to be as sharply marked as a gravel walk across a green sward. Ancient Egypt, we are told, was the granary of the Roman Empire, and the soil has lost none of its fertility; but all the vast spaces east and west of the valley of the Nile, between the fourteenth degree and the Mediterranean (above eight hundred thousand square miles), are desert. It would seem at the first glance to be utterly unfitted for the habitation of man; but as he continues to live and multiply amid the ice-floes of the Arctic circle, so he does here, in the rainless, barren, and torrid zone. He who has never travelled through the desert (according to a recent writer on the subject) can form no just idea of that strange and wondrous region, in which all the ordinary conditions of human life are completely changed.

It is essentially a waterless land, without rivers or rivulets, and almost without springs; once away from the Nile, the only supply is derived from deep wells, few, scanty, and far apart. "When I explored the great Arabian Desert, between the Nile and the Red Sea, it had not rained for three years,"

he continues, "and when I travelled over the Suakim route and through Kordofan no rain had fallen for two years. Between the twenty-ninth and the nineteenth degrees of latitude it never rains at all; and water becomes precious beyond the conception of those who have never known its scarcity. Members of the Catholic Mission at El Obeid assured me that the summer before, water had been sold as high as half a dollar a gallon by the proprietors of the few wells that had not dried up. When long droughts occur the always scanty crop of *dhurra* fails away from the Nile, and the greater part of the flocks and herds, and a considerable part of the population, perish."

Colonel Colborne tells us in his work, that in the region of loose sand dunes, called by the Arabs the "Devil's Sea," a whole company of soldiers perished of thirst.

"It follows naturally that when undertaking a journey through the desert, the paramount subject is water, which is usually carried in goat-skins, suspended from the pack-saddle of the camel. These are the water bottles of the Scriptures; they become leaky from wear, and always lose a portion of their precious contents by evaporation.

"The first thing after reaching a well is to ascertain the quantity and quality of its water. As to the former, it may have been exhausted by a preceding caravan, and hours may be required for a new supply to ooze in again. The quality of the desert water is generally bad, the exception being when it

becomes worse, though long custom enables the Bedouins to drink water so brackish as to be intolerable to all except themselves and their flocks. Well do I remember how at each

gorges where the sun never penetrates. The desert would be impassable without the camel. He was created for it. His broad soft foot enables him to traverse deep sands where the horse would sink



HERDSMAN IN THE DESERT (LOWER EGYPT).

well the first skinful was tasted all round as epicures sip rare wines. Great was the joy if it was pronounced *moya helwa*, 'sweet water;' but if the Bedouins said *moosh tayib*, 'not good,' we might be sure it was a solution of Epsom salts."

The best water is found in natural rocky reservoirs, or in deep narrow

to his knees. He lives on almost nothing, the scanty herbage of the desert and the twigs of the thorny mimosa being his favourite food; but his most precious quality is his ability to travel for five days without drinking amid the fiercest heat of summer, for which reason the wells are rarely more than five days' journey apart.



RIDE THROUGH THE DESERT (LOWER EGYPT).

The great desert, says Cushing, which occupies so much of Northern Africa, is composed of coarse quartzose sand, abounding in some parts with shells, or siliceous pebbles and shingle, and everywhere full of salt. In some parts the sand is soft and shifting, so that the foot sinks at every step; in others it is hardened into a sort of gravel, over which car wheels move easily. There are spots in it, few and far between, where springs rise, and around these palm trees, acacias, and small oases of cultivation are found; but again, for many hundred miles, it is arid and sterile, with only here and there a few patches of prickly plants, around which small hillocks of sand gather. "Thus," he continues, "on the way from Cairo to Suez, a journey of eighty-four miles, there is only one solitary gum-tree standing about midway between. In these immense plains of sand, you have the vastness and sublimity of the ocean, with additional sensations of solitude from the silence which prevails. . . . But the clearness of the sky, which aggravates the heat of the sun by day, renders the night sky unspeakably beautiful, and that is the time for the traveller to make his way over the desert."

Meanwhile, though the general face of the sand is level, the desert contains many lofty mountains of varied formation and character; and its outline is modified by rivers and seas. It is to the fact of the confluence, in the interior of Africa, of sundry mountain streams into one great river, the Nile, and the association of that river with

certain ranges of mountains along the desert, that the land of Egypt owes its existence. Its animal and vegetable life, its productions and monuments, may all be regarded as the joint product of the desert and the Nile.

It is difficult, says Mr. St. John, to convey any correct idea of those desolate and barren wastes that border on the valley of the Nile. "But the face of the desert is singularly diversified," he adds. "Arid it no doubt is, and to many, gloomy and dispiriting, suggesting ideas of death, which are certainly, in most cases, unwelcome. Yet this is by no means the effect which it generally produces, since the Bedouins are, beyond most other nations, gay and cheerful; and in my own case, never were my spirits more light, my fancy and imagination crowded with more pleasurable images, than when riding on a fleet dromedary across the sands or through the stony valley of the Libyan Desert, amid the refreshing breezes of the morning."

Elsewhere he speaks of the mirage, or, as the Arabs call it, the Goblin of the Desert, when their eyes are deluded by the motion of waves, tall palms and trees tossing their branches in the distance where the sand alone lies; "an evil spirit that beguiles the wanderer, and mocks him with a false show of what his heated brain paints in glowing colours."

But the sense of vision is not the only one which the mysterious desert mocks with fantastic tricks, for the author of "Eothen," in his experiences of Eastern travel, tells us on the

fifth day of his journey from Gaza to Cairo, of strange sounds that floated through the waste. The sun growing fiercer and fiercer, shone through floods of light "more mightily than ever on me he shone before, and as I drooped my head under his fire, and closed my eyes against the glare that surrounded me, I slowly fell asleep, for how many minutes or moments I cannot tell, but I was gently awakened by a peal of church bells—my native bells—the innocent bells of Marlen, that never sent forth their music beyond the Blaygon Hills. My first idea was that I still remained fast under the power of a dream, . . . but it seemed to me that about ten minutes passed before the bells ceased. I attributed the effect to the great heat of the sun, the perfect dryness of the clear air through which I moved, and the deep stillness of all around me. It seemed to me that these causes, by occasioning a great tension and consequent susceptibility of the hearing organs, rendered them liable to tingle under the passing touch of some mere memory that must have swept across my brain in a moment of sleep."

Such is the Desert.

That there was much weariness and discontent in the camps at Korti, Dongola, and elsewhere up the Nile, the following letter from an officer may serve to show:—

"They are supposed to be going to build straw huts for us, but these are not begun yet. The sun is most frightfully hot, and the tents we have are really unbearable in the day-time. The

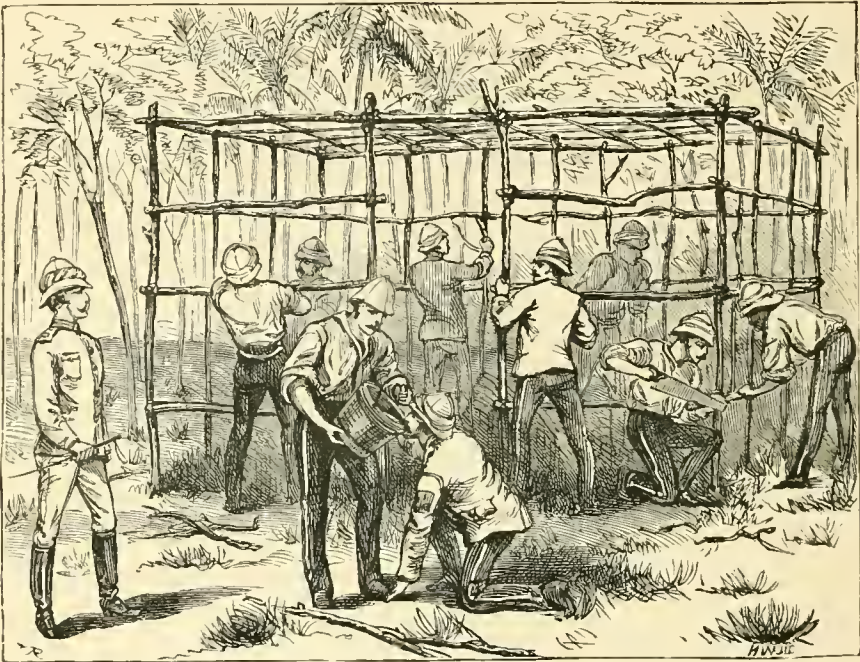
thermometer was a hundred and twelve yesterday in the tents, and this is only March. We have nothing to read and nothing to do all day. They have stopped the parcel and newspaper post, and we are only to get one newspaper a regiment. We all want things badly, and, by the parcel post being stopped, we can get nothing. The men have no clothes except the rags they started in, and there are none for them. I wonder if no one at home will stand up for the wretched troops, as against the cruelty with which they are treated by being kept up in this awful country for the summer. It seems as if the country had no feeling for us, who have gone through all the toil and hardships of this Expedition; numbers are dying even now, though they send the sick off every day. It really seems a disgrace to the nation to treat the troops who have worked so hard for it in this way."

We should have mentioned in its place that three months before the camps were formed at Korti and Dongola, the Cameron Highlanders were marched to Korosko on the Nile, a town embosomed among mountains, to check any possible advance of the enemy across the desert in that direction, and with the object of opening the road as soon as General Earle's column reached Abu Hammed; while Major Rundle, with several hundred camels, was quite ready to move up the supplies; and the battalion, though far below its proper strength (having no other linked with it to draw from), was burning with the desire to do

something worthy of its name and its gallant old colonel, Macdonald Leith, a veteran of the Crimean and Indian wars, when news reached them that Brackenbury had been recalled while his column was actually in sight of Abu Hammed.

But Major Rundle had not waited

to those our troops had used at Gakdul and the Dog's Tooth on the Bayuda Desert route. He reported that a thousand men and a thousand camels would exhaust the entire supply of good water; so that, if ever we were compelled to use this route, which turns most of the upper and lower series of



1ST LIFE GUARDS (CAMEL CORPS) BUILDING THEIR SUMMER HUTS ON THE NILE
(THE FRAME-WORK).

to explore the road for the advance of the ill-fated Earle, for even before the column of the latter had made any appreciable movement, he had gone by the caravan route from Korosko to a point about twenty miles from Abu Hammed. The famous well of Morad, mid-way, he found to be, as the best authorities now described it, so bad that the water of it sickened his camels; but he found some "pockets" of water similar

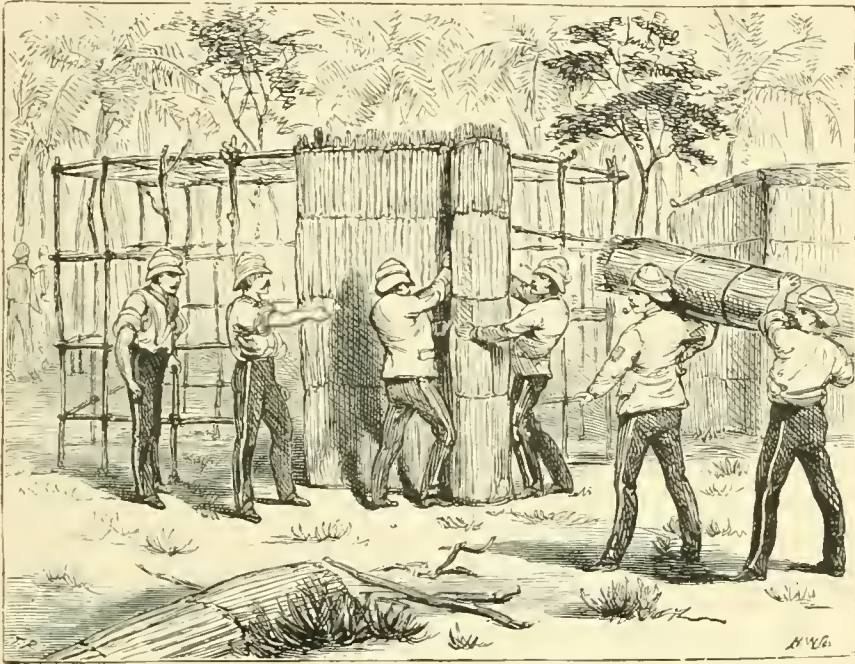
to those our troops had used at Gakdul and the Dog's Tooth on the Bayuda Desert route. He reported that a thousand men and a thousand camels would exhaust the entire supply of good water; so that, if ever we were compelled to use this route, which turns most of the upper and lower series of

cataracts, we would have to carry water for ten days at every trip of a convoy; and, even at the lowest possible rate of consumption, this meant a proportion of one camel to every six men of the force alone.

Major Rundle's great enterprise on this occasion deserved a better fate than to be wasted. The mention of this road (says the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle*) "leads me to ask

whether it has ever occurred to anybody in Britain to consider the inevitable effect upon the Soudan and Lower Nubia, and even Upper Egypt, of the opening up of a railway to Berber. In the first place it will entirely destroy the transport trade from and to the Soudan by the river route, and will

quite useless, while even the line from Cairo to Assiout will have no small portion of its trade taken from it. Indeed, there is between Abu Hammed and Assouan no local export trade whatever, with the exception of a little gum arabic, that is to say, the country barely feeds itself, and it is scarcely too



1ST LIFE GUARDS (CAMEL CORPS) BUILDING THEIR SUMMER HUTS ON THE NILE
(PUTTING MATTING ROUND THE FRAMES).

drive into pauperism or migration the vast population that now, between the Upper Cataracts and Assiout, gains the main part of its living by working the nuggars and dahabeahs, which are now nearly all taken up by the Government. The towns, such as they are, of Abu Hammed, Merawi, Debbah, Handak, Dongola, Derr, and Assouan, will be ruined, the Wady Halfa railway, and that at the First Cataract, will be

much to predict that the effect of the Berber-Suakim railway will be to drive all but the mere agriculturists from the Nile valley over ten degrees of latitude. In other words, this vast stretch of country will, by the operation of tapping the Soudan trade at Berber, relapse into simple barbarism, and be even more useless to Egypt or to any other power than it is at present."

As it was relinquished, despite all the enormous expense that had been incurred, the effects of the proposed line were, of course, never tested.

History being said to reproduce itself, it is curious to note that the task assigned to Lord Wolseley, that of establishing some solid government in the Soudan to prevent attacks on Egypt, was in some sense put in practice in the third century by the Emperor Diocletian, who punished the cities of Alexandria and Coptas for rebelling against him. He handed over the whole country south of the Soudan to the fierce tribe of the Nobatæ, on the condition that they should protect the frontier of Egypt from the attacks of tribes farther south; and they performed this service for three centuries.

Prior to the battle of Abu Klea there occurred one of the most melancholy events of the campaign, which was scarcely noticed in the newspapers at home—the fate of Captain W. H. Gordon, of the 3^d or Militia battalion of the Royal Welsh Fusiliers, an enthusiastic soldier, who, serving as a volunteer in the Ashanti campaign, did such excellent work on the line of communications, that he was appointed by Lord Wolseley (then Sir Garnet) to a post in the Coast Police, with which he distinguished himself till struck down with fever. In 1876 he went to Servia and assisted Dr. Humphry Sandwith, C.B. (of Kars), in the distribution of aid to the sick and wounded, and the Servian refugees from Bosnia, for which he received from Prince Milan the golden Cross of the Takovo.

In the following year he did some similar humane work at Bucharest; and when we took Cyprus he was appointed by General Wolseley to a post in the island, from whence he got leave to proceed to Ismailia in 1882, but failing to get employment in the army, he returned to his post at Cyprus, where he remained for nearly two years longer. At the beginning of the Soudan war he went to Dongola as the representative of a Telegraph Agency, and subsequently to Korti as a correspondent. Resolving to accompany the desert column he unfortunately did not leave with it, but attempted to go on with Colonel Burnaby afterwards.

They missed each other, and some days after he was overtaken, in a perishing condition, with his Greek servant and two camels, at a considerable distance from the Gakdul track, and without water. His immediate wants were supplied by Lieutenant Douglas, of the Cameronian Rifles, then attached to the 19th Hussars; and by that officer he was put in the right track of the column, but from that moment was never heard of again. His servant, camels, and baggage also disappeared. For a long time his comrades, hoping against hope, thought he might turn up among the Kabbabish tribe—a vain expectation. Whether he was murdered by some of the many marauders who hovered about the Dog's Tooth Pools, or perished by the horrors of thirst in the desert, can never be known now. "Captain Gordon," says the *Daily*

Chronicle correspondent, "was a man of considerable accomplishments, had contributed sketches to the *Graphic*, and when leaving Korti was commissioned to send sketches to the *Pictorial World*. His fate must appear to every one at home, as it has here, far more lamentable than if he, like Cameron and Herbert, had been slain in open battle."

At this time, when our troops were at Korti, Dongola, and elsewhere, the Nile was presenting some curious problems. It was already fordable at Kostambi, where it cannot be usually crossed on foot earlier than May; and at Kodokol and Rumi island, near Dongola, the sand-banks lay entirely across the bed of the stream, leaving a space not fifty yards wide, and not six feet deep, with a current of three miles an hour. Thus it was difficult to account for the volume of water careering past New Dongola, Abu Fatmeh, Korosko, Assuan, and Cairo.

"The disappearance of the water that passes Kodokol," wrote a correspondent, "would, one is inclined to think, be accounted for, long before it got a hundred miles, by evaporation, and the continual drain day and night of irrigation by water-wheels, which are sometimes to be found on both banks to the number of eighty in a mile."

Commander Poore, R.N., who had ample means then of studying the Nile, from the sea to the Gerendid Cataracts, had a theory that the river is copiously fed by great springs in its bed near the Cataracts. Certain such springs were visible above Semneh, in what is named

the Wady Atireh Cataract. Others asserted that the wadies were underground rivers that rose and fed the great stream beneath its surface.

On the 20th of March it was reported at Korti by natives that the enemy were gathering at Berti, and strengthening the position by loopholing the walls and digging rifle pits. They were also stated to be raising works in the formidable Shukuk Pass, and on that day, as all the British troops at Korti were to be removed to Dongola, Captain Childers of the Royal Engineers went thither to prepare their quarters, though Commander Baker, R.N., was to remain in command of General Gordon's Soudanese troops.

Meanwhile the Mudir of Dongola was gathering forces at Handak, for the purpose of attacking the Hassaniyeh tribe.

On the 20th a messenger arrived at Korti from Omdurman with the intelligence that the new Mahdi had appeared—a holy man named El Sengoosi, a native of Darfour, a small state in tropical Africa, 345 miles long by 230 in breadth. He boldly announced to the people that Mohammed Achmet Shemseddin, the so-called Mahdi, was a false prophet, and disobeyed the laws of their faith. The messenger added the old Mahdi was now at bitter enmity with Khalifa Abdullah, his principal chief, and had superseded him in command by his own uncle; and that, in consequence of this step, the Baggaras had left him. There was some indignation excited in his army from the fact of the spoil taken in Khartoum

being small, and what there was of it the Mahdi had conveyed to his old residence, the Island of Abba, in the Nile, while food was so scarce in the fallen city that the people were fain to fell palm-trees and eat the pith.

of "the mysterious Frenchman" of whom Gordon wrote, and both the *Siècle*, which is the organ of the President of the Chamber, and the *Paris*, affected to be astounded at the action of the British Government setting a



THE EGYPTIAN CAMP AT WADY HALFA.

At this date we find the name of Olivier Pain, the Communist, cropping up again. The French Ministerial journal *Paris* of 20th March, commenting on the alleged reward offered for Olivier Pain, called it a "monstrous violation of the rights of nations," and added "that all honest people must hope that he will escape the paid assassins of Queen Victoria."

The Ministerialists all took the part

price, as it were, on the head of a Frenchman. Such a piece of impertinence, we were told, was a flagrant violation of international law, and would never be committed by French officers. And it was now asserted that the French in Madagascar were harassed by an Englishman named Colonel Willoughby, while an ex-officer of our Royal Engineers from Woolwich was teaching the Chinese

how to make entrenchments at Tonquin.

Nothing fresh, however, had been heard about the Mahdi's supposed French adviser or adherent, and the virulent M. Henri Rochefort happily became silent about him for a time.

with Lord Charles Beresford, Sir Redvers Buller, and the whole Headquarter Staff, in whale boats.

The Armour Packing Company of New York were now unable to fulfil within the prescribed time a further order from the British War Department



M. OLIVIER PAIN.

On the 27th of March the last detachment of British troops quitted the camp of Korti for that of Dongola, a town which Ogilby in his "Africa," folio 1670, on the authority of *Les Africanus*, calls the capital of Nubia, "but very meanly built" in those days. The preceding day Lord Wolseley had inspected General Dormer's command, with the defences and huts, and then returned to Dongola, *via* General Brackenbury's camp at Kurot,

of ten thousand cases of canned meat for our troops in the Soudan, but another firm in Chicago received orders to provide immediately 4,000,000 lbs. of tinned beef for the same purpose.

A messenger now came to Korti reporting that the Shukoorieh, a large tribe inhabiting the country between the Blue Nile and the Atbara River, had flatly refused to obey the orders of Mohammed el Kheir to oppose the expected British advance to Berber.

Further tidings came to Dongola of a rising against the Mahdi in Kordofan, where several tribes had pronounced for El Makki, a new preacher of the Khattomea sect (which takes its name from the burial place of Sidi Hussein, a much venerated saint) who had slain the Emir Mahmoud, a relative of the Mahdi. This Emir was said to have put Slatin Bey to death for having held communication with General Gordon during the siege of Khartoum.

On the way from Korti Lord Wolseley inspected all the newly-formed camps on the Nile, and found the country quiet, the people friendly, and willing to supply provisions for money; but the river was low, the navigation difficult, and the weather very hot, as the Kramseen wind had begun to blow.

On the 30th March Lord Wolseley took his departure from Dongola to Cairo with his personal staff, consisting of Colonel Grove, Zohrab Bey, Captain Adye, and Dr. Pratt, mounted on camels, while Lord Charles Beresford and Major Creagh were to proceed by whale boat to Wady Halfa, from whence the party was to sail in the *Water Lily* on the 7th April, *via* Assouan, for Cairo, in consequence of orders from the Home Government, which did not then transpire.

On the 31st the Mudir of Dongola received intelligence that his troops had an engagement with the Hassaniyeh tribe (against which he had mustered them) near the Hannak Mountain, and had killed and captured a number

of the enemy, with some of their cattle.

During the Crimean campaign the majority of letters about the war ("Voices from the Ranks," as they were entitled when published in a volume) were from Englishmen, but during that in Egypt the majority seem to have been from Scotsmen. Of the latter we here select two, as descriptive of camp life in the Soudan. Private Whytock, of the Black Watch, then in Brackenbury's column, wrote thus to his parents in Dundee:—

"Camp, Merawi, March 21st, 1885.

"Dear Father and Mother,—I have great pleasure in writing you, and to be able to say that I am well, as this is the first opportunity I have had of writing home for a very long time. We have had sad knocking about since we went up the Nile; certainly the hardest campaigning I ever experienced. However, I hope the worst is now over. I suppose you have seen in the papers all about the battle we had at Kirbekan. It lasted four hours and three-quarters. I had my helmet shot right through in that affair, and got a spear-thrust through my bullet-ponch. If spared to come home, I intend to preserve the helmet as a memorial of my very narrow escape from death. We had nine men killed and thirteen wounded. I thought my last day had come, but I am still alive and well, thank Providence. I know how anxious you must all have been, especially my mother. I am sure she would be uneasy about so much delay in getting direct word.

"The fellows who brought your last letter across the desert on camels were waylaid, and had everything taken from them by the Arabs. Here we are very hard up for almost everything; it has taken me three days' begging all round the camp to get this scrap of paper on which to write home. We have come down the Nile from Abu Hammed about 200 miles from Khartoum. We were too late to relieve Gordon, but, by way of avenging the death of Colonel Stewart, we have had plenty of work to do in destroying the mills and villages, &c., of the enemy. I was in the house where he was killed, and saw his steamer, riddled with as many shot as there are days in the year.

"We are, as I said, in great want of supplies of all sorts, and I hope they will soon be brought forward. Both officers and men are almost naked for want of clothes. I have no shoes nor trowsers, and only one shirt. It is a mercy that we are not in a cold country, or we should all perish. On the contrary, the heat now is something terrible, especially from noon to about 3 p.m.

"We are all as busy as bees at present, and are earnestly hoping that we will get into more endurable quarters before the hottest time of the year, or the regiment will get quite knocked up. This is by the first mail for the last two months."

The other letter, from a Cameron Highlander, was addressed to the editor of the *Dundee Journal*, and ran thus:—

"Sir,—During the present state of affairs in the Soudan, when the smallest piece of information regarding it is eagerly scanned, perhaps a few remarks on our camp life may prove interesting to many who have sons or husbands engaged in this campaign.

"The regiment to which I belong—the Cameron Highlanders—will be well known to your readers, it having taken a prominent part in the campaign of 1882. Our regiment, mustering little over 500 strong, left Cairo on the 19th of November, 1884, it being the last to proceed to the Nile in this campaign. Taking the train from Cairo, after a miserable ride of eight hours we arrived at Assiout, where we embarked in four barges which were to convey us up the Nile.

"The sail to Assouan, where our first journey was broken owing to the First Cataract, occupied eleven days, and was accomplished without any noteworthy incident, save a few short delays occasioned by running on sand-banks, which proved to be numerous all along the route. A ride of about an hour in trucks similar to those used for the conveyance of goods at home brought us to the scene of our embarkation above the First Cataract. We got on board barges again, and were soon sailing merrily up the Nile. But this part of our voyage was not destined to pass so smoothly as formerly. There being no steamers to tow us, we had to depend on the wind, which at first was in our favour, but suddenly died away, leaving us almost at a standstill. Then physical strength was called into requisition, 'Tommy Atkins' having to get ashore and pull the barges in reliefs.

"This laborious journey occupied three nights and two days, when we reached Korosko, where we

now are, a dreary-looking place, surrounded by hills of rock and sand. There is a small fort, having four Krupp guns, and a trench twenty-four feet deep by fourteen wide. There are a few Egyptian soldiers in it, and it will be a great benefit to us in case of an attack, which at present is not likely to occur, as we are a long way from the fighting line. The desert route taken by General Gordon on his way to Khartoum starts from here. Yet even in this lonely place our soldiers are not devoid of amusement; there are cricket, football, and Saturday evening concerts. The New Year was heartily enjoyed here, a dinner of the delicacies in demand at that festive season being provided. Immediately after dinner our officers were hoisted on stretchers, and carried in triumph round the camp, much to the wonderment of the natives, who never beheld such an outburst of British enthusiasm.

"There were also regimental sports, which occupied two days. They were much the same as sports at home, save camel-racing by soldiers and natives, which caused much amusement by the many ludicrous positions taken by Tommy Atkins on the 'Ship of the Desert.' The proceedings were very creditable, and tended greatly to increase a good feeling between the soldiers and natives. The troops are at present building mud huts, to be used as a hospital, and to take the place of tents. The work is pretty severe, it occupying eight hours per day. The latest novelties are umbrellas, which have been served out to the troops, also sunshades, which completely cover the neck. There is an hour's drill every morning, also church parade on Sunday. We enjoy walking up and down the banks of the Nile after four o'clock in the afternoon. There is a small village or bazaar, where articles are exposed for sale by natives, and a few enterprising Greeks, who find it to their advantage to follow the soldiers, and furnish them with articles which otherwise they could not get. We are now settled here for the summer, with little or no prospect of going farther up the country."

It was clear from such letters that our soldiers suffered considerable hardships, and in some cases the causes appear to have been preventible. How long similar complaints will accompany the gallant doings of our troops, it is hard to tell; but one must denounce in severest terms the neglect too often displayed of our men's ordinary comfort.



SURGEON-MAJOR LANE.

From a Photograph by Messrs. F. W. Markwick and Co., Hastings.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BATTLE OF HASHEEN.

A Cavalry Reconnaissance—Osman's Ground—The Battle of Hasheen—Charge of the Bengal Lancers—Shelling the Village—Valour of the Enemy—The Casualty Lists—The General's Despatch—Royal Humane Society's Awards—A White Camel.

WE have referred to the cavalry reconnaissance made by order of Sir Gerald Graham, in front of Suakim, on the 19th of March. It was fruitful of much valuable information. The staff discovered the exact nature of the country about the village and wells of Hasheen, with the generally dangerous character of the whole district.

The latter lay concealed behind the first ridge of hills which divides the plain, sloping down to the sea from the minor valleys of the mountain region. The trenches and rifle-pits which the Arabs were so confidently

said to have formed, could not be seen at the gorge of the Hasheen valley; but what we did discover was, that Nature unaided had given them a position marvellously well adapted to their peculiar tactics, and especially unfavourable to the operation of European troops. In rear of the first line of hills, or rather behind the first line of detached hillocks, that rise on the verge of the plain, there lies a belt of thick black scrub and mimosa bushes about six feet high, or rather more, and though not of sufficient density to bar the passage of cavalry or infantry to-

tally, yet thick enough to hide on all sides the sight of objects twenty or thirty paces distant.

At one or two points this screen, or belt, was intersected only by strips of ground that were comparatively open, where the scrub had always been stunted, or swept away by the rush of

to Lord Wolseley, dated Suakim, March 19th, 6.40 p.m., he wrote :—

“I carried out the reconnaissance to Hasheen this morning, with the Cavalry Brigade and Mounted Infantry. The infantry of the Indian contingent moved out about four miles in support. The enemy retired in front of us, evacuating the village of Hasheen, and making for the mountains, a slight opposition being offered by isolated parties. Left



ARAB GIPSY ENCAMPMENT.

torrents from the mountains in the rainy season. In rear of this natural belt the valley opened out into an amphitheatre surrounded by lofty hills, its mouth being flanked and guarded by two steep and conical eminences.

At seven o'clock in the morning the reconnaissance was made; General Graham inspected all the troops in Suakim, with the exception of the Shropshire, Berkshire, and Surrey Regiments. In a telegraphic despatch

replies to Osman Digna's letter. Force back in camp at 12.30. Wounded, Lieutenant J. R. K. Birch, Mounted Infantry, who behaved very gallantly. Shall form entrenchments near Hasheen to-morrow morning. Garrison employed, the East Surrey Regiment."

The details of the movement thus briefly narrated were as follows :—

Soon after *reveille* on the morning of the 19th considerable excitement prevailed in camp, in consequence of the issue of certain orders which seemed to indicate a speedy general advance upon the position of the enemy; but it soon

transpired that the operations of the day were to be limited to a preliminary reconnaissance of the strength and position of Osman Digna's forces, the men taking one day's rations and 100 rounds each.

At seven a.m. the whole cavalry rode across the plain in the direction of Hasheen, and were followed soon after by the brigade of Guards, who were to act as the reserve, and by the infantry of the Indian contingent, according to the general's telegram. The cavalry advanced with great caution and in skirmishing order, and within three hours reached the hills where the enemy were supposed to be in position.

The troops, in skirmishing order, continued to advance steadily, the scouts in front ascending boulder-strewn ridges which were also covered thickly with brushwood, the narrowness of the only practicable paths, or passages, compelling them, at times, to ride in Indian file. On reaching the crest, considerable bodies of the enemy were seen massed in the valley and on the adjacent ridges, where they got into positions of shelter, only parties of thirty or forty remaining in sight.

The troops continued still to advance, and were well on the ridge when a party of Hadendowas rushed yelling from an ambush, and Lieutenant Birch, of the Surrey (serving as captain with the Mounted Infantry), was severely wounded by a spear thrust. Our men did not fire till within ten yards of the foe, several of whom were shot down, but not before three more of the Mounted Infantry were wounded, and

Lieutenant O'Connor, who killed no less than four Hadendowas, had his horse shot under him.

The enemy were seen all along the range now, and apparently massing for battle; but, after a time, they fell back on some hills beyond our range, and the cavalry pushed on to Hasheen, which was found to consist of about fifty miserable huts, and completely deserted. In view of our return, they were neither burned nor injured. An examination of the ground proved that water could be obtained at a depth of eleven feet from the surface; thus, when the troops advanced again, the necessary appliances for the formation of wells would be brought by the Engineers.

Nothing was heard of the enemy after the brief skirmish, and as the object of the reconnaissance (as described in the opening paragraph) had now been accomplished, the scouts fell back on their supports (unfollowed by the enemy), and the bugles sounded for the whole force to retire.

All seen then did not number above 1,500 men; but these were not the main body of Osman Digna's forces. During the advance the scouts of the Bengal Lancers (Hodson's Horse) captured three rebels, to whom, of course, quarter was given and some valuable information expected; but one of these, as he was being marched along within touch of the Indian troopers' lances, was ruthlessly speared to death by one of our Arab "friendlies," who chanced to pass near him.

Before leaving Hasheen and falling back on the camp at Suakim, a letter

placed in a cleft stick was left in a conspicuous position, addressed to Osman Digna, being General Graham's pacific reply to his threatening missive brought into camp a week before, and recorded elsewhere.

It was found now that Osman Digna had shifted his ground and taken up a position several miles nearer Suakim, and considerably to the northward of Tamanieb, where there was an unusual feature in a Soudanese landscape, a perennial stream, clear and only slightly brackish, but diminishing in volume as it descended.

The reconnaissance, we have said, saw the enemy posted on the hills around Hasheen; and it was out of this very locality that the Arabs issued some weeks before, when attempting to cut off some cavalry sent to Handoub. The presence of any large number of men at Hasheen, where they had been so long, implied a tolerably abundant supply of water there, since no other wells were known to exist nearer than Handoub, six miles to the north. Another thing observed was that the choice of such a position indicated a bolder resolution.

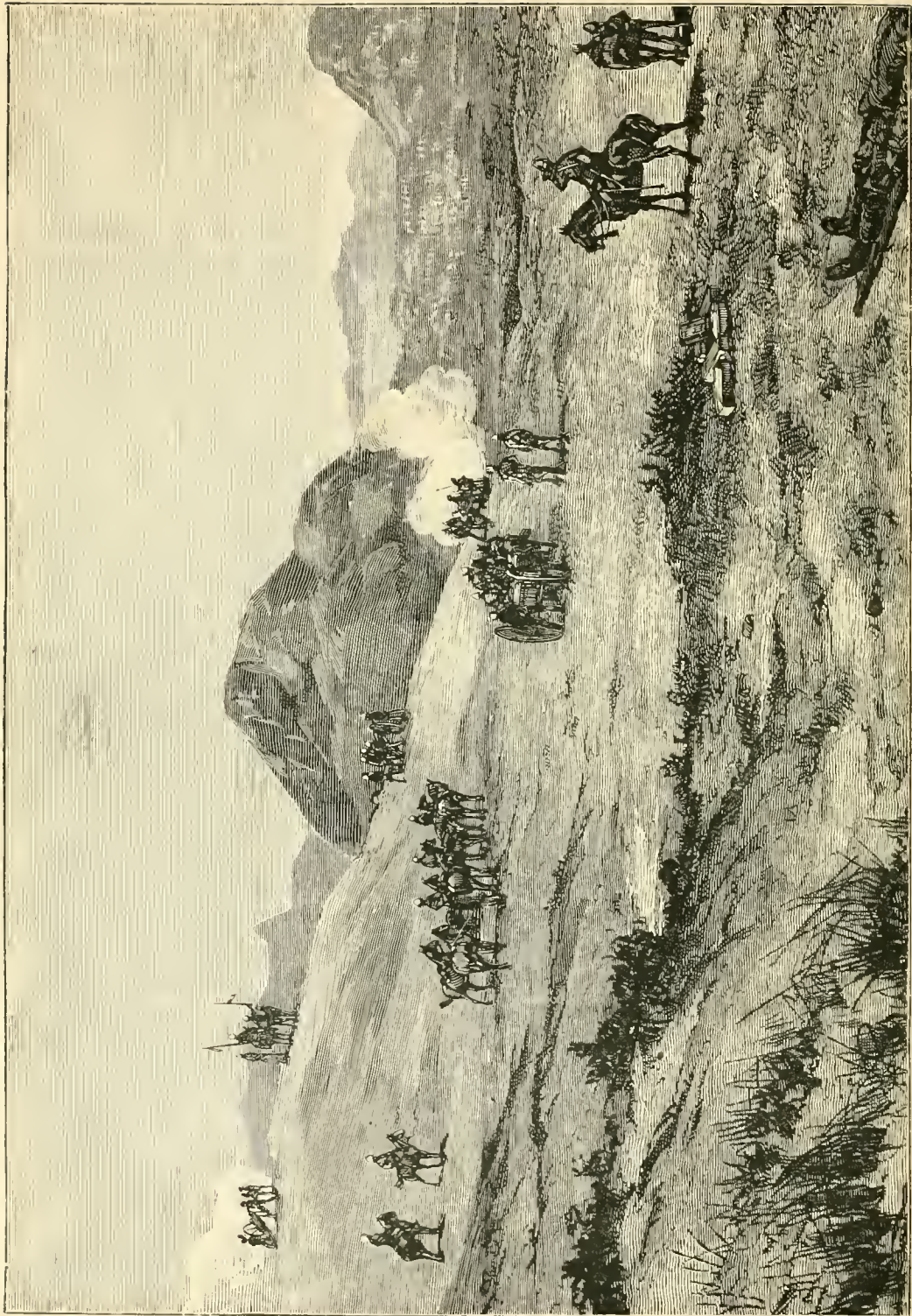
At Tamai (where there was running but brackish water in two places, emerging from a sandy bed and re-absorbed after 200 yards) and at Tamanieb, Osman had in his rear a clear line of retreat, from the former towards the district of Tokar, and from the latter to Sinkat. Now it was found that he had rough hills in his rear, while the Sinkat road formed a prolongation of his right flank. It was possible, therefore, that

he might find his direct track to the mountain fastness occupied, and his position turned on the right, while an attack might be delivered upon his front.

The distance from the camp at Suakim to the base of the hills below Deberet is under twelve miles, easily covered by a march in the cool portion of the morning; so that a movement in echelon, left in front, would bring the army into a line facing north-west, and so menacing his position obliquely.

"The march of the army, as described by our special correspondent," said the *Standard*, "shows how wild and difficult the country is wherein our troops are operating. The approach to the summit, whence the scouts obtained a view of the enemy's position lay through rough ridges covered with prickly brushwood, and the affair with the Arab outpost, or ambuscade, is suggestive, inasmuch as it indicates how arduous an advance might be made. On the other hand, it should be noted, that the scouts closed with the enemy and drove them in by hand-to-hand fighting. The foremost troops entered Hasheen, and the object of the movement was to see the hostile levies in position, and when that was gained the troops withdrew. It is very possible the apparent retreat may have inspired the Arabs with fresh confidence, and they may interpret the incident as an evidence that they are feared."

All this was put to the test on the 20th March, and not a moment too late. There was no doubt that the powerful Hadendowa tribe and their



THE ROYAL ARTILLERY SHELLING THE VILLAGE OF HASHEEN.

allies, when reinforced by dervishes from the west, had their naturally warlike spirits roused to boiling heat, by what they deemed the triumph achieved in blood and massacre at Khar-toum, and by the—to them inexplicable—retreat of Lord Wolseley's hitherto

liminary to the successes thought to be achieved on the Nile.

These inspiring influences increased the natural and characteristic courage of those dark warriors, who, although severely beaten at El Teb, stood again as bold as ever at Tamai and Tamanieb.



CAPTAIN DALISON.

(From a Photograph by Lambert Weston, Dover.)

victorious columns; while the prestige of the Mahdi had gone far abroad, and found echoes in Turkey, Arabia, and India. For a long time these Hadendowas had beset Suakim, compelling its garrison to keep within the narrow area, by the arid shore of the Red Sea, unable to do more than defend the water forts and sandbag redoubts, with the aid of the warships; and this, with the supposed retreat of Graham at Hasheen, was an exhilarating pre-

On the 20th March, the day after the careful reconnaissance, the battle of Hasheen was fought, to secure the possession of some hills which, by order of General Graham, had been selected by the officers of the Royal Engineers as the site of an entrenched camp to keep the enemy in check, and, if possible, cover Suakim.

The march of the troops from the latter place began at six in the morning, leaving the battalion of the Shrop-

shire to hold it. The column took one hundred rounds and only one day's cooked rations per man; but a quantity of reserve ammunition and more supplies followed under escort. The ground over which the march lay was very rough and pebbly, encumbered by boulders and bushes of the prickly mimosa.

First came the scouts of the Mounted Infantry, riding in a great semicircle; then followed, successively from the right, the 20th Hussars, 5th Royal Irish Lancers, and the Bengal Cavalry. Next came the advancing infantry, in hollow square, with the Royal Artillery, Gardners, and camels, with litters, hospital stores, water, &c., in its centre.

Formed in fours from the right, the front face of the square was made up by the Surrey and Berkshire Regiments and the Royal Marines. The brigade of Guards in column formed the right face; the Indian Brigade, also in column, formed the left face; the rear was open.

In this order the column reached the spurs of the outlying hills, from which the advanced parties could be seen slowly falling back. General Graham with his staff now galloped to the summit of a lofty hillock on his right front, and from thence was enabled, by the aid of his field-glass, to obtain an uninterrupted view of the plain around the Hasheen Hill, and to search the adjacent ridges. The Surrey Regiment was now sent up to occupy Baker's old zeriba, which lay on lofty ground to the right of the hillock, while the sappers immediately set about construct-

ing redoubts on two overhanging hills, for the protection of the water supply, camels, and stores; and, continuing its progress, the column (says the *Daily Telegraph*) debouched upon the wide plain, which was encircled on all sides by craggy hills of volcanic origin and having crater-like summits.

After traversing the plain, the enemy were seen in a position of great strength, with banners streaming and weapons glittering, on a spur to the left front. "Within the next five minutes the bushes seemed alive with riflemen; they crowded on the Hasheen Hill; they swarmed through the underwood, and nothing could be seen but little puffs of smoke rising over the mimosa trees. Here and there a shriek, a groan, a gap in the ranks—instantly filled up—showed that some of the enemy's bullets had found a billet; but for one that hit, a thousand whistled harmlessly over us."

Against these sharpshooters, the Marines and Berkshire Regiment were now let slip, and they advanced at a rush in such splendid style, that it seemed like a rival race between the corps to reach the summits of some hillocks on the right of the ridge held by the Arabs. The Marines were first up, and instantly opened fire, to cover the advance of the Berkshire, among the hills, where the sound of the musketry reverberated like the rolling echoes of thunder tossed from peak to peak; and sharply did the Arabs respond from every rock and bush and coign of vantage.

"Volley succeeded volley on both

sides," wrote the correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, "and bullets began to fall unpleasantly thick among us, the sand puffing up in spirts between the horses' legs. Where I stood with the Sikhs, the leaden hail was, by this time, whistling all around; but, after a while, our disciplined fire became too hot for them, and they cleared off. Some retired to the right, but the largest body moved off to the left of our front, the intention of the latter manœuvre being to turn the hill held by the Marines and the Berkshire."

To check this movement the Bengal cavalry were despatched against them, and went thundering on in squadrons. A fierce conflict now ensued, and while it lasted, one of the European officers was seen, by two strokes of his sword, to cut down two Mahdists in quick succession. After completing their charge the Bengal Lancers, who made a gallant show with their tall turbans, glittering spear heads, and streaming red and blue banneroles, drew off to let the infantry pour in their searching fire among the broken masses, which then numbered about 6,000 men.

Led by an aged sheikh mounted on a camel and brandishing his spear, about forty undaunted Arabs rushed round the flank of the Indian cavalry, so fleet of foot that they actually got into their rear. The Lancers now charged home, bearing many to the earth, and driving the others round the base of a hill toward the square formed by the Guards. With headlong courage and fiendish yells the

Arabs, now increased by 2,000 spearmen and 800 riflemen, rushed at the latter, but were received by a withering fire, under which in hundreds they perished miserably, within some twenty yards of the bayonets of the front rank.

Among these was a young lad mounted on a white camel, the appearance of which had long been familiar to our troops in many an attack on Suakim, and on which he now led the charge. The camel and its rider now fell riddled by the bullets of the Guards. Re-forming, the Bengal troopers now spurred with levelled lances and gathering force and fury upon the Arabs, who, after their futile rush at the Guards, were recoiling, and scattered them between the hills in every direction, for with all their splendid courage and physical strength, the enemy were destitute of anything like tactics, save skill in rushing to cover as skirmishers.

"At this time," says the *Daily Telegraph*, "another body of Mahdists coming round on our right reinforced them. Their courage was admirable, but their tactics seemed at this juncture somewhat bewildered. However, they were so full of fight that they could not get enough. Our troops quickly followed them up as they circled round the crests, pouring in a very hot fire, and never letting them stop to concentrate. But they were not to be cowed even by such constant punishment. All this time the firing was heavy and continuous. Our field guns were brought into play after a while, and notwithstanding the

disadvantage of position and the rough contour of the ground, they did excellent service."

By 11.30 a.m. the adjoining hills had been cleared of the enemy, and our outposts held all the points occupied by these brave Arabs. They had retreated farther into the hills on the right, and were still followed up by our troops.

Then it was that some of the Bengal cavalry were sent at speed round the outer spur of the left ridge to intercept their retreat, but the Arabs, when brought to bay, turned with the most indomitable courage, and rushed forward on foot to meet their mounted enemies. Right into the midst of the latter they plunged, throwing up the lance heads with their round shields, exactly like the Scottish Highlanders of old, and driving a thrust home ere the trooper could resort to sabre or carbine. Anon they threw themselves on the ground under the horses' bellies, and disembowelled or hamstrung them as they passed; then the throat of the rider was seized as his helpless steed rolled over with him.

In vain did the Lancers fight with desperation, often one to four or five Arabs. They were compelled to fall back upon their supports, saving their wounded, but leaving the corpses of their unfortunate comrades among the dense mimosa bush.

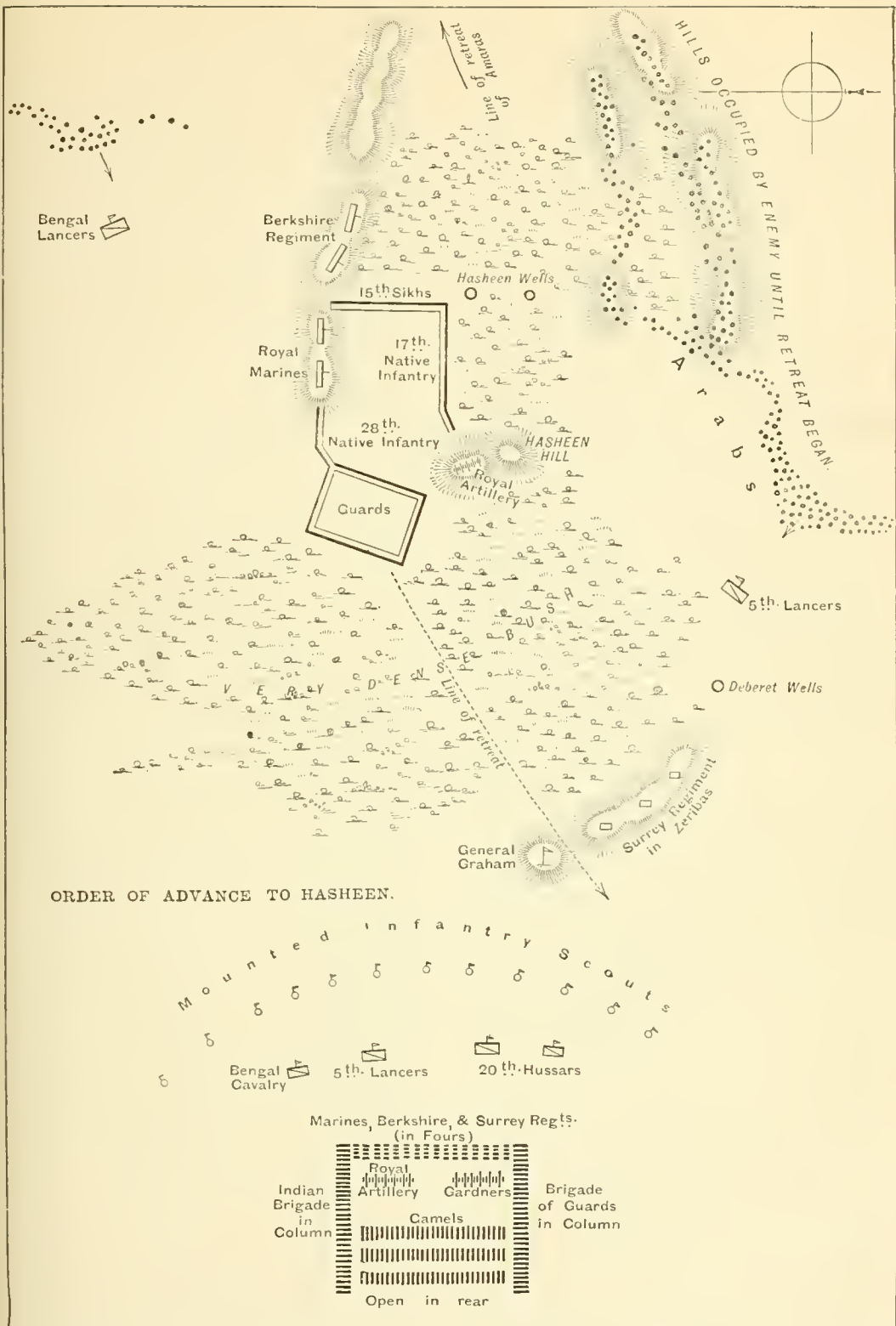
How heavy was the price the Arabs were made to pay for this slight success it was difficult to say, according to the correspondent of the *Standard*, but there is very little doubt that every wound they dealt was returned fourfold.

Meanwhile, the other ridge was securely held by the Marines and Berkshire. The Indian Brigade having by this time reached the little village of Hasheen, deployed, and formed a half square, with left front resting on the lower slope of the ridge under the Berkshire, and its right rear on the conical mound at the mouth of the valley, in rear of which the Guards' Brigade had formed square in reserve.

From the left slopes of the hill above Hasheen the artillery shelled distant ridges on the right, and plumped shrapnell into the bush, whenever a group of Arabs could be seen; while from their coign of vantage the Berkshire and Marines made some deadly practice with their rifles on the enemy in the plain below. Captain Woods, of the Royal Marine Light Infantry, killed three at over a thousand yards' range. But neither shell, nor shrapnell, nor rifle fire, could effectually clear the acres upon acres of bush and scrub that stretched all round the British position.

Far away in the plain between us and Suakim we could see party after party streaming down from the direction of Tamai, and sweeping right round in our rear to the hills and densely-wooded valley on our extreme right, where they gathered, some thousands strong, to await the moment when we should begin to fall back.

At the time the rush was made at the Guards' square, another body attempted to skirt round the lower slopes of the two hills upon which our working parties were constructing



redoubts; but the cavalry and Mounted Infantry charged down upon them, and either speared them with their lances or shot them down as they swept over them in headlong career.

At this point only seven Arabs escaped alive, says the *Standard*, but they seemed content for the opportunity of retaliation, which they knew must come whenever our force fell back.

"Nothing," wrote a correspondent, "could exceed the coolness which they displayed, as I watched the scene from the hills occupied by the 49th and Marines; they could be seen lazily sauntering about in small knots from bush to bush, or lying down under the mimosa trees, in many places not more than 200 yards from our squares, but as secure from sight and fire, under cover of the dense undergrowth, as if they had been miles away. To the west, far up the Hasheen valley, a considerable body of Arabs, some thousands strong, were retiring slowly into the hills. These, it is believed, were the Amaras, a tribe of whom many are in Suakim and have been loyal to us throughout, while those who are with Osman Digna remain out rather under coercion than from any feeling of sympathy with their fanatical leader."

It was a little before 11 a.m. that the troops occupied the positions represented in the plan, and halted to allow our working parties in rear to erect the redoubts and zeribas which General Graham determined to hold; but precisely at one o'clock p.m. he issued orders for Sir John McNeill's brigade on the hills and the Indians at Hasheen

to retire upon the brigade of Guards, which was to bring up the rear and cover the retreat of the entire column.

At two p.m. the Guards began to move, the Grenadiers upon the right-half flank and front, the Coldstreams on the quarter-right flank and rear, and the Scots on the left-half front and flank—that is, of course, speaking by the direction in which they were marching, and not by the original formation. Within the square were the whole of the artillery, the greater portion of the cavalry and Mounted Infantry, the stores, ambulance train, ammunition train, camels and mules in hundreds. The moment this encumbered column got in motion, the whistle and firing of rifle bullets overhead announced that the Arabs thought that their time for vengeance had come.

Within the next five minutes the bushes in our rear and on our right flank seemed literally to swarm with riflemen; they crowded on the Hasheen Hill, they filled all the scrub, and nothing could be seen but clouds of whirling smoke streaked by sudden jets of fire, and several men fell killed and wounded. The bugle sounded a halt, for this reopening of the action was intolerable, and then, by sections from the rear, right flank, and right front, volley after volley was poured consecutively into the bush, for a few moments thus checking the enemy's fire.

Then the retrograde march began again, and then up sprang the Arabs, and the rain of lead set in worse than ever. Another hundred yards were

gained, and then the bugles sounded a halt, and fresh volleys were poured into the dense mimosa cover. Again and again these tactics were repeated, and, though the fire of the invisible foe was checked, it was never silenced; and sometimes even during the halts the Arabs would rush forward within twenty yards of the square, fire their rifles right into the faces of our men, and then throw themselves flat on the ground to escape their fire. Few of those who so flung themselves down ever rose again.

At last the column emerged from the dense belt of bush into what was comparatively open ground, but three-quarters of an hour had been occupied in marching a mile. "How many there were in the bush it is difficult to estimate," wrote the correspondent of the *Standard*, "but, judging from the intensity of the fire, at some moments there could not have been less than from 600 to 700 riflemen concealed in the villainous scrub. . . . Yet, what is even more deplorable than the loss of life itself, was the answer one heard returned on all sides to the painful question, 'Was this loss necessary, or even useful?' To move a crowded square through a dense scrub swarming with such gallant foes was, at best, a dangerous manœuvre, especially when nothing was done to minimise the risks." Had the Mounted Infantry and cavalry been used to scout or skirmish through the scrub, and cover the retreat as they covered the advance; had the battery, or half the battery, of artillery been sent on

with the Second Brigade, or the Indians, and posted on the hillock under the Deberet Redoubt, from whence they might have shelled the bush, the enemy's fire must have been kept down, if not silenced, and the retreat might have been effected without many casualties. But the artillery, cavalry, and Mounted Infantry, were inside the square of the brigade of Guards, useless, an encumbrance rather than a help, and exposed to this terrible fire! The only pleasant feature in the operations of that day at Hasheen was the steadiness of our officers and men. Thoroughly was it tested, and in no instance was it found wanting; but the actual results of the engagement were difficult to estimate.

"We attacked the enemy, who had been reinforced the previous night by twelve hundred 'regulars,' from Tamai," wrote a correspondent; "we drove them from the position they wished to occupy, and after the object had been obtained, we advanced into the valleys, showing the enemy our strength. Nobody doubts that we punished the rebels, except the rebels themselves, who will probably fight all the harder on Sunday, when we expect to advance again. From the experience gained to-day, it seems they know thoroughly the value of bush fighting, and justly estimate the value of a guerilla warfare. They are beginning also to prefer the rifle to the spear. At headquarters the operations are regarded as successful, and as we have the Surreys to hold the redoubts on the hills to-night, they are partially right; but large bodies of

the enemy never came into action to-day."

The combat proved to our troops that their adversaries were as vigorous and valiant as those who fought at El Teb and Tamai; that they were becoming more numerous and better equipped; and that whatever may have been the first effects of an irregu-

patched the following telegram to Lord Wolseley:—

"March 20.

"The result of to-day's operations has been to establish a strong position commanding the Hasheen Valley, and protecting my right flank and communications in the ensuing operations against Tamai. The cavalry showed great dash and individual gallantry in very difficult ground, covered with high thorn bushes, and occupied by an agile and determined enemy. The infantry proved that when pro-



AMONG THE MOUNTAINS NEAR HANDOUB.

lar mode of fighting upon soldiers trained to meet foes like themselves, these effects had now lost the advantages they derived from novelty. Their tactics had become known, and were defeated by calm discipline.

General Graham had no intention then of pushing beyond Hasheen, except so far as to enable him to sweep away the enemy should he resist; and thus the combat at the hill, wells, and village, was brought on by the inevitable tendency of the Arabs to offer a fierce resistance.

General Graham immediately des-

perly handled, they could master the enemy in any position. The Berkshire, supported by Marines, stormed a steep hill, strongly held, while the Guards showed an unshaken front when attacked in the thickest scrub, and protected the cavalry by steady volleys. The Indian Brigade also worked admirably. The practice of the artillery was excellent, and the positions were chosen with judgment. The Royal Engineers, assisted by Madras Sappers and Miners, and working parties of the East Surrey, planned and executed the defensive works with great skill and coolness, although repeatedly threatened with attack by the enterprising enemy, who at one time swarmed on all sides."

The losses in the engagement were one officer, Captain M. D. Dalison, of the Scots Guards, shot through the heart, two of the 5th Lancers, and five



THE BERKSHIRE REGIMENT ATTACKING THE ARAB POSITION AT HASHIEN.

of Hodson's Horse, and others, making a total of twenty-one killed; while Surgeon-Major Lane, Major Harvey, 5th Lancers, Major Robertson, 9th Bengal Lancers, and forty-two men, of various corps, were wounded. How many Arabs fell was never known.

After their arduous day's work the troops re-entered their lines at Snakim at half-past five p.m. The zeriba, or fort, committed to the care of the Surrey Regiment, was an enclosure intended to hold water, stores, and ammunition, and was so placed that four entrenched works upon a hill commanded the deposit, a precious one in that quarter. The garrison was supported by two Krupp guns and four Gardners, and was supplied with signalling apparatus for day or night.

About thirty workmen were now despatched from the Glasgow Tube Works of the Messrs. Stewart to Snakim. These were tube-fitters, rivetters, and blacksmiths, who were to superintend the water-pipes that the firm was supplying to the Government in connection with that peculiar scheme, the Suakim-Berber railway. They were to have all their expenses going and returning, and from £16 16s. to £20 each, a month, as wages. The first contract of malleable iron pipes for the Suakim-Berber water-supply was for fifty miles—each pipe being four inches in diameter. At all stations along the projected line connections for drawing water off the main pipes were to be made.

About this time a new return was published of the casualties in the force

which marched from Korti for Metemneh, under Major-General Sir Herbert Stewart, up to January 23. This document showed that in the battle of Abu Klea, on the 17th of January, nine officers were killed, nine wounded, and four admitted into hospital; of non-commissioned officers and men, sixty-five were killed, seventy wounded (of whom three subsequently died), and thirty-eight were admitted into hospital.

In the actions fought on the 19th and 21st of January, 1 officer was killed and 9 wounded; of non-commissioned officers and men, 20 were killed and 96 wounded, of whom two subsequently died. Of the total number of cases of sickness, deaths from wounds, and drowning, from September 1st to February 13th, there were 143 cases of sickness among officers, 16 deaths from all causes, 19 admissions into hospitals for wounds, 10 deaths in action, and 1 drowned; of non-commissioned officers and men, there were 4,100 cases of sickness, 240 deaths from all causes, 165 admitted to hospital from wounds in action, 85 deaths in action, 13 from wounds, and 3 by drowning.

Among several bronze medals given by the Royal Humane Society, for saving human life in the Soudan, we may here note two.

One was awarded to Private G. G. McCallum, Gordon Highlanders (old 75th), for having saved Armourer-Sergeant Haigs in the Khaibar Cataract of the Nile, on the 27th December, 1884. The rescued man had been knocked

overboard from a whaler by the foremast breaking in a strong gale. He was carried two hundred yards down the stream, being unable to swim, as his trousers had slipped over his ankles.

Another was awarded to Lieutenant Alderson, of the Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment (old 97th), for saving the life of Private Coombes, 1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry, in the Nile, near Hangow, on the 11th June. Some of the men were engaged in towing a boat, and wading about thirty yards from the bank, when all at once several got out of their depth, and were swept away rapidly down stream by the current. Coombes was the only one who could not regain the bank, and he appeared to be struggling in the mid channel. Lieutenant Alderson jumped overboard, swam to his succour, and with great difficulty kept him above water until rescued. This young officer, who was attached to the Mounted Infantry, was nearly drowned.

Early in August, 1885, an interesting trophy of the battle of Hasheen was brought to London, and presented to the Zoological Gardens there by Major Frank Groves of the 20th Hussars. This was a pure white camel, two and a half years old just broken to the saddle, and perfectly quiet, and which he had captured in the action. A number of Arabs mounted and dismounted, tried to rush the left flank where the Major commanded, and take the British infantry in rear. Major Groves had a number of dismounted Hussars waiting for them, and poured in several volleys at three hundred yards' distance, on which they turned and fled, leaving this camel and another behind, on which the Major and six men galloped forward and captured it before the Arabs could rally. On the 28th of July it was shipped at Suez, and arrived safely in London. It proved a very handsome camel of the fast kind.



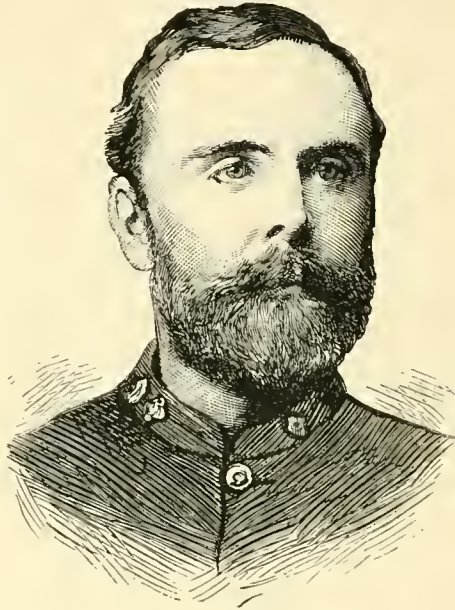
EGYPTIAN PITCHERS.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SURPRISE AT SIR JOHN McNEILL'S ZERIBA.

Funeral of Captain Dalison—Sir John McNeill's Services—His Zeriba—The Surprise—Charge of the Hadendowas—Courage of the Rev. Mr. Collins—McNeill in Danger—His Life saved by the Hon. Alan Charteris—The Casualties—The Night after the Surprise—Loss of Camels—Parliament and the Surprise—The Press Censorship.

THE wound of Surgeon-Major Lane proved so severe, that he died of it, a few hours after the battle of Hasheen. The coffin was covered by a Union Jack and placed in a boat, which was slowly towed by a



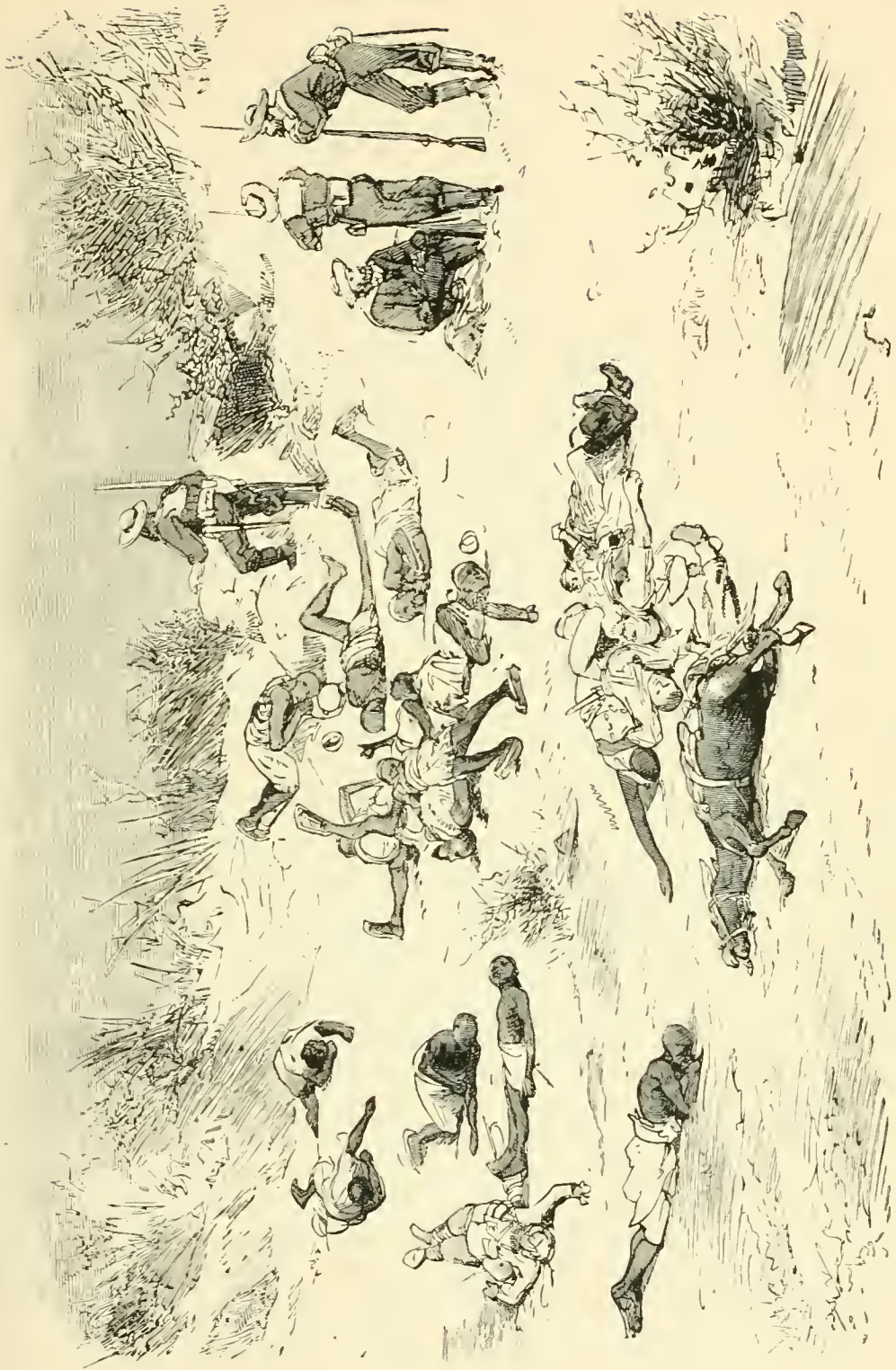
REV. REGINALD F. COLLINS.

The enemy made no attempt at night to disturb the Surrey Regiment in the works at Hasheen ; but when day broke small parties of them were seen in position on the neighbouring heights, from whence they were driven by our artillery fire.

The funeral of Captain Dalison of the Scots Guards took place in the burial-ground on the shore of the harbour at Suakim, where now many

steam launch. All the officers of the Scots Guards attended, as also Lord Abinger, their late veteran colonel, who was there on board the *Arab*. Two naval officers represented their branch of the service. As the body was slowly towed past the landing-stage, all the shipping lowered their colours to half mast. There were many other funerals during the afternoon.

Major-General Sir John Carstairs



THE SURPRISE AT McNEILL'S ZERIBA—A CORNER OF THE SQUARE FIFTEEN MINUTES AFTER THE ATTACK BEGAN.

McNeill, C.M.G. and V.C., an officer who had served with some distinction, left Suakim, at 7 a.m., on the 22nd March, with orders to construct zeribas in the direction of Tamai. These works were to be garrisoned by the Berkshire Regiment, while the other troops returned to camp.

Sir John McNeill, who had formerly been in the 48th Foot, and latterly Military Secretary to the Governor of Canada, had served in the Indian campaign of 1857-8 as Aide-de-Camp to Sir Edward Lugard, during the siege and capture of Lucknow, the engagement at Jounpoor, relief of Azimgur, and various operations at Jugdees-pore. In 1861 he proceeded with Sir Duncan Cameron to New Zealand, and served there on his staff until 1865. He was present at the engagements on the Katikara River, the Koeroa, Ranguri, the storming of the Gate Pah, and various other encounters with the natives, gaining the V.C. for saving the life of a private in a sharp encounter with the Maoris. In the winter of 1866-7 he commanded the Tipperary flying column in the petty Fenian disturbances, and was thanked in general orders by Lord Strathmairn. He served in the bloodless expedition to the Red River (that "military picnic" for which Sir Garnet Wolseley was made C.M.G.), but was wounded in Ashanti; and unfortunately was fated to gain a somewhat unenviable reputation in front of Suakim.

Taking with him the Berkshire Regiment, the Marines, the Indian Infantry, a squadron of cavalry, a

section of the Gardner Battery, and a detachment of Royal Engineers, he marched his force towards Tamai in two squares, and in full sight of the enemy mustered in force on the Hasheen Hill, from whence they attempted to check his advance, but were checked in turn by the shell fire from the works manned by the Surrey Regiment and the vessels in the harbour, a combined cannonade from which they suffered severely.

While his two squares disappeared into the dust and obscurity of the desert, a great body of the enemy suddenly menaced Suakim under a perfect belief that General Graham's entire force had quitted the town. But they were soon convinced of their error when a heavy cannonade was opened upon them from the Water Forts, redoubts, and ships of war; so, falling back by a circular route, they followed up the expedition of McNeill, who, of course, knew nothing of their whereabouts, but had by this time partially constructed one zeriba, about five miles from the coast, and had begun the formation of another. So little was any attack expected, that the baggage animals which had brought ammunition and other stores for the new forts were moving off slowly on the return journey to headquarters, when a deplorable surprise ensued, one that might have proved another Isandhlwana—a surprise caused by the neglect, apparently, of all the precautions usually taken in war, especially one with stealthy savages.

In a volume entitled "A Sketch of

the Campaign," and written by an officer who went through it, it is stated that the two zeribas were unnecessary, and unwisely placed in a dense scrub, when there was open ground adjacent that would have furnished better sites. Of the cavalry vedettes thrown out, none were more than thirty yards in advance of the working parties, who had piled their arms, and were hewing down the tough, thorny bushes; and we hear of no outpickets being distinctly posted, or of sentries.

Suddenly a trooper dashed in at full speed, reporting to the General that the enemy were in sight. While he was questioning the trooper a second dashed in, and before Sir John McNeill could question him "the air was rent with frightful yells," says the officer we quote, "the cavalry outposts came clattering in, dashing through the working parties, and a heavy fire was poured in from the enemy, who seemed all at once to have sprung out of the earth."

"The attack on March 22nd was the only serious attempt of the enemy to stop our advance. They were driven back with great slaughter, though not without severe loss on our side," wrote General Graham, in his despatch of 30th May, to Lord Wolseley, thus briefly dismissing one of the most calamitous events of the war.

"It is impossible to disguise the fact," wrote a correspondent, "that we were most completely surprised, and that only the superb courage of our troops saved us from an overwhelming disaster. Not a man of us had any

idea that thousands of rebels were quietly stretched among the scrub and behind boulders, watching us as we innocently and jovially worked at our zeriba. A few pickets were out, and cavalry scouts as well, I believe—eighteen all told—and we were content!"

On all sides were now heard the cries of the officers, "Fall in, men—stand to your arms!" and never were orders obeyed with more promptitude, for every man felt that he held his life in his hands. And they rushed to their piled arms; and piling, we may explain, is the process of placing the muskets in such relative positions that the butts remain firm on the ground, and the muzzles close together in an oblique position, a custom which was adopted long ago, when the practice of "grounding arms" injured the firelocks.

The troops were scattered, many of them working at different distances from the places where their arms were piled; but courageously and by the force of discipline, habit, and order, all did their best to get into their allotted places, and strive to remedy the dreadful oversight of their General. The squares formed, but the mounted vedettes burst through them for shelter, while behind them rolled a human flood of yelling, howling, and black fantastic forms, picked out with the flashing points and blades of weapons, and accompanied by a strange mingled sound as of the crashing, crackling, and rustling of vast quantities of brushwood, or, as some officers said, like the break-

ing of a distant sea upon a rocky shore. Frantic and shrieking the Arabs charged down like madmen, sweeping right over the transport lines.

"Then came that terrible stampede of baggage animals—horses, camels,

temporary inconvenience. Regaining my feet, I found myself in the Marines' square. Panic, even in these few moments, seemed to have disappeared, and the brave fellows were firing steadily and well." In the first ter-



THE NIGHT AFTER THE ATTACK ON MCNEILL'S ZERIBA.

mules, in one struggling, screeching, helpless, and confused mass. I was just on the edge of the Marines' square," wrote a correspondent, "and was caught in the storm, my horse being swept bodily to the ground, pinning me to the earth. As I lay with other prostrate animals above and around, struggling frantically to rise, I received a nasty kick on the head, which, however, caused me only

rific rush some sixty Arabs got into the Marines' square, but only to be shot down or bayoneted.

Holding their cross-hilted swords in both hands, says the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent and others, the fanatics hewed blindly to the right and left, here slashing a camel, and there cutting down a man. The spearmen stabbed not at random, but indiscriminately; thus animals, camp-followers,

and soldiers, taken utterly by surprise, went down before them in hopeless, pitiless slaughter. The place where the orderly convoy had stood, with all its camels in square, its mules in line, and camp-followers at their stations, drawn up like a regiment, became at once, as if by some horrible

beasts got loose, and, as if they were fleeing in mad flight before a prairie fire, all came thundering down on the zeriba. There was not much velocity at first, as the avalanche had not got fairly under way. The camels being haltered together and the mules chained, the poor creatures were hopelessly en-



CAPT. FRANCIS JOHN ROMILLY, R.E.

sorecry, a gory shamble, and there went up from the terror-stricken men such a shout of agony, despair, and bloody rage, as might well make a man wake in his sleep for years to come—a wild and horrid curdling wail of pain and fear, and here and there a scream so sharp as to be heard above all the rest in its individual misery.

“But in less than a minute the convoy broke,” continues this graphic writer. “The camp-followers fled; their

tangled with each other and the loads they were bearing. Each impeded the escape of the other, and the sword-blades of the Hadendowas flashed like wildfire among them as they were hamstrung right and left, or fell to the ground with their throats cut, to be dragged as dead weight by those who escaped mutilation in the maddened throng.

“But in a few moments the panic was supreme, every beast frantically

struggling to be free; the ropes and chains parted, harness was kicked away, loads fell, and then, as with a simultaneous impulse, the whole seething mass dashed onward. It was a mighty wave of kicking, biting, and plunging brutes, maddened by wounds and the instincts of peril. . . . To stem the living torrent seemed impossible, and to attempt it, certain death."

However, close and steady was the fire of the Berkshire in square, while the Marines received the Arab charge with their usual bravery, and the Naval Brigade, amid the greatest difficulties, got their Gardners into action and mowed down the foe as they came on. The latter, for a brief time, made awful work with the helpless camp-followers, cutting them down with dreadful wounds to right and left.

A regiment of the Indian Contingent, the 17th Bengal (or Loyal Poorbeahs), clad in red, faced and laced with white, had fallen back in disorder, overpowered by the mighty rush, while the Sikhs began to fire loosely in the direction of the zeriba, both regiments hitting several of our own men. At this moment of direst confusion, conspicuous in one of the rallying squares were the figures of Major Alston and the Rev. Reginald Collins fighting back to back, the reverend combatant pouring in shot after shot steadily with his revolver. The square in which he stood was imperilled by the wild firing of the 17th Bengal Infantry, and though the bugles had been sounded repeatedly for them to "cease," in that quarter, the order was un-

heard or unheeded. On this Mr. Collins gallantly volunteered to cross the ground, then swept by adverse showers of lead.

He knew nothing of Hindostani, and could only indicate the major's wish by dashing up the rifles of some of the Poorbeahs and levelling his revolver at the head of the nearest file, on which the firing ceased in the wrong direction, and many lives were saved. Of this episode a correspondent wrote thus:—"Stepping forward, calm and collected in demeanour, the chaplain walked, his life in his hands, across to the Indians, to whom he gave the necessary orders, and then returned as calmly to the little square he had just left. His reception must have been some compensation for the dreadful risk he ran. The men, struck with his heroism, raised cheer after cheer, and, placing their helmets on their bayonets, waved them frantically in their enthusiasm."

The Rev. Reginald F. Collins had been previously an oblate of St. Charles, at Bayswater, a community founded by Cardinal Manning, and, after spending some years with the London Mission, became an Army Chaplain; and, being sent from Aldershot to Egypt, was present at Tel-el-Kebir, where his gallantry obtained special commendation from Colonel J. N. Beasley, of the Royal Irish Fusiliers. He also won the love of our soldiers at Alexandria during the prevalence of cholera, till stricken down by fever, after which he was attached to the column at Suakim.

The steady courage of the Berkshire

Regiment did much to save the whole force from destruction. Double the number of Arabs got into its square than entered the Marine square; but they were killed, and 120 were speedily shot or bayoneted; and two companies of the regiment, the F and C—where all excelled—displayed remarkable valour.

Captain C. M. Edwards, when the onslaught was made, was serving out water to his men of the F company, after cutting brushwood, and both companies formed a rallying square on the outside of the zeriba, and apart from the mass of the regiment, which was formed elsewhere, and which they had not time to join. On this little isolated square the Arabs dashed their force again and again, but its fire, close and rapid, mowed them down in terrible heaps, the dead and wounded falling over each other, with legs and arms in the air, while many came so close as to perish under the bayonet.

After fighting for some time desperately, this "grand-division square," as it would have been called a few years ago, fell back on the zeriba held by the Marines. It was commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel W. J. Gillespie (formerly director of the Gymnasium at Bombay), and all the six company officers were present.

Sir John McNeill, when the alarm was first given as related, was on horse-back outside the Berkshire zeriba, where the men fought in their shirt sleeves, where Colonel Alfred Huyshe commanded, and where he pistoled the Arabs in quick succession when the

mêlée began. McNeill attempted to gain the shelter of that zeriba towards which he attempted to spur his horse, but it threw out its forefeet, and obstinately backed towards the swiftly advancing enemy. His Aide-de-Camp, the Hon. Alan D. Charteris, Lieutenant of the Coldstream Guards, and third son of the Earl of Wemyss, gallantly rushed to his rescue. He dashed aside the rifle which one Arab was levelling at the General, hewed down a second with his sword, but was speared in the arm by an Arab boy of ten years, who fought like a polecat, till he was shot to death, and the General got to a place of safety. The valour and devotion of Charteris on this occasion, recalled those of his elder brother Alfred, who went so gallantly through the Ashanti War, and died of fever on the homeward voyage.

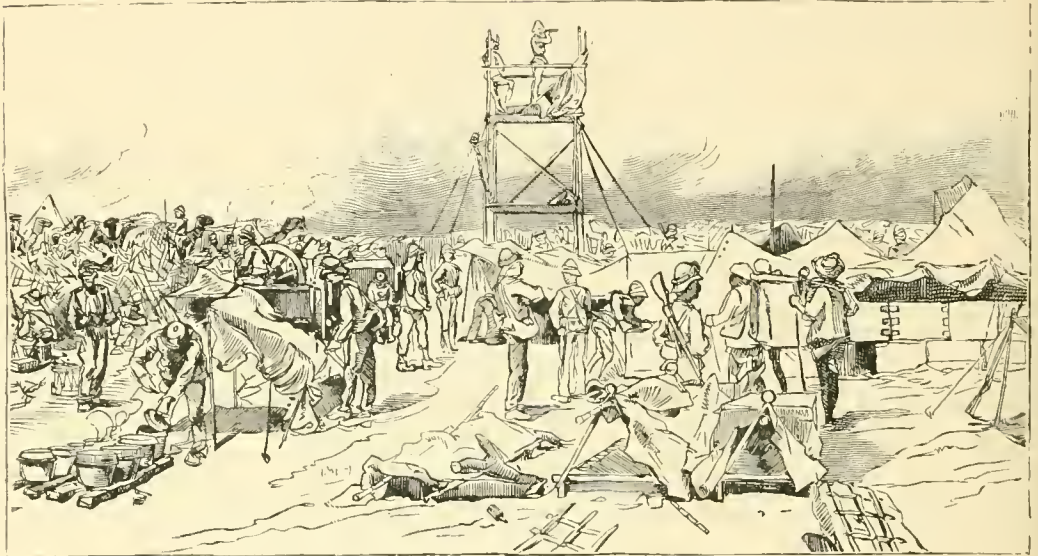
Another officer who greatly distinguished himself in the calamitous affair, was Brigade-Major Kelly, who, while fighting like a paladin outside the zeriba, would have been slain, but for the noble efforts of Commander Domville, of the *Condor* gunboat.

When the first wild rush of the enemy was checked, the position was safe, and the heavy file-firing poured into the masses of Arabs, from the faces of the zeribas and improvised squares, with the incessant shower of shot from the Gardner guns in the redoubt, under Lieutenant Paget, swept to destruction all who charged along the front. The whole affair was over in half an hour, says one account—a quarter of an hour, according to another;

and the Arabs sullenly withdrew, firing all the time to a certain period, when they fled with precipitation, vanishing into the bush, as suddenly as they had emerged from it.

Sir John McNeill now endeavoured to concentrate his column and put it in some order, but so dense were the clouds

in the uniform of the Mahdi—even the women—and one of the three standards found on the field was a special gift from him, and bore a legend, purporting that who ever fought under it should prove victorious. Only here and there was a body seen, with long shaggy locks, and naked all save a loin cloth.



INSIDE MCNEILL'S ZERIA FIVE DAYS AFTER THE SURPRISE.

of smoke that had settled down, and so dark those of the sand-dust that had risen over the scene, that for a time nothing could be seen or quickly done. When a light breeze cleared these off, the whole ground in and around where the squares were, or had been, was thickly encumbered by dark and yet bleeding bodies, with those of our soldiers who had perished ere they could reach shelter or the piles of arms. Over one thousand Arabs lay dead there alone. Among them several women and boys were found. Almost all were clothed

As at first reported to the head-quarter staff, our total losses were as follows:—Naval Brigade, Lieutenant Seymour and 6 men killed; Berkshire, Lieutenant Sholto Swinton and 13 men killed, 17 wounded; Marines, 8 killed and 12 wounded. Among the killed were two Engineer officers, Captain Romilly and Lieutenant Newman; of the Indian Contingent, there were about 25 killed and 70 wounded. Among the former was Major James W. W. von Beverhoudt, of the Bengal Staff Corps, serving with the 17th Bengal.

Among the wounded was Major Drury. This officer, in striving to save one of his men, says the *Daily Chronicle*, vainly attempted to stay the mad rush at first, but in a moment, they were hacking at him with their swords and spears. "Grander heroism was never shown on any field of battle. For

"At six p.m., in the Berkshire zeriba, the dead were laid out in rows. I counted," says the *Times* correspondent, "13 privates of the Princess Charlotte of Wales (Berkshire) Regiment and Royal Engineers, 6 of the Naval Brigade, and 2 of the Army Hospital Corps. Near them lay Lieutenant



MAJOR VON BEVFRIHOUDT, 17TH BENGAL N.I.

(From a Photograph by J. B. Hawke, George Street, Plymouth.)

several minutes Drury fought with at least twenty rebels, and with his single sword kept them from their prey; nor did he abandon his efforts till a spear wound in the neck and the danger of being hopelessly surrounded compelled him reluctantly to retire."

Four of the Poorbeahs were missing. The Commissariat and Transport Corps had several casualties and seven missing. Other casualties and many of the details were not given in the first reports.

Swinton of the Berkshire and Lieutenant Seymour, the total number killed in this zeriba being 23. In the Marines' zeriba, there are 6 dead, and the grand total is 36 killed. This is the number at present laid out in the zeriba, but no doubt many more are lying outside."

There was no moon when darkness fell, at half-past seven, and a deep silence reigned all over that terrible plain—a silence broken only by the sighs and

hollow moans of the wounded ; but by ten the moon shone out brilliantly. "A walk round the zeriba by its light makes the battle-field even more ghastly and impressive," wrote the correspondent above quoted. "Here, within the zeriba, the ground is encumbered with dead and wounded camels and horses, and is littered with the clothing and portions of the kits of the dead and the living. In the centre of the zeriba, a few water barrels, ranged in line, form a rendezvous for the officers. All over the ground are patches of blood and brains. In one corner of the zeriba lie two rows of our dead. Looking from our zeriba over the plain, which is nearly free from bushes for the distance of a hundred yards, the moonlight reveals a fearful spectacle. The bodies of the enemy lie thick over the plain in every imaginable attitude. Immediately beneath the zeriba hedge they are most numerous—a proof of the desperate gallantry with which they came on with spear and shield, knob-kerry and camel stick. But there were others still more brave ; for, from our zeriba alone, seventy or eighty bodies were dragged out into the plain, before nightfall. The dead animals it was impossible to move. At one a.m. the electric light from the *Dolphin* in the harbour six miles away is visible at intervals. As its long and brilliant beam sweeps around the plain, and over us, it cheers our hearts. This anxious and weary night is rendered more trying by the cries of a wounded Arab outside the sandbag redoubt. He calls on the name of 'Allah' incessantly, and is

answered by a comrade at a long distance. Now and again, a sharp, shrill cry comes from the bush—no doubt from parties of the enemy seeking their outlying wounded. No attack has been made, and the only sounds that break the deep silence, besides those which I have spoken of, are the occasional stamp of a horse, or the groan of a wounded camel ; and the only light seen is that of a match as some of the men light their pipes."

However, there was one scare at 10.30 p.m., when a mule, breaking loose, galloped madly across the bivouac. Two or three shots were fired, and the whole Berkshire stood to their arms, and instantly there burst from all sides of their square a rolling fire that would have destroyed every living thing within 500 yards, had not Colonel Huyshe, an officer who had served in the China campaign of 1860, ordered a bugler to sound "cease firing," when the fusillade ended as suddenly as it had begun.

One of the most extraordinary features of this ghastly battlefield, said the *Times*, is the great number of camels that were killed—certainly two-thirds of all that came out with the column ; 600 were supposed to have been slain by our own fire, or ripped open by the enemy. Scores of the patient and unfortunate animals were left outside the unfinished zeribas and fell beneath our bullets, as the enemy were swarming behind them ; and the disposal of the bodies of all these camels became a matter for serious consideration, if the position

where they lay was to be retained. It was now but too evident that the attempt to storm these advanced works was but a portion of a grand scheme devised by Osman Digna. Had it succeeded, an attack on Suakim would at once have followed, and the situation of our little garrison at Hasheen would have been rendered desperate.

The terrible night of the 22nd passed, and already, when dawn stole in, a sickening odour of blood pervaded the air; and, though shots whistled out of the bush, where the enemy were still lurking, the burial parties were detailed for their grim and sorrowful work—the interment in hasty graves of young comrades who but yesterday were full of life and manhood.

This affair produced some acrimonious correspondence in the newspapers at home, and, with other matters connected with the campaign, came before Parliament, when Sir George Campbell asked a question concerning the promised inquiry into the circumstances of the surprise of Sir John McNeill's zeribas.

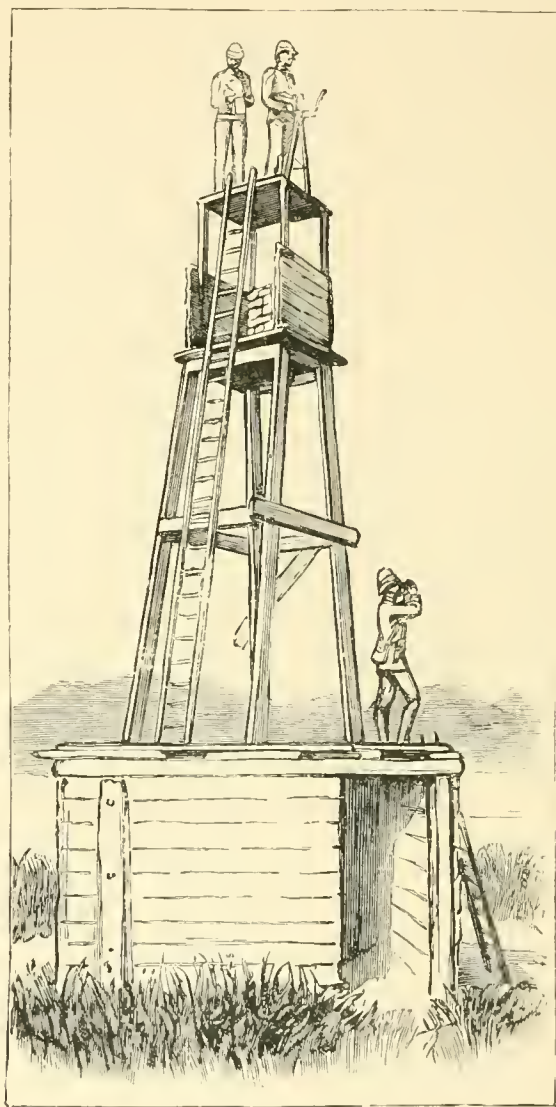
To this the Marquis of Hartington replied thus:—"As Lord Wolseley was about to proceed to Suakim, he was instructed to make personal inquiries on the spot, and to give his opinion upon the events referred to. In a despatch, in which he acknowledged the receipt of these instructions, Lord Wolseley strongly deprecated any further inquiry. I may perhaps be allowed to read a short extract from the despatch:—"But, at the same time, I would point out that I myself

strongly deprecate (save in the most extreme cases) inquiring too rigorously into the conduct of commanders after unsatisfactory engagements. It is hopeless to expect to find a General who does not make mistakes. The history of war shows that the greatest Generals have done so often. There may be cases in which these mistakes are of such a character as to call for the immediate removal of their author from his command. But, short of this, to examine minutely into any faulty dispositions that have been made, and to publish to the world a condemnation of them, simply takes away from the General implicated all the confidence of his troops, without, as far as I can see, any compensating good result whatever.' Up to the present time Lord Wolseley has not sent any further report on this subject. Under these circumstances, H.R.H. the Field Marshal Commanding in Chief is of opinion, in which I concur, that it would be advisable to await Lord Wolseley's return from Egypt before coming to any final decision on the whole question."

Another most important matter, brought before the House by Lord Bury, was the defective ammunition which was served out to the troops, and caused the jamming of rifles and machine-guns at more than one disastrous crisis. To this Lord Morley made the curiously indifferent reply that "up to that time the authorities had no reason to suppose that the ammunition was in any way defective, and at present the War Office knew

little as to the cause of jamming ; but Lord Wolseley's representations were under consideration." This was hardly

"The Press censorship at Suakim," wrote the correspondent of the *Standard* some three months after these events,



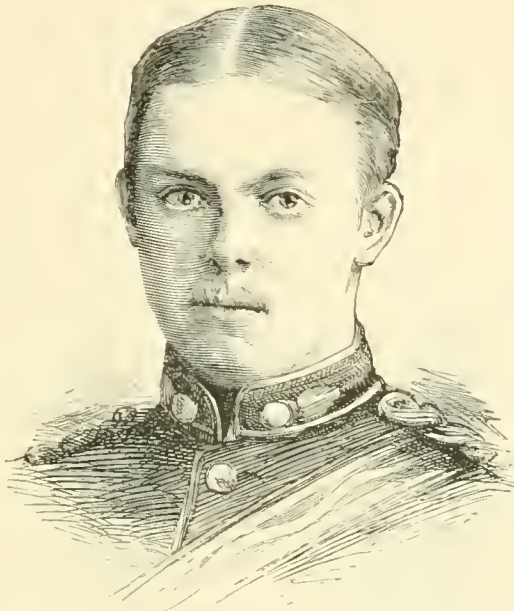
SIGNAL STATION IN A ZERIBA.

satisfactory, and from that moment the subject was selfishly dropped ; but such answers found an echo in all our camps in the Soudan where the honour and lives of our soldiers were thus left at issue.

"although exercised with the utmost courtesy and forbearance, naturally discouraged criticism. Nor can it be denied that, under the present conditions of war correspondence—restricted,

as it is almost entirely to telegraphic reports—it would be impossible, or at least hazardous, to allow complete latitude in this respect; and, if granted, it would be a doubtful boon, of which few correspondents, with a due sense of responsibility for the interests of the force they are allowed to accompany,

time, to some incidents connected with the campaign in the Eastern Soudan. The facts as then narrated were sufficiently eloquent to speak for themselves, and, indeed, did arouse at home feelings akin to indignation at the apparent incapacity to which so many gallant lives were needlessly sacrificed,



LIEUT. NEWMAN, R.E.

(From a Photograph by Elliott and Fry, Doker Street, W.)

would probably care to avail themselves. But the considerations which seal a correspondent's lips in the field no longer hold good when the campaign is over, and the events with which he has to deal from day to day, under the exciting influences of the moment, have passed into the domain of history. I do not think I need make further apology for venturing to draw attention, in somewhat plainer language than I was able to use at the

and which sheer pluck and steadiness alone redeemed from the most disastrous consequences. Under the first impression produced by the newspaper reports from Suakim, several pertinent questions as to the conduct of recent operations were asked in the House, and even Lord Hartington himself was constrained to promise that an inquiry should at least be made into the causes which led to the fatal surprise at McNeill's zeriba on the 22nd

March. But, like many other ministerial promises, the public still waits for its fulfilment. The political blunders of the Government seem to have driven into the background the military blunders of the responsible Generals; yet surely the latter involve a question which affects the interests of the country no less materially than the former, and, in justice to those who laid down their lives at Hasheen, and in the two actions later at the zeriba,

the report (if any there be) should not be allowed to rest in the safe shelter of the War Office pigeon-holes."

He then proceeded to ask twenty-three pertinent and stinging questions, as to the management of the Suakim portion of the campaign, with direct reference to two of the leaders therein. These were never satisfactorily answered, and to insert them here is apart from our narrative, but they made much noise at the time.



MEN OF THE INDIAN CONTINGENT IN KHAKE UNIFORM.

A, Man of the 45th Sikhs; B, of the 15th Sikhs

CHAPTER X.

OPENING OF THE ROAD TO TAMAI.

Removal of the Wounded from the Zeriba—Graham's Despatch—Successful Cavalry Operations on the 22nd of March—The *Ganges* Hospital at Suakim—Skirmishes in front of the Town—The Balloon Corps—Osman Digna's Tactics—Attacks on Convoys—Arrival of Nurses—Increase of Sunstroke—Arrival of the Australian Contingent—Osman's Movements.

THE night of the 22nd March was, as may be supposed, one of no small anxiety to those in the unfinished zeribas. In such unpleasant proximity to the bush, it was impossible not to expect another attack from a foe now inspired by vengeance for a double defeat, if Hasheen could be considered one; and that was done now which should have been done before the working parties began to break ground—patrols were thrown out and outpickets were strengthened; and all other requisite precautions were taken; while every man lay with his arms by his side, ready to fall into his proper place at the least alarm; but none was given, and, save for the brief scare made by a runaway mule, the night passed peacefully.

Sir Gerald Graham arrived at noon, on the 23rd, from Suakim, and marched on the corpse-strewn ground amid the joyous cheers of McNeill's column. He brought with him the Brigade of Guards, the Mounted Infantry, and 700 camels; and a new zeriba was constructed at some distance from the vicinity of the enemy's dead, while preparations were made to transfer the numerous wounded to Suakim, by a convoy which started in the afternoon escorted by the Grenadier Guards; but the Scots and Coldstreams remained behind. All the wounded were

ordered on board the Hospital Ship *Ganges*. It was proposed to send home 250 sick and wounded to Britain speedily.

Nearly all the enemy killed on the 22nd were Hadendowas. The ground round the zeribas presented a terrible spectacle by daylight. The bodies of the Arabs lay over each other in layers and heaps, mingled with those of the camels and baggage animals; while all between lay spears, swords, shields, knives, knobkerries, and Remingtons. Owing to the labour involved it was resolved at one time not to construct another zeriba, and the troops were employed all day dragging the bodies of Arabs well to leeward of the works.

Lieutenant Richardson, of the 5th Lancers, was now found to be missing, and the worst was feared for him. On this day the numbers of killed and wounded were increased by those discovered in further searches round the zeriba.

The medical arrangements were excellent, and all the wounded before being carried away by the convoy were well cared for, while zeriba hospitals, built of biscuit boxes, were formed for future contingencies; but complaints were already heard on all hands of the insufferable odour arising from the bodies of men and animals. Mean-

while the entrenched positions seemed impregnable and the enemy showed no desire or design of attacking them.

The wounded Arabs confessed that many of the late Berber garrison had

zeribas to be shot. When our men were sent out to bring in the wounded rebels lying about in the bush, these latter crept bleeding on all fours, with spears in their mouths to attack them.



PEOPLE OF THE BENI AMER TRIBE ON A JOURNEY.

been in the attacking force—no pleasant story to hear, as it was one of the many garrisons we had come to rescue! “The fanaticism of the Arabs is amazing,” wrote a correspondent. “After the fighting was virtually over, single Soudanese came dancing up to the

and even hobbled on broken legs towards them. The enemy were busy all night removing their dead, and arms, and searching for the standards lost in the fray, one of which, when the Gardner was rushed, was actually planted on the gun.”

On all hands regrets were heard for the loss of brave comrades sacrificed in consequence of insufficient vigilance; and the old lesson of the uselessness of cavalry vedettes in a thick bush, and the folly of leaving any portion of a camp inadequately protected, while a

cautiously-worded despatch to Lord Wolseley. It says not one word of any omission of duty; but rather praises Sir John McNeill:—

“Suakim, March 23rd, 6.30 p.m.

“Advanced to zeriba, at 12 noon. Arrived there with the Guards and a large convoy.



LIEUT. RICHARDSON, 5TH LANCERS (ROYAL IRISH).

(From a Photograph by J. Lafayette, Westmoreland Road, Dublin.)

zeriba is being constructed, were there learned at a terrible price, as the graves laying in rows attested. Another such mischance must have led to the gravest results.

On the 23rd the enemy were seen to be active in all directions; parties were hovering near the town on the north and south, and others were moving at a distance towards the north and west.

The following is General Graham's

“Am sending in wounded and baggage animals with the Indian Brigade and Grenadier Guards under Fremantle, leaving two battalions of Guards with McNeill's brigade. A stronger zeriba has been constructed, and I consider the position secure against any number of the enemy.

“The attack yesterday was very sudden and determined, and came unfortunately on our weakest point. The Sikhs charged the enemy with the bayonet. The Berkshire behaved splendidly, clearing out the zeriba when entered and capturing three standards. The Marines also behaved well. The Naval Brigade was much exposed and suffered severely. The Engineers also suffered heavily, being out working when attacked.

“The enemy suffered severely, more than 1,000

bodies being counted. Many chiefs of note have fallen.

"I deeply regret our serious loss; but am of opinion that McNeill did everything possible under the circumstances. The cavalry (5th Lancers) did their best to give information, but the ground being covered with bush, it was impossible to see any distance.

"The troops behaved extremely well. All the staff and regimental officers did their utmost. The enemy charged with reckless courage, leaping over the low zeriba, and although they gained a temporary success, they have received a severe lesson up to the present time, and have not attempted again to molest the zeriba."

Captain Garston of the 9th Bengal was reported to have been saved from a spear wound, by a shirt of mail which he wore under his tunic. However, it appeared that this shirt of mail consisted of a few small strips of chain work, picked up by the merest accident in a native bazaar, before leaving India. It occurred to him that these might serve a good turn when engaged with the enemy, and, with this end in view, his wife had fortunately contrived to fasten them here and there, within the lining of his uniform.

A despatch that was published at a subsequent period, gave some account of the cavalry operations on the eventful 22nd of March.

It stated that a squadron of the 20th Hussars which marched at 10 a.m. on that day, saw small parties of the enemy in their front between Suakim and McNeill's zeriba. These retired, and no fighting occurred, thus the squadron reached the latter place at 1 p.m. Half an hour later, Major Graves of this regiment, received a despatch from Major-General McNeill, and in consequence marched out. About two miles

from the zeriba, his Hussars met a squadron of the 9th Bengal Lancers. Just then heavy firing was heard at the zeriba; the 20th and 9th were at once formed together, and hastened there. They had proceeded about a mile, when they encountered a large number of camels and other baggage animals, with many camp-followers, some native infantry, and a few British soldiers (scattered workers doubtless) in full flight for Suakim, and closely pursued by the Arabs, who were cutting them down, unresisted, on every hand.

Major Graves, on perceiving the state of affairs, with great presence of mind, changed front to the right, dismounted half his men on the direct line of pursuit, and some half-dozen volleys were fired, which had the effect of stopping it. Leaping to their saddles again, the cavalry pushed forward at full speed, repeating these tactics, and succeeding in driving back the Arabs.

About this time they were joined by a troop of the 5th Lancers (Royal Irish), just when a considerable body of the enemy were observed to be endeavouring to turn the left flank of the entire mounted force by the way towards the sea, in order to resume their pursuit of the helpless transport. Lieutenant Peyton was consequently ordered to take one troop of the 9th Bengal Cavalry and intercept them. This he did most effectually, and was fortunate enough to overtake and succour some twenty wounded men of ours, and eventually the pursuers were completely put to flight.

A few days after the attack on this luckless zeriba we find the following passage in the letter of an officer stationed at Suakim :—

"We marched back (from Tamai) to the zeriba that night and bivouacked among the corpses outside, which, though buried, asserted their presence in the most emphatic way. Next day we marched back to Suakim, never again, I hope, to see McNeill's zeriba. 'Tom Cringle' ought to have been there to paint adequately the horrors of that six miles' march. When going from Suakim, the last three miles of the march were marked at every step by graves, Arab and Indian, so shallow, that from all oozed dark and hideous stains, and from many protruded mangled feet, half-stripped grinning skulls, or ghastly hands, still clenched in the death agony, though reduced to little more than bone or sinew. Strewed around, thicker and thicker as we neared the scene of Sunday's fight, lay the festering bodies of mules and camels; and round them hopped and fluttered, scarcely moving when our column passed, hundreds of kites and vultures. The ground was also thickly sown with hands and feet, partially dragged from their graves by the hyenas, and the awful stench and reek of carrion which loaded the air will never, I think, be forgotten by any of us. Day after day we passed and re-passed over the same sickening scene with our convoys in blinding dust and under a scorching sun, obliged to move at a foot's pace to keep up with the weary camels and pick our steps carefully, for fear of setting foot on one of these dreadful heaps of corruption. I have not exaggerated in the least the horrors of that awful road. . . . I am now at Handonb, where we have plenty of water, a luxury which you in England can't properly appreciate, nor ever will, till you spend a week in your clothes in a sand-storm, with the thermometer at 112° or thereabouts."

Before transference to the *Ganges*, Hospital Ship, all the wounded were first brought to the Base Hospital at the H Redoubt in Suakim—a transference effected as quickly as possible—to keep the wards clear for fresh cases from the front. The sick-tents were pitched within an earthwork defended by 200 men of the King's Shropshire

Light Infantry. The Hospital, which was in charge of Brigade-Surgeon Tanner, was a model of cleanliness. Every comfort was ready there, including champagne, ice, arrowroot, and beef-tea. On the 21st of March there were brought fifty-seven wounded from the zeriba, including Dr. Matthew Digan, R.N., of H.M.S. *Sphinx*, who had a gunshot wound in his arm-pit. Several were severely wounded by rifle-balls, and some by spears.

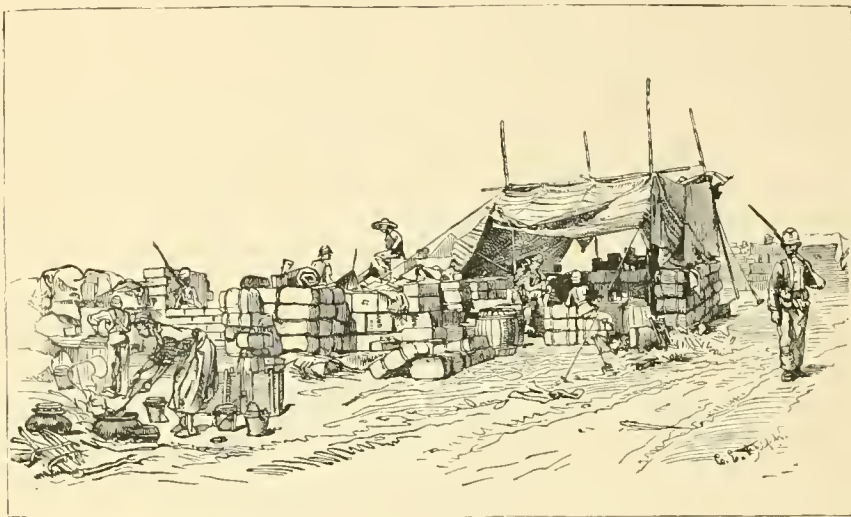
In the *Ganges* there had been, up to this date, 103 admissions since her arrival on the 15th of March, including eight officers. These were the Hon. Alan Charteris, with a spear wound in the left ear; Lieutenant Birch, of the East Surrey, with a spear wound in the arm; Majors Harvey, of the 5th Lancers, and Robertson, of the 9th Lancers, with a spear wound in the thigh; Lieutenant Campbell, of the Royal Marine Artillery, Staff-Surgeon Buckle, R.N., both with intermittent fever; Lieutenants Benson, of the Royal Artillery, and R. B. Finnie, 2nd Scots Guards, slightly affected by the sun. For coolness, the *Ganges* was moored at the farthest point out seaward in the harbour. The medical officer in charge, with four nursing sisters, was Surgeon-Major G. C. Gribbon, formerly of the King's Own Borderers.

In his despatch of the 30th of May to Lord Wolseley, General Graham states that in the preceding March "the 23rd, 24th, 25th, 26th, 28th, and 30th, strong convoys proceeded to the zeriba. Those of the 24th and

26th were attacked in the bush, the enemy being repulsed on each occasion with great loss. As the enemy were reported to have withdrawn from Tamai, a reconnaissance was made on April 1, which proved that they were still in some force, and I determined to advance and endeavour to compel them to fight. And here," he adds, "I

instant, his letter containing statements for which we cannot vouch:—

"A worse or more dangerous position for a camp it is hard to imagine, and a better might have been laid out by a boy fresh from Sandhurst. I do not know whether you have heard of all the nightly attacks to which we have been subjected regularly since yesterday week, when five fellows stole past our scattered redoubts and outposts and made their way up to the head-quarters camp, which was abso-



"ROUGHING IT"—MESS OF THE GRENADIER GUARDS.

may be permitted to remove a somewhat confusing idea—that Osman Digna is a great and warlike character. The facts, as ascertained, are, that he himself never appears on or near the scene of conflict, but is content to urge on his men from some safe position or inaccessible fastness."

And now we shall give the details of the operations disposed of in this brief paragraph. As regards the position and strength of our post at Suakin, an officer wrote thus, on the 16th

lately unprotected, and stole Gordon's favourite horse and nearly cut his groom in pieces. I assure you we have had a hard time of it, and it is only for the last two nights that we have had any feeling of security. Our little camp is now fortified by a ditch, earthworks and bastions, and has a guard of two hundred and fifty men, and although we are called out two or three times every night, we feel safer than we have done. Our great danger now is being fired on by the other camps, for though so placed as to be too far apart for mutual protection, we are near enough to cause reciprocal damage. Any night during the past week, if the Arabs had made a raid in any numbers, we must all have had our throats cut. No less than two thousand men were on guard every night, and what with fatigue duties all day, we are nearly worked off our legs. The thermometer is eighty-seven degrees in the tents at night."



PROPOSED ROUTE OF THE SUAKIM-BERBER RAILWAY-WADY YUNGA, NEAR ARIAB.

Several other letters, about this time, appeared in the public prints, with the same complaints.

On the 23rd March, the zeribas in front had the first of the series of daily supplies of rations and water, sent out under a strong escort, while prowling parties of the enemy were still visible from Suakim. It was reported under this date, that the railway had now been constructed as far as the camp, and that a locomotive was running on it regularly with excellent results, but that the further construction of the line had been suspended, awaiting the results of the forthcoming military operations.

During all the 24th of March, the Guards and Sikh Infantry, in advanced positions, were cutting and burning a wide road through the bush to the front. The emaciated appearance of many of the enemy's dead, whom they found scattered about, seemed to confirm the rumour of the scarcity of food in Tamai. All that day our troops at the zeriba were busy burying the dead. Besides the bodies of women—said to be some thirty by one account—they found those of old men and boys, thus showing the fierce religious rancour of the tribes.

On that morning the Sikhs and Sappers under escort, started on the Tamai road to construct another advanced zeriba.

"I am just returned," wrote a correspondent, "from accompanying a convoy sent out with stores to the forces in front. We advanced three miles in the direction of the zeriba, and

at that point overtook the Sappers and Sikhs, who had started some time before but had been busy road-making. The enemy, still full of fight seemingly, was hovering about us in small parties of mounted men; we therefore waited on the way for the Guards and Marines, who had been directed to join us and take on the supplies. We halted thus in the bush-covered plain for more than an hour, every precaution being taken to prevent another surprise; the troops standing to their arms in a well-formed square; the camels and mules all hobbled to prevent any sudden stampede on the part of these nervous beasts."

Soon after heavy volleys were heard in front of this halted party, and it proved to be a smart rifle-fire delivered by the Guards advancing from the zeriba, who had been assailed by clouds of the enemy's skirmishers, ere they could form the junction with the party from Suakim. Three officers, Captain the Hon. North Dalrymple, of the Scots Guards (son of the Earl of Stair), Lieutenant Maclurean, and Lieutenant A. E. Marchant, of the Marines, were wounded, the first-named in the leg. The Guards carried with them Private Leigh, of the Coldstreams, who had received a similar wound, and they reported that they had seen several women fighting in the Arab ranks. These African Amazons bore spears and shields, and one, at least, had been shot down. The zeriba, they added, had been fired into on Monday night, the 23rd, and also attacked, but only in a desultory and

half-hearted fashion at dawn of morning. All had the same story to tell, that its neighbourhood was in an awful and truly horrible condition; that the air all around it was loaded with sickening odours from the corpses of men and camels festering in the fierce sun, before they could be buried; and that the water stored near at hand had become infected by the foul atmosphere and heat, and become black and fetid.

According to the latest official return, now issued on the 24th inst., the British losses in the engagement of Sunday last, exclusive of camp-followers, were 6 officers and 94 men killed, 6 officers and 136 men wounded, and 1 officer and 70 men missing. These casualties include those of the Indian Contingent, who had 3 officers and 52 men killed, 4 officers and 71 men wounded, and 38 men missing. The missing were still unaccounted for.

The loss inflicted on the enemy in the skirmishing of the 24th was reported as being over 700 men, and that no fewer than thirty-four women were killed.

On the summits of the hills the cold at night became very trying now, as contrasted with the intense heat in the daytime; and on the 25th the Hasheen zeribas were evacuated by the Surrey Regiment without loss, although several thousands of the enemy were in sight during the movement, and appeared to be threatening the retreat of the corps, which, however, they abstained from attacking, deterred by a couple of rounds from a Krupp gun.

The Surreys destroyed the zeribas

and redoubts, and marched safely into camp. Their deserted works were immediately occupied by the enemy.

At this time the absence of so many troops at the advanced posts, together with the necessity for furnishing strong escorts for the convoys that traversed the sandy plain daily, rendered the task of guarding the extensive lines at Suakim one of difficulty and anxiety; but no precaution was neglected. Nevertheless the Arabs, undismayed by the bright, weird flashes of the electric light from the harbour, continued to prowl about the neighbourhood, and to do to death any unwary straggler; thus, on the night of the 24th two Greek civilians were barbarously murdered by a band of them.

The Engineers' Balloon Corps, under Major Templar and Lieutenant Mackenzie, made their first essay in connection with actual operations on the 25th March at Suakim. The balloon was successfully inflated and sent up, to the blank astonishment of the natives, who were all agog at a phenomenon which seemed to exceed even the wonders of the electric light and the telegraphic wire, and throughout the day the frequenters of the bazaars were in a ferment on the subject. They were unable to satisfy themselves as to the origin and uses of a war balloon, and it was known that the wild theories of the native wiseacres would lose nothing in colouring by the time they reached the ears of Osman Digna.

The balloon was taken to the right of the Water Forts and filled from compressed reservoirs the night before

the ascent. At daylight, when the convoy was ready to start on the 25th for the zeriba, Lieutenant Mackenzie ascended to an altitude of 200 feet,

tenant Mackenzie reported that the bush, which, when seen from the ground, is dense and obscures the view, seemed quite open from a height.



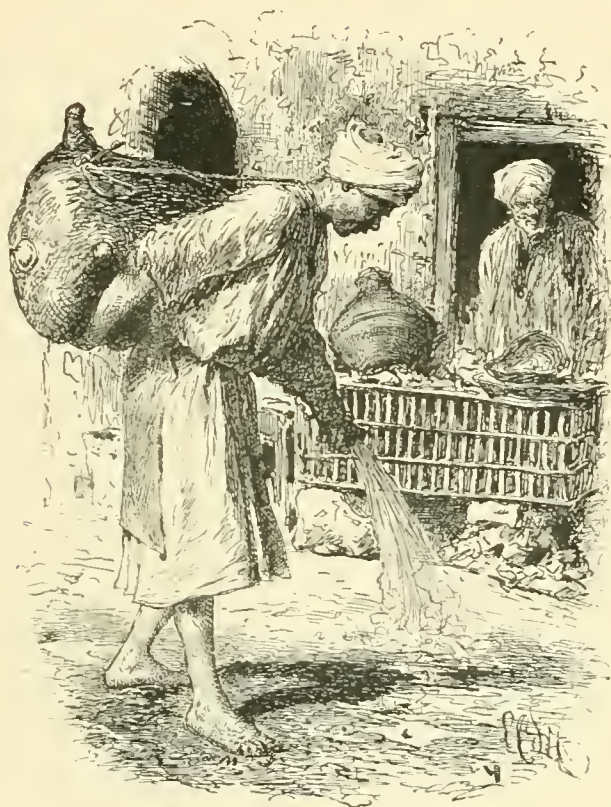
SIR GERALD GRAHAM.

and was then towed by a rope attached to a waggon in the centre of the marching square. Major Templar was in charge below, a post requiring much care and attention, in order to keep the waggon steady, if possible, so as to avoid breaking the rope. Lieu-

He saw the enemy's camel posts a mile out on the road towards Hasheen. A body of them was observed retiring towards Tamai, and a third, near the sea-shore, he could see engaged in capturing or destroying McNeill's stampeded camels. The enemy were

also seen at 400 yards' distance from the convoy, and they came out into the space left in front to examine the balloon, doubtless with fear and great wonder. Messages were passed between Lieutenant Mackenzie and

tenant Mackenzie what he would do in the event of a disaster below," wrote the *Times* correspondent. "He replied that he had thought of that point while in the air, and had decided to come down and anchor 50 feet from



ARAB SCAVENGER: WATERING THE ROAD.

Major Templar written on small pieces of paper attached by a loop to a rope. On the arrival of the convoy at the zeriba the balloon was hauled down, packed, and brought carefully back to Suakim.

The balloon, of goldbeater's-skin, contained 7,000 cubic feet of gas, was 23 feet in diameter, and its total weight was 90lbs. "I asked Lieu-

tenant Mackenzie what he would do in the event of a disaster below," wrote the *Times* correspondent.

Major Templar was completely satisfied with the result of the ascent, as proving that a war balloon can render good service far from home, and remain up nine hours with gas made at Chatham. Besides the balloon, he had a portable lime-search-light, which was constantly used in the camp and zeriba.

The same correspondent had an interview with the chief of our "Friendlies," who stated that Osman Digna had issued orders to his followers to pursue the following tactics:—Small parties of his men were to lie concealed in bushes or hollows scooped in the sand, while others diverted our attention by attacking us with their fire. Those in ambush were then to try and break the square, and, if successful, the main body was to attack in force. The chief also asserted that in the assault on the convoy, when the Guards had some men hit, the men told off for the attack hesitated, owing to the experiences of the 22nd March, and were taunted as cowards by Osman Digna, who, according to General Graham's despatch, seemed particularly careful how he exposed his own person to the chances of lead or steel.

The convoy, over which Lieutenant Mackenzie and his captive balloon floated, did not reach the zeriba without experiencing some little opposition; but that which started at seven in the morning of the 25th under General Graham, with the bulk of his staff, had a sharp encounter. The convoy was laden chiefly with water, and was escorted by the Grenadier Guards, the 70th, 53rd, and 28th Native Infantry. The 20th Hussars covered the advance. Four miles from the town the convoy was attacked by the enemy, who were not in great strength, but showed the utmost determination. Steadily was their onslaught met, and file-firing was

poured into them with the most deadly effect. They were 5,000 strong, yet only three of our men were wounded by bullets, but not a camel-load was lost, and ultimately the enemy retreated to the hills, leaving behind them about two hundred dead, among whom were found the bodies of three women and a boy—four boys and one woman, according to another account. With the exception of one combined charge, they contented themselves with a very ineffective rifle fire upon the square, as their bullets went high overhead. Their charge was chiefly checked by the Grenadier Guards.

It was an extraordinary sight to see these Arabs, rushing on to certain destruction, apparently mad with excitement and fanaticism, without a hope of victory and inspired only with one desire—to die in battle. "It was noticeable," wrote a correspondent, "that a great change has taken place since the encounter on Sunday 22nd. The enemy then attacked with a resolution and courage begotten of their confidence in their superior numbers. On that day they fought as if they hoped to win. In the last two attacks upon our convoys this has not been the case. The majority hung back, and evidently shrank from coming to close quarters with the terrible line of fire round our square, while those who charged did so in the spirit of the Afghan Ghazis, desiring death, but hoping to kill at least one foe before dying."

The square continued firing for half an hour, in volleys, whenever the Arab groups showed themselves in force

among the mimosa bushes. At the end of that time they retired out of sight, their retreat being hastened by some shells from the Artillery who were signalled to come out from the zeriba and meet the column.

One of our three wounded received his injury from an Arab, who had been wounded as he charged the square, and then shamming death lay perfectly rigid, till the front face of the square marched over his body, when he rose on his elbow, and speared one of the Grenadier Guards, by whom he was at once despatched.

The arrival of the convoy was hailed with cheers by the troops in the zeribas, as they were very short of water, some camels which had bolted from the convoy of the 24th, and were lost, having been chiefly laden with that liquid, so priceless in the desert. The consequence was that, in the zeribas, the troops had been on the extremely small ration of a pint per man, with a gallon to each camel. This was at a time when the heat was increasing seriously, and though the pleasant sea breezes tempered it, even at noon, there were, on this day, several cases of sunstroke on the march, and among the holders of the zeribas.

There, wrote one who was present on the 26th, "the stench is still terrible, in spite of the efforts which have been made to minimise it, by burning the carcases of the animals and burying the dead. Unfortunately, many of the bodies of the native followers and transport men, killed in the stampede on Sunday, still remain unburied in the

bushes; this state of things is unavoidable, as burying parties going out to search for them would be liable to attack, and has created a bad impression in the minds of the rest of the natives."

A serious difficulty now occurred with the native labourers employed by the officers of the Transport and Commissariat, when they all struck work, demanding higher wages. Whether this movement was the result of outside emissaries, or was simply a strike for pay was unknown.

The Grenadiers remained at the zeribas, but the Scots Guards returned with the column and convoy to Suakim.

Later on in the day, General Graham's scouts captured a woman who, in the agonies of thirst, had left her people to seek for water, and was brought into Suakim. For a time she was very reticent, but the kind treatment she received afterwards impressed her favourably, and she gave some valuable information respecting the state of matters at the camp of Osman Digna. She stated that 900 of the Amaras under Ali Rebak had deserted him on Wednesday 25th March—the preceding day—and retired into the mountains. That those encountered by the convoy were part of 5,000 men he had sent to pursue and punish them; and that Osman's forces at Tamai mustered 20,000 men, divided into four columns of equal strength, and each displaying seven standards. But notwithstanding the apparent intelligence of the woman, and the inherent probability of her statements, the account she gave was

not confirmed by the observations of our spies.

On the night of the 25th, four Government Staff nurses, and two belonging to the Princess of Wales's

faces of our sick and wounded men brightened up when they saw them passing through the wards.

It was suggested that the ropes by which the war-balloon was towed should



FELLAH WIDOW MOURNING.

branch of the National Aid Society arrived at Suakim, and were distributed as follows :—One Government nurse to the *Ganges*, three to the Base Hospital, and the other two to that on Quarantine Island. Much satisfaction was felt at the arrival of these humane ladies; all heartily welcomed them, and it was touching to see how the pale

be eased, several feet from the ground with a protecting shield, capable of resisting the cut of an Arab sword or of deflecting a chance bullet or spear thrust, for if once the balloon got adrift, both it and the officer in the car might be lost. "It would appear we have made a huge mistake," said the *Globe*, at this time. "in the course we have

adopted for reducing the Soudanese to submission. The balloon sent up from Suakim has terrified them more than all the fighting we have done; and if, as suggested, rockets were used against them in the bush, they would be more terrified still. A rocket would, of course, continue its way until spent,

on his final advance into the hills, the troops who had fought so splendidly at El Teb and Tamai, became hopelessly demoralised and disorganised by the terrible heat. The British soldier is not a salamander, nor is the Indian sepoy either, for the matter of that, and after the temperature rises beyond



LAYING THE SUAKIM-BERBER RAILWAY.

any obstacles it might meet with only deflecting it, and rendering it still further an object of awe and wonder. Cannot some one suggest any other resources of civilisation?" But it is somewhat singular that these missiles which were so effective in the Zulu bush, were not yet resorted to in the war in the Soudan.

The increased cases of sunstroke were now creating anxiety and alarm. "General Graham," said the *Globe*, "is having precisely the same experience as he gained this time last year, when

a certain level, both are liable to fall to pieces in a military sense. The worst of it is, that the marching and fighting must be performed in the daytime, as it would be too risky to attempt nocturnal operations in the presence of such vigilant enemies. Nor will there be very appreciable diminution of the heat when the hill country is reached. On the summits there may be something of a breeze which, by the help of a very powerful imagination, might be considered cool and refreshing; but in the valleys, and on the slopes, the atmo-

sphere will be more unbearable than even in the Suakim plain. If, then, sunstroke is already making gaps in the ranks, what may be expected when the real summer heat sets in? Those who have travelled in the Eastern Soudan at that season, describe the heat as absolutely prostrating. An egg placed in the sand, becomes roasted in a few minutes, and even the Arabs, case-hardened as they are, keep out of the sunshine as much as possible. It is a profound mistake to suppose that Europeans in tropical climates soon become acclimatised to the heat. Quite the contrary is the case. At first their physical strength, acquired in more favoured climes, enables them to stand the exhaustion, but as that becomes sapped they suffer more and more, until at last they become completely enervated."

On Friday, the 27th of March, no convoy was sent to the zeriba, as it was necessary to give at least one day's rest to the overworked troops. On the preceding night the enemy fired some shots into the zeriba on the Tamai Road, but no one was injured.

The comparative monotony of the campaign was broken, on Sunday 29th, by the arrival in the harbour at midday of the *Iberia*, with the first portion of the Australian Contingent, consisting of the artillery and some infantry. The crew of H.M.S. *Carysfort* manned the rigging, and welcomed them with three hearty British cheers, to which they vigorously responded. On landing, they were met by General Ewart, commanding the line of communication,

and his Aide-de-Camp. The column consisted of 28 officers, 500 privates, 30 men of the Ambulance Corps, and 30 of the Artillery, Colonel Richardson commanding the whole.

All the infantry wore scarlet tunics, with whitehelmets, and black knapsacks. The artillery were armed with repeating carbines. Headed by the drums and fifes of the Surrey and Shropshire Regiments, they marched along the causeway from the Shore Island, the whole route being lined by an extraordinary heterogeneous gathering, which, in itself was a remarkable sight—Sepoys, British privates, Arabs of the town, Aden camel-drivers, Greeks and camp-followers of all kinds; and strong and deep was the enthusiasm with which the troops received them, all the more perhaps, that they wore the familiar red coat, a rare sight in Suakim then. In line the Australians received Sir Gerald Graham with a general salute as he rode along their front, and then, forming them in hollow square, he addressed them thus:—

"Colonel Richardson, officers and soldiers of New South Wales—In the name of the force which I have the honour to command, I give you a hearty welcome. You are our comrades in arms, who will share the toils, and I hope the glories of this expedition. I am proud to command such a force! You belong to our Empire on which the sun never sets, and every British heart beats with the glorious spirit which knits it into an Empire. We honour the feeling which led you to leave your pleasant homes, to war against the desert and its savage inhabitants. You are soldiers as well as Britons and will cheerfully submit to the privations and severe discipline necessary for the safety of an army in the field. The eyes of our common country are on you, and I am sure you will do credit to the splendid colony which sent you out, and the race to which you belong."

Three cheers were then given for the Queen and the General, after which the Contingent marched to its camp near the right Water Fort. This remarkable force was composed of men belonging to all the social classes; prosperous colonists—men strong, straight, and well set-up, from the country and the bush, retired soldiers and artisans. Their physique was splendid; their average height was in excess of any British infantry, and they were no “boy-soldiers of the new system,” as their average age was over thirty years. The medical staff spoke highly of their stamina and general health; and their hearty expressions of patriotism were a perfect revelation of Colonial pride in the Mother Country.

On the preceding day a large convoy of animals laden with water had been escorted without molestation to the zeribas; but there were some cases of sunstroke, especially among the men of the Berkshire Regiment. During its march the convoy heard the din of artillery. This was caused by the Krupp gun in McNeill’s zeriba, which had opened on a force of the enemy coming from Tamai. Their intention had evidently been to attack the convoy, but a few rounds put them to flight.

The zeriba was found to be greatly improved in every respect. Profiting by the lesson of the 22nd, a rough wooden tower had been constructed, affording a wide view of the adjacent country; and there watchmen were constantly on duty, so that during daylight none could approach unseen; therefore Major Templar’s balloon was

used very sparingly, and more with a view to excite the superstitious fears of the Arabs, as its use was utterly beyond their comprehension.

The Arabs were reported to be looting the transport *Arafat*, which had gone ashore westward of Gebel Teir, so the *Carysfort* was sent to succour and protect her crew, who were making a desperate struggle for their lives. The *Carysfort* found her full of water; all on board had escaped, and the Arabs plundered her as soon as she was deserted.

Great disappointment now began to be felt by rumours that Osman Digna did not intend to make any stand at Tamai after all, and that the lessons of the recent fighting had been taken so much to heart by his followers, that they were deserting in thousands, and that he had now but a few hundreds under his standard. On the other hand our spies asserted that he had only shifted his headquarters to Tamanieb.

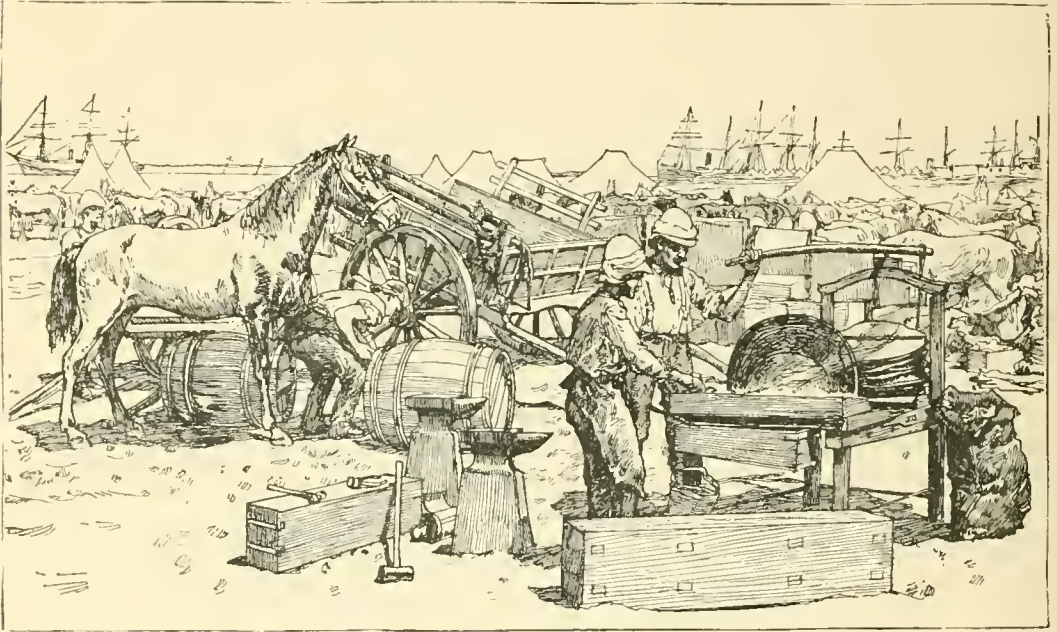
Tamai is situated in a rocky ravine, about four miles from McNeill’s zeriba; there the intervening plain slopes gently upwards to the base of the first hills, in a vale or wady of which the village lies. These slopes are clothed with underbrush, scrub, and high grass, dotted with groups of mimosa and cactus, in some places seven feet in height, and interspersed with dry stony water-courses. They terminate abruptly, half a mile from Tamai, where a strip of broken, rocky ground occurs, traversed by long hollows sixty feet deep and from 200 to 300 feet wide, with steep sides impassable for cavalry. This diffi-

cult terrain is backed by a ridge of red granite and gneiss, a most formidable position, now held by Osman with whatever troops adhered to him and a chief named Ali Saoud.

Instead of being added to the 2nd Brigade as was at first intended, the Australians were attached to that of

they had been well drilled and had many old soldiers in their ranks. The Colonial Artillery was brigaded with the Royal Artillery.

On Monday 30th March a convoy went to the zeribas, and returned without a sight of the enemy; nor for two preceding days had anything been seen



SHOEING-FORGE OF THE NEW SOUTH WALES ARTILLERY AT SUAKIM.

the Guards, an honour which yielded them great gratification; and the officers of the Scots Guards gave their officers a dinner in camp. The utmost anxiety to meet the enemy prevailed among them; and, after having come so far to fight, every rumour of the dispersal of Osman's men caused them keen disappointment. They had now donned their khakee uniform, and, by the manner in which they went through their evolutions, showed that

of them in the vicinity of these forts. A white flag was seen flying over the village of Hasheen, and some bodies of Arabs were visible retiring up the valley of that name. The General regarded all this news as important, and held frequent conferences with the Intelligence Department, the local Government officials, and the chiefs of the friendly tribes, as it was possible that the veiled movements of the Arabs were a ruse to lull us into security, and

enable them to burst from an ambush on any advancing force attempting to reach Tamai.

On the 31st it was reported that even the latter place had been abandoned by Osman Digna, who had gone, some

pursue Osman into his fastnesses among the hills. He proposed to push the railway as far on as Haudoub, and strongly fortify that place.

It was now generally supposed that, if the Egyptian colours were removed



REDOUBT AT HAUDIOUB, HELD BY THE AUSTRALIANS.

said to Tokar, others to Berber, sending all the women of his force away two days before. A squadron of the 5th Irish Lancers and a troop of the 9th Bengal Cavalry, now rode to Hasheen, and when returning, saw a party of the enemy, thirty men on foot and twenty on camels, who fired fifteen shots at our troopers without hitting one, so their fire was not returned. But the General decided, for the present, not to

from Suakim, and the British alone left flying, many of the hostile tribes would capitulate, and that the labour of those starving people might be utilised upon the railway. As the white flag was still fluttering at Hasheen, General Graham decided to ascertain, if possible, whether it meant that the enemy were anxious to treat. Some Hussars rode out, and returned reporting that nothing could be seen

anywhere of the enemy, who had evidently abandoned their advanced position. So, in view of the inexplicable and mysterious movements of the enemy, an advance upon Tamai, which was to have taken place next day, was wisely postponed.

The alleged desertion of Osman's men was said to be due to the terror of General Graham's letter left at Hasheen; and current reports said that, when its contents became known in the rebel ranks, it led to the departure of the Amara tribe. The latter pointed out to Osman that they had been badly beaten in almost every engagement, even with small parties of the British; and whilst those who remained with him were in constant danger of being slain, the friendly tribesmen were well treated at Suakim, and paid liberal wages for working on the railway and wharves.

Osman was said to have been greatly enraged by this plain speaking, and sternly warned the tribe that any man deserting the cause would be put to death. Notwithstanding these threats, they went off in a body, but were pursued by the Hadendowas. A sanguinary conflict ensued, in which some hundreds of the Amaras were slain, and the remainder were afterwards compelled to return to Tamai.

After a short time, it was discovered that his forces, as an army, had disappeared; that its posts in all directions, Hasheen, Tamai and Tama-nieb, had been abandoned, and that there was no combined strength within a considerable radius round Suakim.

Finding himself deserted by all but a few hundred, he had now retired to his home at Erkowit. Such was the story brought in by spies and friendly natives; but it was urged, that any immediate withdrawal of our forces, like that which took place after our victories last year, would enable him to regain his prestige and authority, when the whole work would have to be done over again, whereas, if we could push on the railway, and take a firm hold of the country, he would never more be able to hold up his head.

Any intention of leaving had not yet been mooted; while the 17th Company of the Commissariat and Transport Corps, 200 strong, under Commissary-General Collard, and a company of the Royal Engineers, under Lieutenants Cotter and Baldwin, were sent to strengthen Suakim garrison, together with Captain C. F. C. Beresford, and forty-five non-commissioned officers and men of the Post-Office Volunteers, to work the telegraph lines, in addition to Lieutenant-Colonel Lee and Captain Dorn of the Royal Engineers—all in the *Ghoorka*, B. I. Steamship, which had on board 700 tons of stores for Graham's column.

On the 29th of March, a Guardsman, writing from Suakim to his parents in Dundee, said, "I have done a little of everything here—slaying, grave-digging, and body-snatching. We had to drag the dead and bury them as they lay about, like rotten sheep. I never saw anything like it. I shall be glad when the time arrives for us to come home again. I cannot get any water to drink."

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL GRAHAM'S ADVANCE TO TAMAI.

Graham's Plans—The Advance—Grant's Reconnaissance—Bivouac Disturbed—Formation for the Advance—Wells of the Desert—Tamai reached—Villages destroyed—Australians under Fire—The Return March—General Graham's Despatches—Railway Difficulties—Climate of the Soudan—The March to Handoub—The *Bosphore Egyptien*.

"On the 2nd April," says General Graham, "the force advanced to the zeriba, and thence to the Teselah Hills, near Tamai, and on the 3rd occupied and destroyed Tamai itself, the absence of any formidable opposition proving that Osman Digna—notwithstanding his boasted intention of driving the British forces into the sea—had not forgotten his defeat at the battle of Tamai last year, and that the actions at Hasheen and the zeriba, and the repulse of the attack on the convoys, had rendered him quite unable to collect any body of men to meet us in the field.

"I did not advance to Tamanieb, because there seemed little or no probability of the enemy making any stand, and much labour would have been required to make the water at Tamai sufficient for the horses and transport animals of the force preparatory to a move.

"The enemy had now been driven from the positions they had taken up at Hasheen and Tamai, and their forces were destroyed or dispersed. I therefore determined to endeavour to fulfil the second part of my instructions, and proceed to open the route for the railway. This work could not have been commenced earlier with advantage. Indeed, had time permitted, it would

have been better to have delayed the commencement of the railway till the rolling stock and plant had been disembarked."

The details of the operations thus summarised were as follows.

On the 2nd of April the troops at Suakim found the situation suddenly changed. The day before it seemed almost as if there was to be no more fighting, and the energies of the column were to be devoted to the more peaceful work of railroad-making; but now it was about to move forward, and fight, perhaps, another desperate battle with the Arabs, leaving the Loyal Poorbeahs and Details to hold Suakim.

It was a beautiful moonlight morning, when, at 2 o'clock on the 1st April, the bugles blew reveille at Suakim, and the troops turned out with alacrity; but the start was delayed for some time in consequence of the difficulty of getting into marching order the great and unwieldy convoy, which consisted of one thousand camels, and fifteen hundred mules, laden with many stores, but chiefly with water. Thus it was four o'clock before the column got in motion, and formed in one great hollow square around the transport.

The marching force consisted of the Scots and Coldstream Guards, the Australians, the Royal Marines, the

53rd (Shropshire), the 70th (Surrey), the 15th Sikhs (late Loodiana Regiment), and the 28th Bombay Light Infantry. The sight of the column, with all its points glittering, was most picturesque in the silver light of the moon, but seemed even more so when

plain was found to be deserted by the Arabs—large numbers of the latter were seen hovering on the hills. Colonel Grant, who was in command of this reconnoitring force, considered that a further advance, unsupported as he was, would be hazardous, and therefore



FRIENDLY RUNNERS OF THE AMARAS.

the latter became blended with the rosy Egyptian dawn, while, with its centre crowded by so many animals, it made a passage slowly through the dense bush. The work became more easy as the daylight broadened, but it was not until nine a.m. that McNeill's zeribas were reached.

Long before this the latter had been left at daybreak by the Mounted Infantry and Indian Lancers, who advanced in the direction of Tamai. On approaching the latter—though the

he returned to the zeribas, and heliographed rearward the result of his reconnaissance, which created quite an enthusiasm; "and it was singular," we are told, "to see how the demeanour of the troops, who were looking forward with disgust to a long period of inactivity, varied only by harassing night attacks, was instantly transformed. All was briskness and excitement; the Australians, whose disappointment at the reported retirement of the enemy had been intense, being extremely



MOUNTED INFANTRY SKIRMISHING NEAR TAMAI.

enthusiastic when they found that their long journey had not, after all, been in vain."

It was supposed that the discrepancy between the reports of the spies and the facts discovered by Colonel Grant and his party, arose from the circumstance that Osman Digna's forces, learning we were about to advance, had sent their wives, children, and stores into the mountains in case of a reverse, and rumour, on which small dependence could be placed, stated his strength to be 25,000 men. However, it was thought possible that he might have been reinforced from Berber, and the appearance of these succours had brought back the tribesmen, who had retired to the hills, and determined them on making one more effort to crush us.

On the other hand, two chiefs of the Nurab tribe made their submission on the preceding day at Suakim with 3,000 of their followers.

At the zeribas the column halted an hour for breakfast, when the march was resumed. The 28th Bombay Infantry took charge of the posts, relieving the Grenadier Guards, which, with the Berkshire (or old 49th) and the Naval Brigade, were now added to the column for the general advance on Tamai. Hitherto the heat had not been oppressive, but after the zeribas were left the sun seemed to gain in power, and before the next objective point had been reached, several men became quite exhausted and had to fall out. Generally, however, the mass of the column bore the fatiguing march exceedingly well.

The cavalry scouts were thrown across the front and far away on the right and left flanks, but no sign of the enemy was seen, save about a hundred men on camels moving along the hill-sides on the right. The square formation was kept, and the foot of the Teselah Hills was reached an hour before sunset, "but without firing a shot," says the *Daily Chronicle*. Tamai and its well-known springs were now two miles in front.

Major Templar's balloon, which was inflated without difficulty, did excellent service on the march, the look-out men in the car instantly detecting lurking bodies of the enemy, who, under ordinary circumstances, would have escaped all notice. The conditions were not particularly favourable for ballooning, in consequence of the strength of the wind, which, indeed, dashed the balloon against a mimosa tree. The damage done was not great, but reparable, and pending which, through the forethought of Major Templar, there was another balloon available.

At Teselah Hills the column halted while the Mounted Infantry and a squadron of the Bengal Cavalry pushed on to Tamai, which they found to be deserted by the enemy, small parties of whom, scattered along the steep slopes, fired shots at them, but at too long range to produce any effect; and having achieved their purpose, our men fell back on the column, when, on receiving their report, General Graham determined to postpone further operations till next day, and the troops at once set about

making themselves as comfortable as they could for the night.

The ground on which they were to bivouac was a hollow between the Teselah Hills, and was almost the same spot occupied by General Graham's force in the preceding year before he attacked Osman Digna.

The hills were taken possession of by a wing of the Grenadier Guards, with some guns, while the rest of the troops proceeded as usual to cut down bushes and form a zeriba. According to the *Daily Chronicle*, "the troops passed an almost uneventful night, the bulk of them in the main zeriba, and others in similar positions on the spurs immediately adjacent."

According to the *Standard*, "the evening passed off quietly, and the troops, who had been on their feet nearly twenty hours, were sleeping soundly, when towards midnight they were roused by a dropping fire being opened upon them by small parties of the enemy. Distant as the fire was, it was by no means ineffective. The bullets pattered into the great enclosure, killing one man (of the Surrey), wounding two others, and killing several of the transport animals."

The Grenadier Guards on the heights at once commenced volley firing, while the Artillery burst two or three shrapnell shells over the heads of the Arabs, who at once decamped, and the bivouac was not disturbed again; but this affair gave promise of a skirmish before reaching Tamai.

At sunrise on the 3rd the bugles sounded the "rouse" and "fall in,"

and the column prepared to move forward, when it was joined by the cavalry, who came clattering up from a rear zeriba, where they had passed the night. The 53rd, 70th, and Naval Brigade remained at Teselah Hills to guard the post formed there, and with it a great proportion of the transport animals, while the column, thus reduced to 7,000 men, now pushed towards Tamai, where all hoped to find Osman Digna.

The formation now adopted for the advance was one suggested by General Hudson (commanding the Australians), who had used it during the Sotlej campaign, where it proved admirably adapted for hill-fighting, its chief feature consisting in deploying from the rear, which in a military sense is the act of unfolding or expanding a force.

The 49th in line were the front face of the formation, with the Marines on their right flank and the 15th Sikhs on their left. In the intervals on either flanks were two companies of the Guards.

The brigade of the latter came next, in open column of companies—we are not told at what distance, whether quarter or wheeling, the Grenadiers on the right, the Scots in the centre, and the Australians on the left. The Coldstreams were in rear, marching in quarter column of companies. They were flanked by the Madras Sappers and Miners. Six guns of the Royal Horse Artillery were out on the right flank, and mule and rocket batteries (we read of the

latter for the first time) were on the left.

Tamai consists of a group of five Arab villages with the wells in the

and prepared to open fire, while the mule and rocket batteries were held in reserve at the base of the slope. The ground over which the troops advanced



AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY ON THE MARCH THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS.

centre. Two villages on the right of the line, by which we advanced, were waterless, and had been abandoned by the enemy. In those on the left, parties of Arabs could be seen moving, and against them the column advanced, as it did so deploying for attack.

Mounting some high ground on the right, the Royal Artillery unlimbered

was very rough and broken. It was free from scrub, but was torn into deep stony gullies, and encumbered by jutting rocks and great boulders. Over, or between, these obstructions, the troops worked their way steadily and quietly, while managing, not without an effort, to keep their line with excellent precision.



Charles C. Smith
1864

BURYING A COMRADE AT TAMAL.

Every man was on the alert, for at any moment the enemy might leap out of the deep gullies, and hurl their yelling thousands on our front. But except from ridges on the opposite side of the valley, where some two hundred, armed with rifles, kept up a fire at about a thousand yards' range, there was no sign of the enemy.

The troops on that flank returned their fire briskly; but the foe lurking among the rocks afforded them but a dubious mark, while their own solid formation presented an ample target to the Arab rifles, and several casualties occurred. Precisely at 10 o'clock a.m. Tamai was reached, and the villages were found to be deserted; but it was quite evident that they had lately been occupied by a large force. Most of the huts bore unmistakable traces of having been tenanted only an hour before, and had been hastily evacuated, as the prevailing confusion plainly proved.

Fresh traces of camels and cattle were scattered all over the place, and altogether it was apparent that more than a thousand men had been there over-night. No time was wasted in the village, the immediate anxiety of the troops being to secure the wells in the wady, and draw therefrom a welcome supply of cool water. The result of their examination was most disappointing. Not only were they found to be newly filled up, which had been half expected, but on being sounded, it was discovered that the water was practically exhausted.

It was thought extremely probable

that this failure of the water supply had much to do with the disappearance of Osman Digna's forces; for in the preceding year, after our victory, a fair supply of water was found in the wells, though that battle was fought three weeks earlier than this second advance, and the wells might well have been dry at that date. Great though our convoy was, it had brought only three days' water supply for the whole force, and this serious failure of the wells at Tamai determined General Graham to abandon his intention of following Osman, who had retired to Tamanieb, where also would, no doubt, be found waterless wells; in which case the position of the force would be most serious, and great suffering would be endured on the return march to the sea-coast.

Leaving the village, the square formation was abandoned for a time, and the troops made straight for a sandy nullah, where it was known they would find wells. The order of the return march was the reverse of that in advancing. The Artillery halted occasionally and shelled the Arabs on the hills; and the Cavalry, before they followed, gave to the flames the five villages of Tamai.

Moving on the left of the column, the Mounted Infantry came upon a small party of fifty resolute Arabs, who were actually attempting to turn the flank of several thousand men! A fire dispersed them, but not before they had shot one of the Mounted Infantry and one of the Berkshire Regiment. The other casualties during the day

amounted to twelve wounded, including Lieut. Lalor of the Marines.

"As we fell back," wrote one who was present, "it was curious to see the handful of Arabs making their way, parallel with our march, on the distant hills to our right, running from rock to rock like rabbits, and keeping up a constant fire upon a strong column, but in a half-hearted way. The nullah, however, was quickly and practically occupied without much opposition, save from some upon a ridge, who were cleared off it by the Berkshire and Marines."

Thus, owing to the unfortunate failure of water at that most critical time, the whole course of the intended operations had been arrested. It may have been that Osman Digna would have fallen back from El Tamai on Tamanieb at our approach, as he did; still, it would have been a satisfaction to every man in the column could it have occupied that position also. But now it seemed impossible, in any case, to follow him into his fastnesses among those waterless hills.

"It was a severe disappointment to the troops," wrote a correspondent, "after their immense exertions, after the efforts of the Transport Corps in preparing for the advance, after the marches in the scorching sunshine, after the heavy loss of life in previous engagements, and after the enormous cost of the whole expedition, that the enemy should refuse to wait our attack, and that the want of water should prevent our following him up. The temporary occupation of five wretched

villages was a poor result to show after so much toil, effort, and suffering."

Two days of such work fully justified General Graham's remarks to the Australian Contingent, in which he placed the dreadful desert as the first and deadliest enemy to be encountered, its fierce denizens being almost a secondary consideration.

Meanwhile the Sappers had taken possession of the chief well in the nullah, and set to work to improve it, the Arabs having done their utmost to spoil the scanty water supply. It was almost filled with sand, and when, after much labour it was finally cleared, the result in water was miserable indeed. Attention was now turned to the other wells, six in number, the working parties of Sappers being protected the while by the Guards and Australians.

Not one of these seven wells was worthy of the name. What little water was there was unfit to drink by man or beast. Close by a pool was found, but it contained only a foul, black-looking liquid, unfit even for the camels to drink.

So much for the wells of the desert!

While the Madras Sappers were at work an intermittent fire was daringly kept up by the Arabs, but caused little damage. Ten Marines under Captain Woods, and several picked marksmen, were sent up the nullah to silence their fire. They took cover with judgment, and soon compelled the foe to withdraw.

Meanwhile, the Guards and Australians, relieved of the duty of protecting the Sappers, were having quite a little affair of their own, together

with the Sikhs. Some of the Arabs having taken up positions in a neighbouring ravine, the above-mentioned troops were ordered to disperse them. Our men mounted the hills skirting the nullah, and—as stated—soon drove

Graham to consider the situation, and to decide quickly as to his future movements, for the day was wearing on and the Arabs had vanished; so he made up his mind to return to McNeill's zeriba, while the Artillery covered the



AUSTRALIAN CAMP AT HANDOUB.

off every rebel; so the fighting now was over. Every man in the force behaved well, but the brunt of the work fell on the Royal Marines and the Berkshire Regiment. Great praise was accorded to the loyal Australian Contingent, which answered all expectations, displaying great spirit and dash when necessary, combined with the most admirable steadiness.

It was now necessary for Sir Gerald

retrograde movement, which was performed *via* the Teselah Hills—a trying march under a hot sun.

It was known that Osman Digna had long been drawing supplies from Tokar and its vicinity. An attack on Handoub was now thought of. The water in the wells there was not of much account, but it was supposed that plenty could be got by digging and the use of the bore-pump—sufficient at any rate



BURNING THE VILLAGE OF TAMAL

for a fairly strong garrison without the weary necessity, as in the case of McNeill's zeriba and the Hasheen redoubts, of sending out daily convoys. Extra precautions were taken during the halt at the former place, lest the destruction of the villages at Tamai might exasperate Osman and his followers to follow and make a night attack.

The troops returned to Suakim on the 4th of April, and as there was no reason to continue the occupation of the advanced zeriba it was abandoned on April 6th.

"The troops began their return march from Teselah zeriba at 2.15 p.m. yesterday, and arrived at No. 1 zeriba at 5.50 p.m.," says Sir Gerald Graham in his despatch to the Secretary for War, dated Suakim, 4th April.

"General Fremantle [commanding there] reports everything most satisfactory. They are now marching back, and will be here with the convoy about noon. I consider the troops of all arms deserve very great credit for the way in which they have borne the fatigues of these ten days, and for their readiness in constructing a zeriba at the end of a long march on their arrival at the Teselah Hills; also for their steadiness and good discipline when under fire during the night and the following morning at Tamai springs.

"The Australian Contingent have cheerfully borne their share of our hardships, and showed themselves worthy comrades in arms. I regret that they have had two men wounded."

A later and more detailed despatch was as follows:—

"From Lieutenant-General Sir G. Graham to the Secretary for War.

"SUAKIM, April 5th, 1885.

"Troops returned to Suakim, noon yesterday. Out of a force of 8,175 officers and men only eleven men fell out during march. Altogether there were 17 wounded and 33 sick.

"The marches, though not very long, were very trying, owing to the many delays, the deep sand, and hot sun.

"There is much delay and fatigue in escorting a large convoy of tired, thirsty animals, with continued halts to re-adjust or shift loads.

"This force escorted 1,752 camels, 1,040 mules, and 1,773 followers, and only very steady, well-disciplined troops could have brought this large convoy in through the bush without loss.

"Large provision was made for carriage and attendance of sick and wounded, which happily was little needed.

"There were eight ambulance wagons, besides mule carts and dhoolies, affording carriage for 70 men, and two field hospitals with accommodation for 200 men.

"This expedition to Tamai, and the destruction of that place after Osman Digma's proclamation threatening to drive us into the sea, must have greatly discouraged his followers."

Ali Redab, of the Nurab tribe, one of the two chiefs before mentioned as having made their submission at Suakim, now asked permission to come there with 600 followers. As his faith was doubtful no immediate reply was sent him; but if an arrangement was made it was intended to send him down to the district of Massowah, where every day the Italians were adding to the strength of their garrison and its defences.

The spies of Ali Redab confirmed the statements formerly made by our Intelligence Department, that the enemy was demoralised and might

never face our troops again. Their belief in Osman's invincibility had been seriously shaken, and dissensions had broken out among the tribes under his banner; and it was becoming the general belief that a military occupation of Tokar, which was the chief granary of the rebels, would suffice to break up the insurrection altogether.

Meanwhile, active measures were being taken to push on the railway to Handoub, though delays were feared, as difficulties had arisen with the navvies, who proved somewhat unmanageable under military officers.

On the 4th of April the Coldstream Guards and Australian Contingent marched out five miles in the direction of Handoub to build a fortified zeriba, and a strong, permanent blockhouse, with timber and sandbags, as the then intention at head-quarters was to push straight along the route to Berber, building such fortifications at every five miles of the way, previous to taking the railway so far. Messrs. Lucas and Aird, the contractors for the latter, complained of being much hampered by the exigencies of the Commissariat and Transport Departments, which, though unavoidable in the interests of the Expedition, had greatly delayed the landing of the requisite railway plant, the piers, rolling-stock, and men, their workmen being frequently requisitioned for military purposes. The contractors, however, expressed themselves confidently as being able to push on the line as fast as the troops could move forward, delayed as they would be by the erection of the zeribas and blockhouses.

An intended cavalry reconnaissance, proposed after they came in from Tanai on the 4th, was abandoned, as it was found that a day's rest was absolutely necessary for the horses after the severe work they had been undergoing. During the preceding fortnight they had been afoot at an average fourteen hours per day.

The line of railway, it was now proposed, should go through the Wady Otai and Tambouk, and on to Es Sibil, fifty miles from Suakim. Es Sibil occupies a very elevated plateau, and there Sir Gerald Graham intended to put the troops into summer quarters. But whether the whole force could remain there during the scorching months of that season would depend entirely upon the attitude of the tribes.

The accounts of spies now stated that Osman Digna had retired among the hills to a ridge between Erkowit and Sinkat, and had there taken post, with a large body of men. They added that the total loss of the tribesmen in recent encounters had been four thousand men; and that among the slain was Osman's favourite son, a boy of ten years, whom he had sent forward to encourage the Arabs in their attack on our convoys on the 24th and 25th March, and who was shot in an encounter with the Coldstream Guards and Marines.

On the 6th of April the General commanding reported thus to the Secretary for War:—

"A large convoy of over two thousand camels, and one thousand five hundred mules, escorted by four battalions under Sir John McNeill, marched

at 5 a.m. to clear out Zeriba No. 1, bringing in the garrison, 28th Bombay Native Infantry, and will arrive about 5 o'clock.

"The railway has been advanced towards Handoub, protected by the Scots Guards and a troop of Cavalry. The Australians and Coldstreams, with the 17th Company Royal Engineers, under General Fremantle, are forming Station No. 1, five miles beyond the West Redoubt. The morning very hot, no wind; one Australian and four Coldstreams fell out, one sent back.

"To-morrow the working parties will be cutting

ment of the Soudan were already abroad. Under this date the Correspondent of the *Standard* at Rome wrote thus: "I am assured that the Council of Ministers, at which the King presided yesterday, considered the position in which the Italian troops at Massowah would be placed if Britain should retire from Suakim and abandon further



INTERIOR OF THE FIRST ZERIBA ON THE HANDOUB ROUTE.

a road through the bush, which grows thicker towards Handoub, and on Wednesday this force will advance there, the Scots Guards moving up to No. 1 Station.

"Last night the enemy fired into McNeill's zeriba for three hours, wounding one man and two mules. They were replied to by Gatlings and rifles."

The advance on Handoub was, however, postponed, and, owing to the heat of the weather, the number of sick greatly increased.

Rumours of our probable abandon-

operations against the Mahdi. The *Rassegna* has a long article discussing the same subject, and considering the further possible danger from the Negus [or Emperor] of Abyssinia, into whose country large quantities of arms have been introduced. The same writer also refers to statements from Tunis respecting French intrigues for the occupation of Tripoli by France, which the *Rassegna* considered by no means

improbable." The Italian squadron of war vessels, which had been for some time in the harbour of Suakim, sailed for Massowah on the 6th of April.

All military operations towards Tamaï were abandoned now, and the

riage, and attendance of sick and wounded. There were eight ambulance waggons, besides mule carts and dhoolies, affording carriage for seventy, and two field hospitals, with accommodation for 200 men, as stated by the General.



SOMALI VILLAGE.

whole force was concentrated for the protection of the Railway works. If once the metals could be laid as far as Handoub, the difficulties of supplying the requisites for a farther advance would be greatly overcome, as a zeriba there could be stocked with a sufficiency of stores to supply another camp five miles in advance, without unduly straining the resources.

Large provision was made for car-

Several lady-nurses from the Guards Hospital in London were now under orders to proceed to Suez and to Suakim, for duty with the Guards' Field Hospital at that place. They were to embark at Tilbury Fort in one of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamers, which was taking out a great quantity of medical stores and appliances, for the sick and wounded.

In the early days of April, "so far as

we have information on the subject," said the *Lancet*, "the health of the troops employed in the Soudan has been good, and the arrangements made by the medical staff for the prevention, so far as possible, of disease, for its treatment when it occurs, and for affording aid to the wounded, have been most successful; indeed, they are described by the special correspondents as 'admirable.' But we must not lose sight of the fact that a period is now coming on when the resources of the medical service will be very severely tested. The enforced inaction of the troops during the hot season must undoubtedly prove very injurious, and the effects of the solar influences on the men, who must necessarily be exposed to it, cannot fail to tell upon the sick list. This is, indeed, beginning to manifest itself at Suakim, where, during the late operations, several cases of sunstroke occurred. We may look for a somewhat heavy list of such cases, and of heat-fever, dysentery, and probably cholera. A number of cases of enteric fever are already stated to have been admitted to the hospital, and there seems good reason to believe that they will increase as the season advances. It is satisfactory to know that every provision has been made which foresight could dictate; that there is abundance of medical comforts at hand; that adequate arrangements have been made for the careful nursing of the sick; that an ample supply of ice is to be had, as required; and that the means of transport in hospital-ships, fitted up with every appliance for the

treatment of the patients, and the efficiency of the medical service, have been provided on a very liberal scale. We have not the least doubt that everything will be done by the heads of the medical service which practical experience and scientific knowledge can suggest; but we cannot help feeling very anxious about the health of the troops during the coming hot season."

While on this subject a few details as to the climate of the Soudan may not be out of place. So many different factors constitute what is termed a climate, says a writer, that it is only after a series of observations that any exact knowledge of the climatological conditions of a country can be determined. In most tropical countries, the conditions, be these what they may, are to a great extent fixed in character, and one day is greatly typical of the climate of that part of the year. So one year is typical of others.

In the Soudan the changes of weather experienced are much less pronounced than in countries situated in the temperate zone, so that if the principal characteristic is one of intense glare, a relief from it is of exceedingly rare occurrence. The highest mean temperature of the world is in Central Africa, and the Soudan is situated at about the position where the maximum of heat is attained. There, as in all parts of the globe, the sun is the prime mover, and since in the tropics it is vertical to each place twice in the year, complications are introduced which are unknown in the temperate zones.

In the Soudan the desert constitutes

a very important factor in the climate, since the winds blowing over these arid tracts become dried in their course, and meet with nothing from which they can imbibe moisture or coolness. Consequently, the climate is one of extreme dryness. It scarcely ever rains, springs are scarce, and the evaporation is excessive. It must, however, be borne in mind, that with nearly similar conditions Lower Egypt is very fertile.

Various series of weather observations have been made, chiefly by German authorities, for periods varying from a few days to nearly twelve months; among the principal were those made at Khartoum from June 14th to November 14th, 1852. They show the following results:—

	June.	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.
Highest temp.						
in shade.....	100	99	98	97	98	92
Common temp.						
in shade.....	98	95	93	95	96	89
Mean temp. in						
shade	93	91	90	90	92	84
Highest temp.						
in sun.....	120	119	120	134	143	134

The mean temperature for the whole period was 91° ; the means would, however, be somewhat high, since no night temperatures were taken. The hottest part of the day was at five o'clock in the afternoon, the mean for this hour being 90° ; the coldest at seven o'clock in the morning, when the mean was 84° . The highest temperature reached in the sun was 143° , at two p.m. on Oct. 24th.

The warmest months of those for which these observations were made

were June and October. This is due to the fact that months towards the end of the summer and early autumn are relatively cooler by occasional rains. At Khartoum the wind blows almost exclusively in the direction of the valley. The south and west winds alternate in June, and in the subsequent months the south winds prevail until September. A change takes place in October, when the winds come from east-north-east, while northerly winds prevail in November.

The chief wind current is of the monsoon nature, southerly in summer and northerly in winter. The extreme rarity of the atmosphere, and the absence of vapour in the smallest degree, is shown by the ordinary weather observations. Out of 144 days the sky was clear on 111, cloudy on 20, and overcast on 12. During that period rain fell on 21 days. The occasional rains occur generally from July to October. They are the ordinary tropical rains, and extend but a short distance north of Khartoum.

Then the Nile begins to rise a month before the commencement of the rainy season, while at Gondokoro, in the parallel of Fazoglou, the southern limit of the Khedive's dominions, it does not begin to rise for two months after the setting in of the rainy season, which proves that the rise does not have its origin in the weak rains of the valleys, but in the stormy torrents near its mysterious sources.

Khartoum, bounded as it is by the Blue and White Nile, is more favourably situated than other parts of the

Soudan, and is like an oasis in an endless desert.

To the south, however, there is vegetation to a greater degree, owing to more frequent rain and the less scorching power of the sun, its direct

would be situated well in the heart of the north and north-east monsoon, and probably experience dry, clear weather, in which the sun would have full power to make itself felt.

For other parts of the Soudan, the

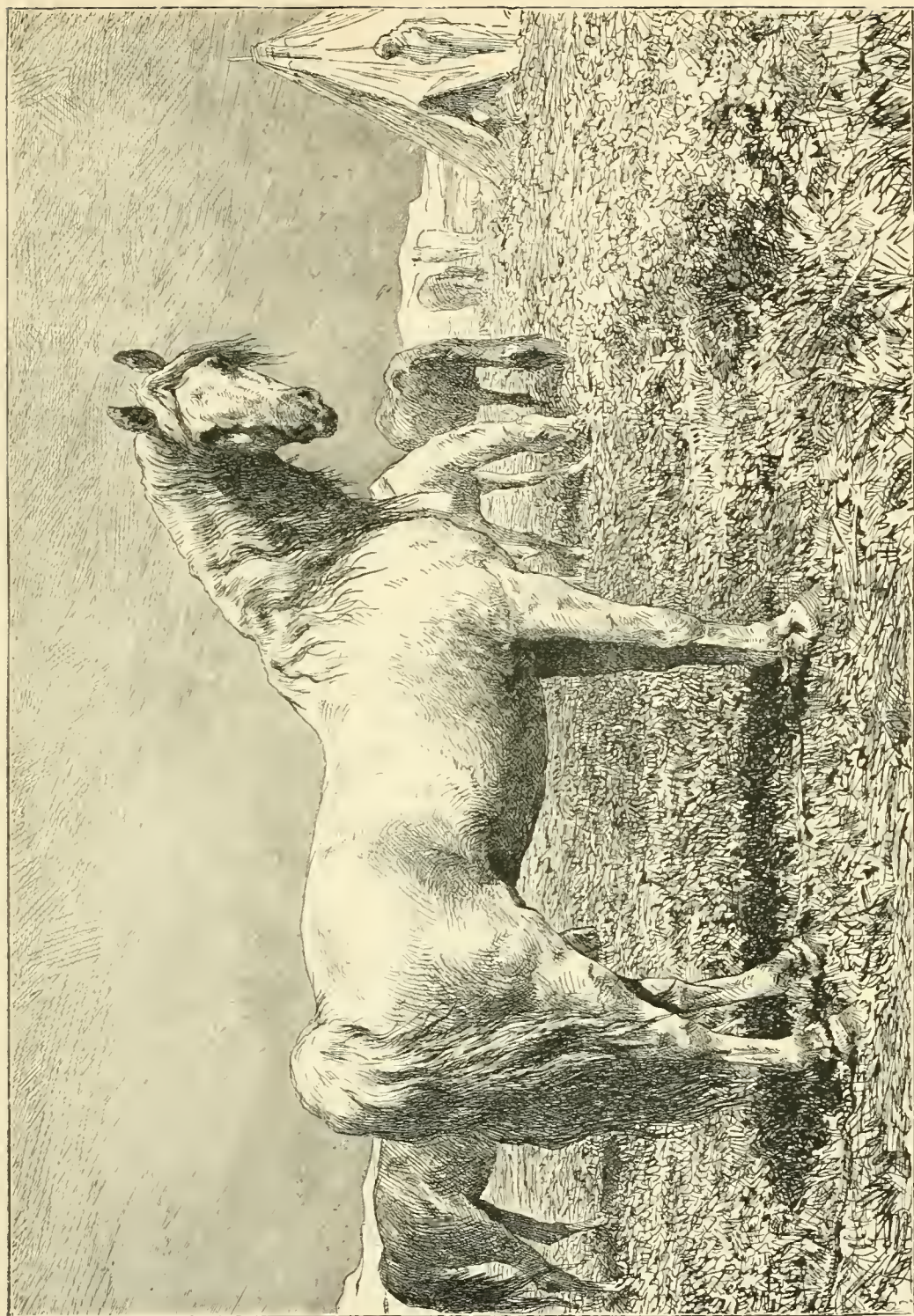


ON THE NILE AT WADY HALFA.

rays being parried by clouds. Gondokoro, which is six hundred miles nearer the equator than Khartoum, has a mean temperature, singular to say, 11° cooler. As meteorological observations do not appear to have been made in the winter months, it is not possible to give any precise details of the climate at that season; but since the sun at this period of the year is vertical to the south of the equator, Khartoum

information which exists is so fragmentary that no deductions can be made; but the materials at hand fully support the series made at Khartoum, and point to a climate probably nowhere surpassed, if even equalled, for its excessive dryness and scorching heat.

The General reported that on the 6th of April the advance was made towards Handoub, which was occupied on the 8th, Otao on the 16th, and Tambouk



ARABIAN HORSES.

on the 19th. He further reported that the railway had reached to Otao on the 30th, in little over three weeks from the date on which the dispersion of the enemy's forces was completed. The detail of these operations was as follows, but prior to which we shall quote this communication, received by Lieutenant-General Sir Frederick Stephenson, commanding our troops in Cairo, from the War Office:—

"I have, however, by direction of the Field Marshal Commanding-in-Chief, to acknowledge your letter of the 24th ult., forwarding statements submitted by Major-General Fremantle, of the gallant conduct displayed by the officers and soldiers below-named, in the Cavalry reconnaissances at Suakim, on the 3rd ult. In reply, I am directed to request that you will convey to them the expression of His Royal Highness's satisfaction at their heroic conduct.

"(Signed) A. ALISON, Adjutant-General."

The following were the names mentioned: Captain Gregorie, of the Egyptian army; Captain the Hon. F. Stopford, Grenadier Guards; Private Baker, 19th Hussars; Corporal Abdulla Sawaff, and Privates Hassan Taina, Ismail Suleiman, and Abny Omry, of the Egyptian Cavalry. In addition to these complimentary notices of individuals, we may add that the correspondent of the *Daily News* felt bound to contradict a report that reflected in severe tones on the conduct of Hodson's Horse (9th Bengal Cavalry) during the engagement at Hasheen. All the authorities competent to express an opinion of any value spoke in the highest terms of the steadiness and gallantry displayed by this regiment in the most difficult cir-

cumstances. The instances of individual bravery, which have been chronicled, were very numerous. Brigade-Major Thompson, of the Cavalry, brought under the notice of the authorities the gallant conduct of two of his men.

The Major was in a position of peril, when two Indian troopers seeing his danger, dismounted, and though breathless, succeeded in putting him on one of their horses, and galloped away with him to a place of safety. Mr. Roberts, who represented Reuter's agency, while in a dangerous position, was rescued by Captain Garstein, of the 9th Bengal Cavalry, who therein performed the third act of valour since his arrival. This correspondent adds that the retirement of Hodson's Horse at Hasheen was due to positive orders given by the Commander, and not, as had been stated, to any hesitation on the part of the men, who on every occasion showed themselves to be alike brave and efficient. If, owing to the martial character they had acquired in past Indian wars, they showed themselves at the outset of the campaign more adept at outpost and scouting duties than their comrades of the British Cavalry, they had never shown themselves one whit less steady and brave.

On the 6th of April a party of Arabs crept within three hundred yards of the Blockhouse Station No. 1, and fired two or three volleys at the signal-box. A few of their bullets struck the platform, so an officer extinguished the lime-light. General Fremantle ordered a squad of the Coldstream Guards to

fire a couple of volleys at the enemy, who were on the west side of the station, and this effectually silenced them.

The following day a party of the Coldstreams, the Australians, and the Madras Sappers, cleared an opening in the bush, one hundred yards wide, for a distance of no less than three miles beyond the station, all labour in vain, as it proved eventually; but from various causes the work of rail-laying made slow progress, although the route was as flat as any part of England or Holland. The horses for drawing the iron material to the head of the rail were not on the ground till noon, and the fish-plates were loaded on ship-board below the rails, so there was a temporary want of the former. Besides, there were no ploughs, no scrapers worked by horses to prepare the roadway, hand labour only being available; and, meanwhile, rebels on camels were often hovering in the distance. On the 8th they approached the headquarters camp, and after firing about a hundred shots at long range, retired, without being fired on in return.

On the 8th the delayed march to Handoub took place, and was accomplished without a casualty; some two hundred or so of the enemy abandoned the place, after firing a few shots when the troops were beyond range. The start was made early in the morning, with a compact force, composed of the Coldstream Guards, the Australian Contingent, a company of the Mounted Infantry, and two mountain guns. They marched from Suakim *via* No. 1

Station, and were accompanied by Mahomet Ali Bey, Chief of the Amaras, or "Friendlies," whose knowledge of the country rendered him most useful to the officer commanding the column, Brigadier Fremantle, a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Coldstream Guards. The Amara tribe occupied the whole country from Handoub to Kokreb, their chief station being the wells at Es Sibil.

During the march the Mounted Infantry scouted in advance, and the appearance of Handoub gladdened the hearts of the Brigade, as there was plenty of good water in the numerous wells, according to the *Standard*; and, indeed, the whole valley was a dried-up water-course, covered with green growth, and drinkable water can be obtained wherever wells are sunk, even a foot deep.

While the troops were prospecting for it, and preparing to form a zeriba, the Mounted Infantry kept a sharp look-out for the enemy, who, however, did not put in an appearance. The scouts heard a few rifle-shots during the morning, evidently fired at a long distance off, but with what object was a mystery to them, unless the enemy were fighting among themselves.

The Coldstreams and Australians worked well, and built a good zeriba between two hills that dominated the village. The hills were next fortified, with a mountain gun on each. From both these a view could be obtained of the whole surrounding country. Open plains were seen extending in every direction, studded by patches of

mimosa; and the ground seemed more favourable for railway purposes than any the troops had yet seen.

The position was a strong one; a company of the Coldstreams took possession of the hill on the north-east of Handoub; while another of the Australians established themselves on the

700 light camels were sent back to Suakim; under an escort of the Bengal Lancers, leaving the outpost largely provisioned. If our spies were to be believed, Osman Digna was using every effort to get his followers to attack Handoub; so the garrison was in constant readiness for any such attempt.



THE CAMP AT OTAO, TWENTY MILES FROM SUAKIM.

south-west. The remainder of the force was to garrison the zeriba, till another forward movement was made with the line of railway, which was then close to No. 1 Station, five miles from Suakim.

General Graham, escorted by Cavalry, came out to Handoub in the afternoon, and after inspecting the works, returned, leaving Brigadier Fremantle in command. It was a source of satisfaction that there was an ample supply of water at Handoub, as it relieved the Transport Corps of one of its heaviest duties, and set free the animals for other work; so

Under date 8th of April, the correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* wrote: "In view of our bitter experience of the ferocity of Osman Digna's warriors, we had long given over hope that any of the many camp-followers and drivers, missing since the terrible affair at McNeill's zeriba, last Sunday fortnight, had escaped with their lives. To-day, however, an Indian driver named Harroo, who was supposed to have been killed in the affair at Hasheen, on Friday, March 20th, walked into camp, and I have just had an interview with



MOUNTED INFANTRY UNDER CAPT. FREEMAN SCOUTING WITH FRIENDLY AMARAS.

him. He stated that when he got separated from the troops at Hasheen he endeavoured to make his escape to Suakim, but his retreat was cut off by prowling parties of the rebels. He was pursued by several Hadendowas, and had almost given himself up as lost when a happy idea flashed across his mind. Falling upon his knees, he called out in Arabic that he was a Seyd, or scion of Mahomet, and begged for mercy. He was seized by the rebels, who, after asking him a few questions, decided to spare his life. He was soon after taken under guard to Hasheen, where 2,000 rebels were encamped. While there two other Indians, both camp-followers, were brought in as prisoners. After a few days' durance at Hasheen, they were taken across the hills to Tamai."

Harroo further stated that he witnessed the departure of the flower of Osman's force for the attack upon McNeill's zeriba, and the return of the broken-hearted survivors of that dreadful affair. The Arabs spared the lives of no fewer than ten Indian drivers, who, with other camp-followers, had been attempting to reach Suakim after the frantic stampede of the transport animals, and these he believed to be then alive, beyond the Tamai range of hills.

"Harroo," adds the *Daily Chronicle*, "brings full confirmation of the reports furnished by our spies to the effect that the fearful losses sustained in the attack on McNeill's zeriba have completely cowed the rebels, and that the resumption of serious operations by them

is very improbable for some time to come, if at all. Small parties of the enemy have returned to Tamai, and are encamped near the charred remains of the village huts. Harroo has been able to give our Intelligence Department information of considerable value. It was supposed that after the destruction of Tamai, the bulk of the rebel forces would be compelled to retreat to Tamanieb. It appears, however, that there are running streams in the hills behind Tamai, affording abundance of water for a considerable force. The rebels are, however, very short of provisions. They have little flour, and scarcely any meat."

Harroo candidly admitted that he had made his escape from the Arab camp because he could not get enough to eat, and added that there was much quarrelling in the Arab camp, and no fresh men joining it.

Mahomet Ali Bey, of the Amaras, remained with the garrison at Handoub, hoping to prevail on the whole of his tribe to submit.

Under date Cairo, April 8th, on the occasion of the retirement of Sir Evelyn Wood from the command of the Egyptian Army, Lord Wolseley expressed his thanks to that force for the assistance they had afforded the British Expedition, and more particularly for the gallantry displayed by that portion which served in the recent battle of Kirbekan. On the same day considerable excitement was caused at Cairo by the suppression of the French organ *Le Bosphore Egyptien* for having reproduced, on the 7th, a proclamation

of the Mahdi in Arabic. The French diplomatic agent protested vigorously against the suppression in the name of his Government, but Nubar Pasha stated that it had been done in direct accordance with precedent and international law.

Its whole tone for months had been bitterly hostile to the British and Egyptian Governments, and it had added greatly to the difficulties of the situation. Thus it was resolved that these systematic attacks should no longer be permitted to continue. Accordingly, at four o'clock on the evening of the 8th, Colonel Fenwick, with a strong force of police, went to the office of the paper, which they closed and on which they affixed seals, and declared the Editor under surveillance in his own house, on which a guard was placed. The French Consul arrived promptly on the scene with his cavasses while the proceedings were in progress, and watched the reading of private papers, as the Editor was strongly suspected of being in secret correspondence with the Mahdi. A large crowd collected and remained for some time on the spot; but all passed quietly. It was generally believed that these proceedings were taken after an understanding arrived at with the new French Ministry, as for the preceding six months the paper had been at work exciting the people to a dangerous extent against the Government; but the public had not heard the last of the *Bosphore Egyptien*.

"The warlike tone of the Paris *Débats* with reference to the suppression of the *Bosphore Egyptien* only produces amuse-

ment in Cairo," the correspondent of *Times* at that place says, "even among the French colony, the respectable portion of which welcomes the disappearance of a sheet that had become a disgrace to it. Indeed, the only disapproval expressed by this class of Frenchmen is of the action of the French Consul, who seems, quite unnecessarily, to have placed himself in a ridiculous position by publicly offering to oppose the Government's decree by force. His conduct might fairly form the subject of diplomatic complaint on the part of the Anglo-Egyptian Government; but it is advisable to ignore it as the error of an over-zealous inexperienced official. On one point the *Débats* is correct. The responsibility for the measure rests with the English, not with the Egyptian Government, and to the English, not to the Egyptian Government must France address her complaint, if she be so ill-advised as to make one. The proprietors of the *Bosphore Egyptien* itself adopt a more practical view, and are evidently taking precautions to substantiate a claim for damages. On this point the Egyptian law is unsatisfactory; for while the Government possesses an undoubted right to suppress a newspaper, it is contended that the closing of a printing office, which alone makes the suppression practicable, is contrary to the Capitulations, as interfering with the ordinary trade of the printers. It is, therefore, quite possible that the Government may be condemned to pay damages. The real remedy lies in maintaining the rights

of printers to conduct their ordinary trade while giving the Government power to close a printing-office if its managers continue the publication of any suppressed journal subsequent to the decree of suppression."

At Suakim the Shropshire and East Surrey Regiments moved out on the 8th to a zeriba, which they had formed a mile beyond the western redoubt, along the railway line, and on the same day the headquarters camp, which had been pitched to the right of the Water Forts, was removed to new lines on the right of the railway.

"Now that the chief work in the landing of the troops and stores is accomplished," writes the correspondent of the *Standard*, "it is only right that it should be stated that the highest credit is due to Lieutenant McGill, and the other officers concerned, for the admirable manner in which all the arrangements of the harbour work have been conducted. The entry and departure of great ships and their berthing in this crowded port have been performed without a hitch or accident taking place, and the difficulty of the task can only be properly estimated by those who are acquainted with the intricate channel, the tortuous approaches, and the small space in which the vessels have been worked. As to the discharging of the cargoes, it is not too much to say that the work would have been altogether impossible had it not been for the facilities afforded by the piers erected by the Royal Engineers last autumn."

On the line of the growing railway

there was a great want of locomotives, but the difficulties of the ground were few. The camp at Handoub was strengthened, and all along the line military pickets were stationed to protect the British gangers and their native assistants. The work, however, progressed with extreme slowness. Water-pipes were laid along the line to keep the thirsty workmen supplied, and telegraph poles were set up and wires run along them as the line progressed; while the engineers in the service of Messrs. Lucas and Aird, the contractors, when surveying as far as Handoub, reported that they had found auriferous quartz and mica.

While these and other works were in full progress, perplexing reports appeared in the public prints at this period. The Cairo correspondent of the *Times* stated that a general impression prevailed in usually well-informed military circles that the Soudan garrisons and camps were to be withdrawn, adding that it was estimated that the troops on the Nile could be concentrated at Dongola in eleven days, and be on board in three weeks later. At Rome, according to the correspondent of another paper, it was currently reported that the British Government was negotiating with that of Italy to hand over Egypt to that country for occupation in the event of war with Russia; and a similar statement was made by the correspondent of the *Standard* at Rome as regarded Suakim; on the other hand, stern-wheel steamers were being prepared for conveying the army to Khartoum in autumn.

187. JUL 18

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