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FIELD-MARSHAL EARL KITCHENER,  
O.M., K.P.

# LORD KITCHENER OF KHARTOUM

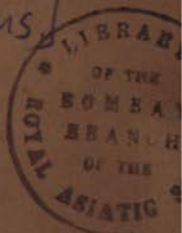
A BIOGRAPHY

By  
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London:  
JAMES NISBET & CO., LIMITED

IN CONJUNCTION WITH

"The Daily Express"

XX-2-39

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KITCHENER OF KHARTOUM

*First published in 1914*

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## PREFACE

PERHAPS the truest, as well as the wittiest, thing ever said about Lord Kitchener was by that prince of war correspondents, G. W. Steevens. "You feel," he said, "that he ought to be patented and shown with pride at an International Exhibition — British Empire Exhibit, No. I., *Hors concours*."

The popular idea of him as a cold, taciturn, ruthless man of almost incredible foresight, who organises victory by long, patient preparation beforehand until the event becomes as inevitable as the output of some beautifully adjusted piece of machinery—that idea of him is true as far as it goes. The facts of his extraordinary career confirm it at every turn.

But there is much more behind. If he embodies in his person the very opposite of the traditional British idea of "muddling through somehow," if he is the very

incarnation of efficiency carried to the highest point, that is the side of him which he has chosen to turn to the world.

Few people realise what an extraordinarily adventurous career he has had. Certainly he has known how to make full use of his opportunities, and the story of those opportunities is a veritable romance of modern chivalry. Even before the South African War he had fought in eight engagements, been twice shot at by Bedouin, all but murdered in Palestine, narrowly escaped being hanged as a spy, and been badly wounded in the face by a bullet.

And what of the man himself? Like all deep, strong, silent natures, he has a great fund of simple human sympathy and affection. No doubt, in the process of getting things done, he has been obliged to have a very short way with stupid, vain, and incompetent people, but those who know him best—and they are, it must be admitted, few in number—are well aware that such necessities have always been odious to him. A private soldier once described him as being like “the blooming Day of Judgment,” but

no one has ever accused him of injustice, and he has always known how to temper judgment with mercy. It is indeed impossible that any man with so wonderfully creative an imagination as Lord Kitchener's could be lacking in heart. The idea that he is a sort of merciless, inhuman machine proves on examination to be based simply on the fact that he has never, in the current phrase, "worn his heart on his sleeve."

Another proof that this estimate of him is groundless is furnished by the well-known fact that he has known, perhaps more than any great commander of modern times, how to win the passionate devotion of his immediate subordinates. This power of choosing the right human instruments worthy to execute great designs is one of the most characteristic signs of genius, and it may indeed be said to be a condition of success in every great enterprise, whether it be in the profession of arms or in statesmanship, or in the higher grades of commerce. It is a quality in which Napoleon, Marlborough, Wellington, and Nelson—perhaps more than anyone—excelled.

Not the least of Lord Kitchener's services to his country has been the influence of his example and stern training on a whole school of younger officers, who will themselves hand on the noble tradition to future generations.

## CHAPTER I

### EARLY YEARS—WITH THE ARMY OF THE LOIRE

It has often been asserted that Lord Kitchener is a kinsman of Captain Edward Berry, Nelson's flag-captain on board the *Vanguard* at the battle of the Nile. On November 4th, 1798, just a hundred years before Sir Herbert Kitchener was received at the Mansion House, Captain Berry was presented with the freedom of the City, having been sent home from Egypt with the despatches giving the news of the victory.

It may have been owing to this family connection that Lord Kitchener bears as his first Christian name that of Horatio. The first Horatio Kitchener, who was named after Lord Nelson, was the son of a cloth merchant in London. The Kitcheners are East Anglians, hailing originally from Lacon Heath, in Suffolk; and it is characteristic that though the Kitcheners wandered far and wide, as is the English way, most of them came and sought wives in their own country. True to this tradition, Kitchener's father,

himself a soldier, who died in his ninetieth year, married Miss Francis Chevallier, of Aspall, in Suffolk. The Chevalliers are a French Huguenot family, and they still possess a quaint and most delightful old house called Aspall Hall.

Lord Kitchener has thus no Irish blood in his veins; but he was born in Ireland, owing to the fact that on leaving the Army, his father, Colonel Henry Horatio Kitchener, bought two estates in Kerry. It was while the purchase of these estates was pending that the future Field-Marshal was born on June 24th, 1850, at Gunsborough Villa, near Tralee. It is a pretty, old-fashioned looking little house, of a type more often seen in English than in Irish villages. Crotter House, where he and his two brothers lived till they were in their teens, is a more considerable and more Irish looking mansion, with large grounds containing all the features which make country life delightful to adventurous and high-spirited boys.

The quality which more than anything else has enabled Lord Kitchener to achieve his great successes has been that of the thorough man of business. As we shall see, his triumphs in Egypt, in India, in South Africa, and particularly the spectacular victory of Omdurman, were all the result of patient preparation and

organisation. And it is not at all fanciful to say that he inherited this "infinite capacity for taking pains" from his father, and has improved upon the inheritance.

Colonel Kitchener clearly lacked opportunities for his special ability in his cavalry regiment. It was not until he had retired from the Army and become an Irish landowner that he began to show his powers of management; he planted and reclaimed, he sowed and reaped, he improved the breeds of cattle and horses, he drained wet and sour lands, he established new industries—in short, he did exactly what his famous son would have done in a similar position.

It was certainly a happy family at Crotter. Of the four boys, three were destined for the Army. The eldest, Henry Elliott Chevallier, was in the old 46th, was for a time a professor at Sandhurst, served with distinction in Burma and with the Manipur Field Force, and ultimately became Colonel commanding the West Indies Depôt at Jamaica. He is a widower, and has a son in the Navy, Captain H. F. C. Kitchener. Lord Kitchener is the second son. The third, Arthur, died in 1907. The fourth, Lieut.-General Sir F. W. Kitchener, died in 1912, after a most distinguished career in Egypt, Afghanistan, with his brother in

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the Boer War, later on in India, and finally as Governor of Bermuda. He left a son, Henry Hamilton, born in 1890.

It is significant of Lord Kitchener's family feeling that he obtained special remainders of his earldom and viscounty, so that, if he left no children himself, they should pass to each of his brothers and their children in succession. Lord Kitchener's sister Emily married, in 1869, Mr. H. R. Parker, of Rothley Temple, who died not very long ago. Lord Kitchener also has a half-sister, who bears the curious name of Kawara.

What was Kitchener like as a boy? There is general agreement that though active and manly he was not much good at games, probably because in his teens his bodily frame outgrew his strength. One authority declares that he used to get into scrapes, but showed singular address in getting out of them! But these incidents were in early boyhood. Evidently his character soon began to form permanently, and he became noted both for his habitual silence and for his studiousness. For the nurse of his infancy he had a deep affection, and he constantly visited her in after years when he had become famous. This reminds us of Stevenson's love for his "Cummie."

Colonel Kitchener, unlike the majority

of the military men of his day, was a great believer in the value of foreign languages, and he resolved that his sons should be well equipped in this particular. Accordingly, at the age of thirteen Herbert Kitchener was placed by his father in a French school, conducted by an English clergyman on clever and original lines, at a place called Château au Grand Clos, near Villeneuve. There he stayed some time, his brothers being there too, and we can hardly doubt that this experience helped to develop the originality and initiative which very soon began to distinguish him among his fellows.

Kitchener's mother died in 1864, when he was fourteen. It was the first break in the family circle, and it must have affected him profoundly, for thenceforward he seems to have gathered himself together for the serious purpose of his life.

After some preparation at a London crammer's, he passed into Woolwich in 1868. The "Shop," as the Royal Military Academy is affectionately nicknamed, is where the future officers of the Engineers and the Artillery are trained. The teaching always has been good, and young Kitchener found himself in his element. He particularly distinguished himself in mathematics, but the most exciting incident of his career

as a cadet happened not at Woolwich, but in France.

Colonel Kitchener had sold his Irish estates, and married again. It has been said that Lord Kitchener's stepmother was a Frenchwoman. This is not so; she was an English lady, but she shared her husband's love of France. Accordingly, they settled at Dinan, the beautiful and peaceful Breton town of which the aged inhabitants still cherish many pleasant memories of "le jeune Kitchener." It was there that Colonel Kitchener's sons spent all their holidays and became, in a sense very few British boys ever have a chance of being, familiar with France and with French ways.

It was from Dinan that Gentleman Cadet Kitchener threw his first great hazard of fortune, when he went off, without asking the leave either of his father or of his military superiors, to join General Chanzy's Second Army of the Loire.

Enlisting as a private in the sixth battalion of the Mobile Guard of the Department of the Côtes-du-Nord, he went with it to Laval. There, while helping a French officer in some military balloon ascents, he caught a chill which developed into pneumonia, and this abruptly ended his first experience of

active service, and indeed nearly ended his life.

But if he saw no fighting, he saw other things which were much more valuable to him.

The inefficiency and mismanagement were tragic. Chanzy's great army, which was really an unorganised herd of men rather than an army, fought gallantly for three days in a continuous snowstorm before retreating from Le Mans. Chanzy wished to retire on Alençon, but Gambetta ordered him to Laval, and that was the end of the war in that part of France.

Young Kitchener's battalion belonged to the Reserves, and that is no doubt why he saw no actual fighting. But he saw that, while the men were splendid, they could not fight for long with nothing to eat. All round Laval were the most pitiable evidences of incompetence. On the railway stood idle forty miles of rolling-stock which ought to have been used in bringing up reliefs and supplies. The roads were blocked with the baggage of the defeated army, and with starving, frostbitten men and horses lying down to die by the wayside. Chanzy's retreat has been compared, on a small scale, to Napoleon's retreat from Moscow. Discipline practically vanished. Soldiers insulted their officers, who wept at their own

powerlessness, and hundreds of deserters were brought in by the mounted gendarmerie.

There were indeed lessons to be learnt at Laval in those bitter January days and nights. France learnt them, and so did the young English cadet who looked on.

The greatest lesson of all that Kitchener mastered was the supreme need of efficient organisation. An army fights, as it marches, on its stomach, and without supplies the bravest troops in the world must fail. Next, but not less important, was the necessity for iron discipline, and Kitchener grasped this so thoroughly that in his later career he earned the reputation of being hard even to the pitch of ruthlessness. As a matter of fact, what he has consistently and invariably been "down on" is indolence and slackness. For errors of judgment, however expensive, he has always known how to temper justice with mercy; some notable proofs of this statement are to be found in his despatches in the South African war.

Lastly, during those eventful days at Laval, Kitchener tasted the bitterness of defeat, or at least he saw what it meant to be on the losing side. Afterwards, as we shall see, with Marchand at Fashoda and again with the Boer leaders at Pretoria, he showed a chivalrous and

understanding sympathy which won the hearts of the conquered.

When finally young Kitchener returned to England, his father had to bring very powerful influences to bear in order to enable him to re-enter Woolwich; his escapade had not been at all to the taste of the British military authorities, whose object at that time—how strange it seems to say so now!—was to discourage the younger officers' enthusiasm for France in her struggle with Germany.

## CHAPTER II

### PALESTINE AND CYPRUS

HAD Kitchener, in his early manhood, visions of future distinction such as other famous soldiers have had? That is his own secret. He has never been a man to dream, and now on the threshold of his career he began a steady, ceaseless preparation which certainly looks as if he was even then conscious that it would be his to play a part in great affairs.

As a boy and youth he was naturally at the disposal of others, bonds which he first broke to gain that invaluable experience with Chanzy's army. Thenceforward he seems to take a firm grip on his own destiny, as if he said, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul."

Although the East has left her mark deep both on his character and on his physique, surely no man was ever less of an Oriental. To bend the East to his own aims the white man must earnestly foster all the qualities in which he most differs from her. Kitchener studied her profoundly, in all her fatalism, indolence, superstition, procrastination, and spasmodic

brilliance, while he sedulously cultivated in himself the very opposites of these characteristics.

He left the "Shop" and got a commission in due course in the Royal Engineers, and for some time he worked at Chatham and Aldershot at field telegraphy, which was then of course a more interesting and important branch than it seems to be now.

It is clear that Kitchener early grasped the fact that great opportunities come to those who make them, and that routine duties faithfully performed do not as a rule lift a man out of the ruck. Time is everything, and it is most interesting to note all through his career how little time he ever wasted—indeed, it would be hard to find a moment when he was not either doing or learning something.

Having mastered field telegraphy, he cast about for something further to do and to learn which should prepare him for bigger things than fall to the lot of the ordinary regimental officer.

The opportunity came in 1874, in the unexpected guise of the Palestine Exploration Fund. One does not ordinarily associate "K. of K." with biblical research, though there is certainly every reason to believe that, like most soldiers, he is sincerely religious; but it needed a Kitchener to see the

enormous possibilities of the work which was now offered to him. It was to survey Palestine and identify in a properly scientific manner the various places mentioned in the Scriptures, to copy inscriptions, to make plans and drawings of ancient buildings and ruins, to study the geology and natural history of the country, and to record the ancient manners and customs of the people, which were even then fast vanishing before the tide of Western civilisation.

Many a young Sapper would have thought this a troublesome, difficult job, which would take a long time and would lead to nothing; Kitchener saw that, though it would take a long time, it would teach him a good deal that he was unlikely to learn otherwise.

His immediate superiors were two brother officers of the Sappers, Captain Stewart and Lieutenant Conder. It was a lucky day for Conder that sent Kitchener as his assistant, for twice he saved his life—once while bathing, and another time during an attack on the camp in Galilee.

It is curious to note how often in his life Kitchener was brought in contact with France and with Frenchmen. We have already seen how his father sent him to study French at a time when English boys of his age and class were at English

public schools, and of course more or less profoundly ignorant of modern languages.

Now, in Palestine, the French Foreign Office had lent to the Exploration Fund a distinguished archæologist, M. Clermont Ganneau; with him Kitchener struck up a warm friendship, and with him indeed he seems to have thrown off a great deal of his habitual reserve. M. Ganneau later gave an account of his friend, which certainly differs in some respects from the prevailing idea of "K. of K."

"We often had to meet and consult each other. I have the pleasantest remembrance. Kitchener was a 'good fellow' in the fullest acceptance of the word. Tall, slim, vigorous, dark-haired, he was clearly of the Irish type. One felt him capable of headstrong acts; indeed, he showed visible signs of the 'hammering' that many Irishmen get on coming into the world. Putting it politely, he did not lack originality. A frank and most outspoken character, with recesses of winsome freshness.

"His high spirits and cheeriness formed an agreeable contrast to the serious, grave characters of some of his comrades. His predecessor, Lieutenant Conder, for instance, was of a much sadder disposition. Kitchener's ardour for his work astonished us. He drew up excellent maps, but he did not confine himself to cartographic labours. Gradually he began to take an interest in archæological discoveries; and acquired in these matters a marked proficiency. The more important of his researches dealt with the synagogues of Galilee."

As we know, M. Ganneau was wrong in thinking his friend an Irishman in blood. The friendship continued, and there is an interesting letter extant in which Kitchener, writing to M. Ganneau from the South Kensington Museum, sends him a copy of an inscription found on a pillar near Gaza, and asks his opinion of it. Kitchener makes a beautifully accurate copy of the Greek uncial characters.

Altogether Kitchener spent four years in Palestine, with intervals of work at home. To his employers he gave the greatest satisfaction, which was warmly expressed in the annual reports of the Fund. His surveying was done with extraordinary thoroughness as well as quickness.

But after all what is interesting for our purpose here is to know how those years served to prepare Kitchener for his future career. Most important of all, he acquired a complete mastery of Arabic and Turkish, accomplishments of which were then extremely rare among British officers. Secondly, he obtained an astonishing insight into the Mahomedan mind, so much so indeed that like that great Orientalist, Sir Richard Burton, he was actually able to disguise himself successfully as a follower of the prophet.

The climate of Palestine, with its extremes of heat and cold, hardened him

physically, and the position of the surveying party, surrounded as they were by no very friendly natives, gave him from time to time invaluable experience in getting round awkward corners. For this period of Kitchener's career, the writer wishes to acknowledge the help derived from Mr. H. G. Groser's interesting biography ("Lord Kitchener: The Story of his Life." By Horace G. Groser. C. Arthur Pearson, Ltd. 1901.)

He had only been at work some seven or eight months when there came that little "scrap" in Galilee in which he saved Conder's life. It was at a small town called Safed, and the trouble arose when a Mahommedan chief entered Conder's tent and began making himself at home in very impertinent fashion. The chief actually attacked Conder, only to be promptly knocked down, but the effect was to bring a whole horde of fanatical Mahommedans on to the camp.

They opened fire with stones, one of which hit Kitchener on the thigh, inflicting a terrible bruise. The mob had a few old muskets, but fortunately none of their shots hit the Englishmen, who, on their part, did their best to calm the fanatics and also to prevent their own native servants from attacking the enemy. In spite of this, one of the mob made a dash

at Conder with a club, and he would certainly have been murdered had not Kitchener come instantly to the rescue and covered his retreat. In the affray Kitchener's arm was wounded.

Ultimately the Englishmen had to leave the camp, and characteristically Kitchener was the last to go; as he fled he was nearly brought down by a bullet which only just missed his head.

Relief soon came in the shape of a force sent by the Governor of the town, but still it was a nasty business, and both Conder and Kitchener suffered for weeks afterwards from the effects of their injuries. They took the greatest trouble to bring the ringleaders to justice, and they did succeed in getting terms of imprisonment for them, and the infliction of a fine of £270 on the town, which went to the Palestine Exploration Fund.

In addition to his injuries, Kitchener fell seriously ill with malaria. His recovery was almost miraculous, and the story goes that when the fever was at its height, and he was parched with thirst, he insisted on taking some light beer, which one would have supposed to be the worst possible thing for him. Nevertheless, it seemed to work an extraordinary change, and the next morning the fever had gone. It left him terribly weak, however, so much so

that when he was riding with Conder up to Jaffa, he fell from his saddle and collapsed on the sand. Conder naturally rode on to get help. But after he had left, Kitchener began to revive, and ultimately managed to make his way on foot to the hotel where they had arranged to put up. Conder, returning with help, was amazed to find his friend gone, and when he got back to the hotel he was immensely relieved to see Kitchener peacefully asleep in bed.

It was at Ascalon that Kitchener saved Conder's life while bathing. The cool waters of the Mediterranean tempted Conder to swim out too far into a dangerous current. Kitchener saw his friend's peril and succeeded in getting him back, but only with the greatest difficulty and the exertion of all his great physical strength.

The material brought home by the party proved of even greater value than was expected, covering as it did some 1,600 square miles. The remainder of the survey was done under Kitchener's sole supervision with great rapidity, in spite of the disturbed and excited state of the country. So the whole map of Western Palestine, from Dan to Beersheba, was completed.

But before he went out for the second

time Kitchener put in a great deal of work in London in preparing and elaborating the rough notes, memoirs, plans and drawings which had been made on the spot. The authorities of the Fund were particularly pleased with the way with which the work was done—indeed, the total cost of the survey, apart from the expenses of management and printing, only amounted to about £18,000, spread over a period of eight years, and Kitchener was employed for only the second half of the period. His employers must have wished sometimes that they had got hold of him earlier.

He returned to Palestine early in 1877, with some fourteen square miles still to survey. At Safed, the scene of the attack in 1875, the party were now received with extraordinary honours, a striking change which must have confirmed Kitchener in his opinion that firmness, instead of weakness and paltering, is the only way to deal with Orientals.

The country which he was now surveying was full of historic memories of the deepest interest as well as extraordinary natural beauty. To both of these Kitchener, as his reports showed, was intensely susceptible. They also show him already a master of that dry, one might almost call it sinewy, literary style which

seems so characteristic of the man. Thus, in one place he writes :—

“The sheikh of the village was extremely rude, and threw stones against an inscription when I attempted to copy it. I therefore left without doing so, and reported the matter to the Governor, who immediately put the sheikh in prison. The next time I went to the village there was no opposition to my copying the inscription; I therefore had the sheikh set at liberty.”

Again, in another place, the natives, unable to account for the proceedings of these mad Christian dogs in any other way, imagined that they had come on a quest for hidden treasure. So with a view to sharing in the spoil they took down the little piles of stones which the surveyors made for measuring purposes, and even dug down to the solid rock below. But Kitchener stopped them by first discovering who were the guilty parties, and then making them build up the piles of stones exactly as they were before.

The latter part of the survey was done under peculiar difficulties, for supplies ran short and had to be husbanded, and the native servants of the party showed signs of wanting to depart, but Kitchener check-mated them by securing the camels on which the party travelled. The whole country was in a very dangerous state.

The Russo-Turkish war was going on, and as the Turkish regulars had all been called up the local officials had few means of preserving order, even if they had wished to do so. Meanwhile, the whole of the Moslem world was excited and uplifted by reports of magnificent Turkish victories over the great Christian power of the north, and brigandage became an even more popular and lucrative employment than usual.

In spite of all these difficulties the work was done, and done well, but at much risk of life. For example, on the return journey the party were mistaken for Bedouin and were fired on by some men from behind a wall. Fortunately the marksmanship of these poor nomads was bad, and no one was hit.

Another time, at Nablous, a large town full of extremely fanatical Moslems, Kitchener tried to have a wall built round Jacob's well in order to protect it from injury. This interference was strongly resented, and Kitchener was actually stoned by a mob of youths in the streets of Nablous. The feeling of the authorities was shown by the fact that his letter of complaint to the local governor was sent back unopened—probably the first and the last time that such a thing has happened to any communication from "K. of K."

The survey work was finished at Beer-sheba on September 28, 1877, and Kitchener returned to England laden with his precious materials. The work of reducing these to order and plotting the sheets of the great map on the scale of one inch to a mile, occupied him and Conder for nearly another year.

Meanwhile, his work in Palestine had become known to members of the Government and others whose business it is to look out for men of executive ability, fit to be entrusted with important duties. Already the young officer had risen out of the ruck and been noted as a man of exceptional qualities, and another chance, which he was quick to seize, soon came.

While he was working away at the South Kensington Museum, the Russo-Turkish war came to an end, and "Dizzy" returned from the Berlin Congress with the results summed up in the famous phrase, "peace with honour." By a convention with Turkey it was arranged that Great Britain should occupy the Island of Cyprus for so long as Russia held certain fortresses in Asia. The strategical importance of Cyprus was then thought to be considerable, but of course the young lieutenant of Engineers had nothing to do with that. He was instructed to make a complete and detailed survey of the 2,500,000 acres

which comprise the area of the island as a preliminary to regular British administration.

He went out in September, 1878, and found installed as Lord High Commissioner Lord Wolseley (then Sir Garnet Wolseley), with whom he was afterwards to be associated in Egypt. But Wolseley did not stay long in Cyprus; he was sent to South Africa as Governor of Natal in the following year, and was succeeded by Sir Robert Biddulph.

Kitchener has never been a man to take much holiday, and furlough for him has generally meant simply a change of work. So it was in Cyprus. He suddenly received an invitation to be present at some impending operations at Alexandria.

This was too good a chance of seeing the "real thing" to resist, and so he went and asked Sir Robert Biddulph for leave of absence. It is said that the High Commissioner flatly refused; but in spite of that Kitchener decided to go, and just managed to reach Limasol before the mail steamer left. He was back again within a fortnight, having seen all that he wanted to see, and the story goes that he told a friend afterwards that it was well worth the "wiggling" he got for it.

Meanwhile, he was showing such efficiency in the survey work that another

job was laid upon his shoulders, namely, that of setting up a regular system of land courts. The Turkish administration of the island had been so lax that there had been a great deal of land-grabbing and corruption; title deeds, if they existed, were anything but precise, and boundary marks usually did not exist. It was a regular chaos, but out of it Kitchener succeeded in evolving a just and workable system.

All the time Kitchener was working hard at Eastern languages, keeping up his Turkish and Arabic, and studying fresh dialects and *patois*. Nor was he indifferent, we may be sure, to the romantic historic associations of Cyprus. Before the British occupation, a Genoese had discovered many Babylonian, Egyptian, Phœnician, and Greek antiquities, which had been sold to the New York Museum. But still much remained, and Kitchener's survey prepared the way for subsequent discoveries of the greatest importance.

The work of surveying was interrupted by a more urgent call for the young Engineer officer's services. Sir Charles Wilson, also a Sapper, was appointed British Consul-General in Anatolia, and he chose Kitchener to be his vice-consul.

The state of things in the province certainly needed a strong hand. It had become a place of refuge for crowds of miserable

fugitives who had been driven out of their homes in the terrible devastation caused by the Russo-Turkish war. The work of relieving these unhappy multitudes and of promoting regular employment tested Kitchener's powers of organisation, but it was a test from which he came out triumphant; and he was able to return to finish the survey of Cyprus a good deal sooner than anyone expected.

This experience in Anatolia was of great value to Kitchener in another way besides affording experience of organisation, for among that motley wretched horde almost every kind of Mahommedan was represented, and during the work of relief he added much to his store of knowledge which was afterwards to be turned to such good account.

## CHAPTER III

### SPADE WORK IN EGYPT

AND now began what will ever remain in some ways the most glorious period of Kitchener's career—his long association with Egypt and the Soudan. No one man, except possibly Lord Cromer, has ever left on those countries so deep an impression of his character and personality. He came to Egypt as a young and comparatively unknown lieutenant, and, by his foresight, patience, unresting but unhurried progress from step to step, achieved amazing victories, not only on the stricken field, but in the healing and revivifying work of civil administration. The Englishman is certainly to be pitied who can read the whole long story without a thrill of pride.

Kitchener delivered Egypt from complex internal and external troubles, set her on her feet, and started her on a future of material prosperity which bids fair to make her one of the granaries of the world. As for the Soudan, not only did he deliver these hapless wastes from the most grinding, hideous tyranny that the modern world has ever seen, but with his irrigation schemes and in

other ways he opened out to them also a future full of hope.

Too many of the great conquerors of history have waged war for the sake of war, and have left the world poorer and more miserable than they found it; the will-o'-the-wisp of military glory led them on, and nothing but the whitened bones of decimated armies, the tears of widows and orphans, and fertile provinces laid waste, remained as witnesses to the cruelty and vanity of human ambition.

It is the special glory of Kitchener that he has never waged war for its own sake—indeed, he has never waged it save with the definite object of securing a lasting peace.

Never during all those years in Egypt, when the temptation to strike too soon would have overcome any ordinary man, did he allow himself to be hurried. There were long periods when the Soudan, dominated by the cruellest and most brutal form of religious fanaticism which it is possible to conceive, and of which the plain record cannot be put down in print, must often have tried even Kitchener's iron resolution. The ravaging of the peaceful tribes with every hideous circumstance of barbarous conquest must have often roused his natural human indignation to a white heat of passion.

It is perhaps a pity that he had not with him in those years some of the politicians at

home who misunderstood him and hampered him in the execution of his great plan ; but they were far away and in safety and their minds were set on other things. They could not—at any rate they did not—understand, and they simply take their place in the story among the other obstacles which this extraordinary man surmounted in due course.

Both soldiers and sailors are really among the most peaceful people in the world, and indeed if one thinks of it there is nothing more natural, for, as an Irish officer not long ago said to the writer of this book, “And why wouldn’t we be peaceful when we know what it is to have our heads cut off!”

The foolish notion of the brutal and the blood-thirsty soldier is certainly flatly contradicted in the person of Kitchener. No commander in the field was ever less of a butcher, and he was even more economical of the lives of his men than he was of such material things as stores, railway plant, and the like. Waste of any kind is abhorrent to his business-like mind, and if he did not strike sooner for the liberation of the Soudan it was simply because he knew, in that cool, calculating brain of his, that he was not ready, and he could not, if he struck before he was ready, count on anything but luck to bring him through.

It is luck—*felicitas*—which Cicero enumerates as one of the characteristics of a good general, but tried by that test Kitchener fails. All through his career you see him resolutely determined to eliminate the factor of chance, so far as is humanly possible, and indeed it is difficult to put one's finger on any point and say, "Here Kitchener was lucky."

What has been said of Kitchener's military genius—and be it noted that the highest capacity for commanding large masses of men in the field has never been claimed for him—might seem exaggerated if we listen to those carping critics who are always ready to depreciate the man who has "done things" in any field of action. It has, for instance, been said that Kitchener's triumphs were cheap triumphs, achieved at the expense of half-naked savages.

How absurd is this misrepresentation will be seen in the pages which follow. The foes whom Kitchener met and conquered were savages in a sense, but they were well found, well equipped with arms of precision, supported by artillery, admirably officered, and trained in fire discipline. Add to this the fact that they were one and all animated by a perfect frenzy of religious fanaticism, each man believing that death in battle with the infidel would translate him straight to the most voluptuous form of Paradise, and

we see at once that such an enemy might well be counted superior to many an army of civilised white troops.

If we look far enough back, we see that the origin of the English power in Egypt is traceable to the astonishing extravagance of the Khedive Ismail, who was a man of such large ideas that he succeeded in increasing the Egyptian debt some thirty-fold. His embarrassments became so great that he offered to sell his shares in the Suez Canal to France. If France had bought them, it is certain that the whole course of Egyptian history would have been changed. But, as we know, it was England who bought them, largely owing to the promptitude of a journalist, the late Mr. Greenwood, and they certainly proved, in a commercial sense, a good investment.

Not many years afterwards, that is, in June, 1879, the Khedive was deposed and succeeded by his son Tewfik, and a dual control by France and England was established. Inevitably the great mass of Egyptians resented foreign control, largely on religious grounds as faithful children of the Prophet, and also from a sentiment of nationalism. The ground was thus prepared for a patriotic rebellion, and it found its leader in Arabi, who had been Egyptian War Minister. It was in 1882 that he raised his standard of revolt.

Alexandria was bombarded by the English, and Arabi abandoned the town and retreated into the interior.

Lord Milner has pointed out the curious irony of fate by which the objects of the Arabists, so far as they were sound, were destined to be really accomplished by the very men who proceeded to wipe out Arabi and all his works.

Kitchener himself stands out as the best, because the most efficient Arabist of them all, for he really, more than any other man, set Egypt on her feet by giving her an army which could be trusted, and by means of that army securing for her the inestimable blessings of peace and freedom for internal development.

How Arabi was suppressed by Sir Garnet Wolseley's Expedition, the brilliant action of Kassassin, leading up to the total defeat of the rebels at Tel-el-Kebir—all this is well known. Kitchener went through the whole campaign as a major of Egyptian cavalry. The authority of the Khedive was re-established in Cairo, and a force of 12,000 British troops was left in Egypt under Sir Archibald Alison.

It is now easy to see that the mercy shown to Arabi in the commutation of his death sentence to penal servitude for life was a tactical error; native opinion interpreted it as a sign of weakness and not, as

was doubtless intended, as a signal example of British chivalry to a conquered foe. ۛۛۛۛ

However, there were men who saw at least the first necessity of the situation. The late Lord Dufferin, who arrived at Cairo as British representative, advised the home Government that British troops could not be safely withdrawn until a native Egyptian army had been created. In consequence of that advice Sir Evelyn Wood was sent out as Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, and he reached Cairo at the end of 1882.

Many experts considered that it would be an impossible task to make even fairly good regiments out of the wretched and dispirited fellaheen who had never known the sensation of standing up to any enemy. Sir Evelyn Wood not only believed the task to be possible, but was confident that, as they had never been given a real chance, it was only necessary to treat them decently and train them energetically in order to turn them into troops of the greatest value.

Wood was a most inspiring chief. He naturally looked round at once for suitable officers to select and train, out of the great mass of human material, the nucleus of the Egyptian Army of the future. Among those who joined him was Kitchener, who was appointed second in command of the

cavalry, his immediate chief being Colonel Taylor of the 19th Hussars.

The old war correspondent, Mr. John Macdonald, has left on record a picturesque sketch of Kitchener at work :—

“Taylor had invited me the night before to accompany him and his friend and witness the operation which they were both to supervise. A tall, slim, thin-faced, slightly-stooping figure in long boots, ‘cutaway’ dark morning-coat and Egyptian fez somewhat tilted over his eyes—such, as I remember him, was the young soldier who was destined to fulfil Gordon’s task of ‘smashing the Mahdi.’

“‘He’s quiet,’ Taylor whispered to me, as we were getting ready; ‘that’s his way.’ And, again, with characteristic jerk of the head, ‘he’s clever.’ And so, in the raw, greyish early morning of January 8th, 1883, the three of us drove in our dingy rattle-trap over the white dusty road Nilewards to meet the fellah cavaliers. Taylor did most of the talking. Kitchener expressed himself in an occasional nod or monosyllable.

“At the barracks we found some forty men waiting. I remember Kitchener’s gaze at the awkward, slipshod group as he took his position in the centre of a circular space round which the riders were to show their paces. ‘We begin with the officers,’ said Taylor, turning to me; ‘we shall train them first, then put them to drill the troopers. We have no troopers just yet, though we have 440 horses ready for them.’

“And now began the selection of the fellah officers.

They were to be tested in horsemanship. The first batch of them were ordered to mount. Round they went, Indian file, Kitchener, like a circus master, standing in the centre. Had he flourished a long whip he might have passed for a show-master at a rehearsal. Neither audible nor visible sign did he give of any feeling roused in him by a performance mostly disappointing and sometimes ridiculous. His hands buried in his trousers pockets, he quietly watched the emergence of the least unfit.

"In half an hour or so the first native officers of the fellah cavalry were chosen. It was then that Kitchener made his longest speech. 'We'll have to drive it into those fellows,' he muttered, as if thinking aloud."

It is now time to turn to the events which had been happening in the Soudan. In the summer of 1881 a young ascetic dervish, named Mahomed Ahmed, of Dongola, began to attract adherents, and soon he showed strength enough to proclaim himself the Mahdi, or, in other words, the Mahommedan Messiah.

Easy victories over weak Egyptian forces enormously increased his power, which was consolidated by his capturing the chief city of Kordofan, a capture signalled by the most horrible massacres.

Practically the whole Soudan now lay at the Mahdi's feet. When Hicks Pasha's army of 11,000 men, having been decoyed into a defile, was practically wiped out by

the Mahdists, it proved a signal for a general rising throughout the country.

The rest of the gallant, pitiful story is well known—Gordon's mission to the Soudan, the siege of Khartoum, the massacre of Baker's levies at El Teb, Graham's expedition to Suakim, the brilliant, hard-fought battles of the Second Teb and Tamai, Wolseley's expedition up the Nile, with the battle of Abu Klea, the second Soudan campaign, and the Gordon Relief Expedition which arrived too late.

How easily Kitchener might have formed one of Hicks's doomed force, but he did not get a chance of that service. Instead, he returned for a time to his old work of surveying, going out with a geological expedition of the Palestine Exploration Fund, under the direction of Professor Edward Hull. His work was to survey the peninsula of Sinai and the territory south of the Dead Sea, in fact a natural extension of his former work.

The party started from Suez in November, 1883, and proceeded to trace the route of the Israelites described in the Book of Exodus. News of the disaster to Hicks's army reached the travellers from Arab sources, and Kitchener began to see that his duty lay with Wood and the embryo Egyptian Army. But he did not leave Professor

Hull's party until he knew that they were safe on their way northward.

The first days of 1884 saw Kitchener on his long journey to Ismailia, accompanied only by four Arab servants. Characteristically he took a new route, which, though much more difficult than the ordinary one, offered a great deal of value to learn. He ruled his Arabs with an iron hand, and he did much useful surveying and other work on the road.

When Kitchener reached Ismailia he found that Gordon had arrived at Khartoum on his important mission of bringing away the scattered garrisons as a necessary consequence of the home Government's decision to abandon the Soudan. The defeat of Baker Pasha had been followed by the brilliant victories of Graham, which—fatal policy—were not followed up. It took a long time for people at home to realise that expeditions, however brilliant and successful they might be, were simply a vain expenditure of blood and treasure if they were not followed up and their fruits consolidated. It is impossible to doubt that the great Gordon Relief Expedition, which as we know came too late, would have been needless had Gordon been given promptly the comparatively small force for which he had begged.

Kitchener saw the whole position, and it

appeared to him that he could be most useful by bringing into play his special knowledge of the Arabs. In particular the Mahdi had attracted to his standard the bulk of the Soudanese tribes, but some there were who were hesitating—waiting, in fact, to see which way the cat would jump.

At no period of his career did Kitchener run more risks; every day he took his life in his hands. It is significant that having one day witnessed the torture and execution of a spy, the sight had such an effect upon him that he always thereafter carried about in his pocket enough poison to avoid, if need be, a similar fate. He is said to have told a brother officer that he did not fear death—indeed, he even expected it at the hands of these wild tribes, but such a death as that of the spy he was determined to avoid.

With Lieutenant (afterwards General) Rundle, whose knowledge of the Arab character was hardly inferior to his own, he formed a long line of Arab tribes, on whom he could at least rely for neutrality, if not for actual hostility to the Mahdi. Of course his blandishments were not only verbal; he had been well supplied with substantial golden arguments from Cairo.

Perhaps his greatest triumph was in winning over the Mudir of Dongola, who would certainly have joined the Mahdi if

Kitchener—all alone this time, except for a small escort of faithful Arabs—had not gone by forced marches and secured this important chieftain. Kitchener could not have helped Gordon in a more practical way. The Mudir's support was of the greatest value, and if Gordon had been only moderately reinforced might well have turned the scale. Even as it was, the Mudir inflicted an important defeat on the Mahdists early in September.

In old days innumerable stories used to be told in Egypt of Kitchener's adventures in the days when he used to go out disguised first as one kind of native and then as another. Perhaps the most dramatic tale of all was this.

One evening a suspicious-looking Dervish was found in camp, and at a juncture at which information of the enemy's plans were of the highest importance. Neither the handsomest bribes nor the direst threats could elicit a word from the prisoner. He pretended to be both deaf and dumb. Suddenly another not less suspicious-looking comrade was led in, who proved equally obdurate. The two were led away, bound, and placed in a well-guarded tent.

A little later, when the camp was settling down to sleep, there was a fresh stir—yet another Dervish was brought in and placed in the tent with his fellows. Soon the

guards outside heard a hubbub of voices from within; it was clear that the dumb ones had found their tongues, but none of their talk could be overheard or understood.

At the end of an hour the third man came out, and not till then did the astonished sentries see that it was Kitchener, so complete was his disguise. Kitchener had discovered that the two Dervishes were spies of the most dangerous kind, and the grim sequel was the immediate ordering up of a firing party with spades for the digging of two graves.

Kitchener's knowledge of Arab ways was also conspicuously shown on a certain occasion during the advance to Omdurman. He had ordered an officer to take an Arab force to guard some important wells. At the hour of marching the sheikh obstinately refused to start, but said he would the next day. This curious fact was reported by the officer to Kitchener. "All right," said the Sirdar, much to his subordinate's surprise. "I think we had better just wait." The same thing happened the next day and the next, and still Kitchener repeated, "Wait."

At last there came a day when the sheikh started off, and it then became known that the superstitious Arab had believed in a malign influence. Once that had passed away, he was ready to obey.

An interesting reminiscence of Kitchener at this period was given by the late Mr. Bennet Burleigh, the brilliant war correspondent. Writing in 1898, before the battle of Omdurman, he says:—

“Sir Herbert Kitchener, an enthusiast in arms, resourceful and daring, unites in himself the skill and subtleties of the sapper with the dash of a trooper.

“It was at Debbeh, ninety miles south of Dongola, in 1884, that I first learned to know him well. He was then living with the Mudir Mustapha's Yawer's irregulars. Wearing the dress of an Arab, he was scarcely distinguishable from a native. He had gone in advance of the British forces on a delicate and dangerous mission, for which he had volunteered. I had wandered, unauthorised, to Debbeh, attended by one servant, in search of news and adventure, and easily found both. On the upward trip I passed a risky night in the Mahdi's ancestral home with his uncle and nephews, and had ridden among bands of fierce Kabbabish. To my astonishment and delight I found one Englishman within the mud walls of Debbeh—Captain Kitchener, R.E., for such he then was. He gave me a hearty welcome, and added to my debt of gratitude by producing two bottles of claret, his whole store, which we most loyally drank at dinner. For weeks he had not heard the English tongue spoken, and he naturally was glad to see a countryman able to tell him something of what was happening outside the Soudan.

“Years have rolled by since; and although he is relatively still a young man, the hot desert sun and African campaigning have done for him what they

have wrought upon many who are his juniors—they have streaked his hair with grey. But to-day, as then, his tall, sinewy form is unbent, he is as active as ever, observant, and of a somewhat silent disposition. In manner he is good-natured, a listener rather than a talker, but readily pronouncing an opinion if it is called for. All his life he has been *par excellence* a 'volunteer' soldier,—volunteering, time and again, for one difficult and dangerous duty after another. There is on record a vigorous prior judgment of Captain Kitchener on an early Soudan campaign, which subsequent events have accentuated and borne out."

All the time Kitchener was in correspondence with Gordon, who, however, does not seem to have received by any means all his communications. What was more to the point, perhaps, Kitchener was unwearying in sending news about Gordon's position at Khartoum to Cairo. Certainly Gordon did not realise what efforts Kitchener was making on his behalf or he would not have written in his journal various bitter criticisms of him and the rest of the Intelligence Service.

It must be remembered that Gordon was in a position of appalling loneliness and naturally hungry for news, which he only received at rare intervals.

In October, 1884, Colonel J. D. Stewart, attempting a dash to Khartoum in a small steamer, was caught and all his party were

massacred. Curiously enough, Gordon did get a letter from Kitchener, addressed to Stewart from Dongola, saying : "Can I do anything for you or General Gordon? I should be awfully glad if you would let me know. The Relief Expedition is evidently coming up this way, but whether they will go by Berber or attempt the direct road from here I do not know." Gordon also had letters from Kitchener giving him details of the Relief Expedition then on its way. In one of them Kitchener says : "A few words about what you wish done would be very acceptable."

The news of Stewart's disaster reached Gordon early in November, and some time afterwards, Gordon writes in his journal : "I had a letter saying Government had given Kitchener *carte blanche* to pay the Mahdi up to £20,000 for me ; but adds the 'writer does not think I would accept such a proposition' ; in which he is quite right ; neither would the Mahdi."

At the same time Gordon says : "I like Baker's description of Kitchener," and he pastes into his journal this paragraph cut from a letter sent him by Baker Pasha :—

"The man whom I have always placed my hopes upon, Major Kitchener, R.E., who is one of the few *very superior* British officers with a cool and good head and a hard constitution, combined with untiring

energy, has now pushed up to Dongola and has proved that the Mudir is dependable.

"It is delicious to find," Gordon adds, referring to the long official telegrams he received, "not one civil word from any official personage except Kitchener; it relieves me immensely."

And a little further on, Gordon observes: "If Kitchener would take the place he would be the best man to put in as Governor-General."

It should be explained that no British regimental officer joining the Egyptian Army took lower rank than Major (*Bimbashi*). The reason for this was that no white officer might have any native officer above him in his own corps. Certainly this curious arrangement justified itself by results. Thus, during the Dongola campaign, majors commanded brigades, captains battalions, while actually at Abu Hamed a subaltern led his regiment in action.

It is thus that we find Kitchener a major in October, 1884, but he was, of course, put on the Staff under his old chief, Sir Charles Wilson, who was head of the Intelligence Department. In the following December he was sent with Sir Herbert Stewart's column from Korti. We get glimpses of what Kitchener did on this expedition from various sources.

We see him using his geological knowledge

to find water, but his principal work lay in following up and questioning wandering natives and in rounding up little parties who were taking supplies to the enemy. All this was at Gakdul Wells, where the column had halted on the way to Metemmeh across the desert.

Early in January, Kitchener, for some mysterious reason, was ordered back to Korti, thereby missing the fight at Abu Klea when about 10,000 Arabs were defeated by Stewart. But the expedition failed in its object, for at the end of January, Khartoum fell and Gordon and his faithful followers were massacred.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE AVENGING OF GORDON

THE failure of the Gordon Relief Expedition must have gone home more deeply to Kitchener than to most British officers, for he, with his profound knowledge of the character of the various native tribes, could see how pitiably the whole business was bungled.

Perhaps it is not fanciful to suppose that even as far back as this period there was germinating in his mind the plan of the great scheme for avenging Gordon which he afterwards executed with such apparently mechanical precision. He must have at least realised at that time that the old policy of brilliant military dashes with spectacular victories over the Dervishes, followed for political reasons by withdrawal, was doomed.

Not so could Gordon be really avenged. He could only be avenged by breaking the power of the Mahdi and of any new Mahdi that might arise finally and once for all. That would have the effect of cutting down at the roots the upas tree of barbarism and oppression, and establishing the *pax Britannica* all over the Soudan. But to conquer

the Soudan once for all meant years of steady preparation, of building military railways, of persuading waverers in important positions at home as well as in Egypt, of re-enforcing the Egyptian army and training it hard year in and year out to trust its officers and to stand under fire.

All this would take an indefinite number of years, during which the patient men of foresight who were planning it must harden their hearts to leaving the country for which they were working still under that hideous and fanatical oppression which had blighted it for so long.

For the moment at any rate Kitchener could do nothing. He resigned his commission in the Egyptian Army and returned to England. His services had been recognised with the usual honours, and in June, 1885, he was promoted Lieutenant-Colonel. But while he was away the work that he had already done was bearing fruit, for the tribes whose loyalty he had done so much to secure stood firm and rendered important services in restraining the Mahdi's forces.

That summer the Mahdi died at Omdurman, the new city he had built on the other side of the river opposite Khartoum. There he was buried, and his successor, the Khalifa, built him a magnificent tomb. The Khalifa was, if anything, worse than the Mahdi himself, and his undoubted bravery

as a soldier did not prevent him from sinking, as years went on, into a deeper and deeper slough of vicious indulgence, a sort of compensation for the asceticism of his earlier life. He was quite clever enough to see that if he did not attack Egypt he had no reason to fear that Egypt would attack him. Thus he was practically invited to continue at his leisure the ravaging of the peaceful and industrious tribes of the Soudan over whom he terrorised.

But Kitchener did not stay long in England. After a short period in Zanzibar as a Boundary Commissioner, we find him in the August of 1886 appointed Governor of Suakim. It was a good place at which to begin, and it soon felt the influence of the new Governor's methods. He practically re-fortified the town. He made it not only proof against Dervish raids, but also the centre from which he could control the regions of the friendly tribes.

The system of subsidies from Egypt he saw was of great value, always provided that the money went to the right people, and here his profound knowledge of the different Arab tribes proved of the greatest worth, for he took care that value should always be received for whatever was paid out. There was one particular sheikh whose services had been supposed to be worth a considerable income, but Kitchener's investi-

gations revealed that the man was a humbug, and he so nicknamed him "The Sheikh of the 'Tongue," a pleasantry which was exactly of the kind to appeal to the rather dry Arab sense of humour.

In October, 1886, Kitchener induced the Arabs to combine against Osman Digna, a notable adherent of the Mahdi, who had married a woman belonging to the most warlike tribe in the Suakim district. Unfortunately, Osman Digna, though severely defeated, managed to escape. He collected fresh levies, and by the end of 1887 had completed his preparations for a regular attack on Suakim. But it was Kitchener who took the offensive and captured the enemy's camp. Naturally enough, the friendly tribes, eager to catch Osman Digna himself, pressed on too far in pursuit, and Kitchener had to advance his reserves hurriedly. The camp at Handoub was retaken by the enemy, and the friendlies had to retreat.

During the fighting Kitchener was struck by a bullet, which went through his jaw into his neck. The wound was so serious that he had to go to Cairo for treatment, and though he went back to Suakim in March he was not really cured, and in May, 1888, he was invalided home.

Promotion to the rank of colonel possibly assisted his recovery. At any rate he

returned to Egypt in time to take part in the operations at Suakim in December.

By that time Osman Digna's raids had become so serious that Sir Francis Grenfell, the then Sirdar, determined to teach him a lesson, and Kitchener was given the command of the first Brigade of Soudanese. These black troops proved of the greatest service, and did credit on the day of battle to Kitchener's organisation and also to his leading. So admirably had they been trained in fire discipline that they actually advanced for 300 yards under a hot fire without returning it. The check to Osman Digna was complete, save that he himself again eluded capture, and by February it was possible to declare Suakim open to commerce.

In the summer of 1889, Kitchener's troops again distinguished themselves at the battle of Toski, where a large force of Dervishes were defeated. In that battle Kitchener was in command of the mounted troops under Grenfell. With them he occupied the enemy's fire until the Sirdar brought up his infantry, and later in the day he led the 20th Hussars and the Egyptian cavalry in a splendid charge, which really decided the issue of the battle. The effect of this blow on the Mahdi's forces was considerable. It really kept the enemy quiet for fully a year. It also brought in

enormous numbers of refugees, for whom relief works had to be started, and to their immense surprise the numerous prisoners taken were not put to the sword.

For his services at the battle of Toski Kitchener received the C.B. It was the last bit of real fighting that he was to see for a long time. Henceforward we shall find him busy with that work of organisation and preparation in which he has always been supreme.

We come now to the later steps which led up to the final triumph of Omdurman. At every turn the story naturally brings into the centre of the stage the figure of Kitchener as the cool, collected, taciturn organiser of victory, but he himself would be the first to deprecate this position, and the first to declare that the work would never have been done without the devoted service of many others, some of whom also reaped fame in the public eye. But the vast majority, each of whom had his little share in the triumph, necessarily remain in obscurity.

First and foremost, there were those regimental officers who drilled and trained the Anglo-Egyptian Army through years of sweat and sand-storm by day and of shivering and alarms by night—years of banishment from home and the simple comforts of the home mess. Even more

splendid, if that be possible, was the service of the white sergeants, who, in a particularly trying position, showed every possible soldierly virtue. Then there were the railway battalions, who were continually performing miracles of ingenuity in mending up old engines and making the utmost of the plant at their disposal. They actually laid over 500 miles of line in a savage desert, step by step—the line, be it remembered, not only having to carry up supplies and stores, but also rails and sleepers for its own extension.

It took something like sixteen years to lick the Anglo-Egyptian Army into shape. Sir Evelyn Wood's original command was only eight battalions, but by the time of Omdurman it had grown to fully 18,000 men, with more than 140 white officers. It was technically a conscript army, but as the Government only took one man out of every 500 of the population, and as the competition to come in was great, it possessed all the advantages of a voluntary army. The fellah soldier received two-pence half-penny a day—that is to say, as much as he could earn in full work.

In addition to the Egyptian battalions, there were also six battalions of Soudanese blacks, admirable soldiers, many of whom had fought against us in the past. These children of nature received better pay and

allowances because they were polygamists. Such was their eagerness for fighting that they had to be given a greater proportion of white officers, simply to hold them in. The cavalry were all Egyptians, because a black man can never be made to look after his horse properly. So, too, the artillery were all Egyptians, for blacks are not clever enough to make good gunners. The camel corps was composed half of blacks and half of fellaheen.

A good story is told of the black battalions which illustrates both Lord Kitchener's careful economy with the taxpayers' money and also his quickness in getting out of a difficulty.

It is said that he ordered the black soldiers to be supplied with the worn-out kit of the Egyptian troops; even the coloured badges on their turbans were altered to crimson, so that a lot of tarbushes might be cut up for the purpose. This naturally did not please their British commanding officer, and he took care that when the Sirdar was reviewing the new force the men should march past him in positively indecent apologies for uniforms. But Kitchener turned to him, and, with a twinkle in his eye, exclaimed, "Why, Colonel, you have done splendidly. Your men are in the pink of condition, quite fat, actually bursting out of their

clothes—and all in four months! Excellent—excellent!”

The native officers were chiefly Turkish by descent, with a proportion of Circassians and Albanians, and they were every bit as good as the officers of the Turkish Army. Among the Soudanese battalions there were some black captains and lieutenants who worked admirably with the British officers; but these were exceptions, for, as is well known, the black's strong point is not education, and he is better fitted to obey than to command.

But best of all in their way were the white colour-sergeants and sergeants who with steady sustained enthusiasm did the hard, slogging work of drilling the recruits and teaching them to shoot. In addition they had to show a great deal of tact, for of course they were technically subordinate to all native officers, some of whom occasionally made themselves offensive. But the sergeants always seemed to know how to smooth over any unpleasantness, and that is why their relations with the white officers became much more cordially intimate than is necessary or desirable in an ordinary regiment.

Still, you may make the best army in the world and find it of no use when you want it if it lacks transport and supplies. Those essentials were seen to by

Kitchener, though, as has been said, not all the credit belongs to him ; he continued and developed the work of his predecessors, notably Sir Evelyn Wood and Sir Francis Grenfell.

From 1888 to 1892 Kitchener was Adjutant-General of the Egyptian Army, and he was appointed Sirdar in 1892.

The appointment aroused much criticism, particularly from the friends of another very popular officer who was thought to have superior claims. But Lord Cromer, to whom the appointment was really due, knew his man, and it is curious to read the comments of Mr. Winston Churchill, who would indeed have been astonished if he could have foreseen that the day would come when the new Sirdar, who had always carefully kept out of politics, would be his colleague in the Cabinet. Mr. Churchill says, writing after Omdurman :—

“ Lord Cromer had found the military officer whom he considered capable of re-conquering the Soudan. Time justified his choice. The support which he gave to Kitchener at this important crisis in his career has been continued to the present day. In many moments of doubt and difficulty the general looked towards the British Agent and always found confidence and encouragement. ‘ Whatever you do, and whatever might happen, I will support you. You are the best judge of the situation,’—such was the famous telegram that preceded the battle of the

Atbara. And as it describes the attitude of the great administrator to his subordinates, so in some measure it explains the wonderful work they have done."

With this may be quoted a letter written to Kitchener in that same year by Sir Samuel Baker, the great African explorer, in which he said :—

"I feel sure that the task of regaining the Soudan will fall to yourself, and by its success will sustain the good fortune which I trust will ever favour you through simple merit alone. My opinion is very strong upon the necessity of quietly preparing for the effort beforehand, so that when the moment shall arrive the success may be accomplished without loss of time. In all our recent expeditions one notes a general absence of military science. You will have the opportunity of preparing for a blow and delivering it with undoubted result, which will bring honour upon the force you command and to yourself."

Early in the year 1892 the Khedive Tewfik died, and was succeeded by Abbas, a young man who began to show signs of restiveness under British control. It was of course at first Lord Cromer's business to deal with his Highness, and Kitchener does not come into the story until early in 1894, when the Khedive, in reviewing some troops, took upon himself to criticise the quality of the new army. The Sirdar was not the man to miss such a chance. The Khedive was compelled to make ample

amends, retracting his observations in the fullest manner; while the home Government signified its opinion of the incident by recommending Kitchener for the K.C.M.G.

Sir Herbert, as we must now call him, owed much at this time to the masterly civil administration of Lord Cromer, who had already brought order out of something very like chaos, and filled the Egyptian Treasury with substantial surpluses. The Sirdar was thus relieved of anxiety on the financial side; he knew he could get the money he wanted for his great plan of recovering the Soudan by the old Roman method of making roads—that is to say, railways—and advancing by stages, while consolidating his position behind him, to the goal.

That goal was Omdurman, because of its geographical position. The Khalifa could not retreat from it without fighting, because if he did it would be equivalent to an abdication of his whole position, both religious and military. Indeed, it was obvious that he must give battle there, if only from fear of his own army, who would tear him in pieces if he flinched.

But before Omdurman a good deal had to happen, namely, the Dongola Expedition of 1896, and the consequent settlement of that province when clear of Dervishes; the advance to Berber; and then the victory of

the Atbara, which led straight to the final blow at Omdurman.

The wonderful precision with which the Anglo-Egyptian forces marched to victory was chiefly due to two things which marked the sharp break, under Kitchener's supervision, from the traditions of the past.

The first of these was the efficiency of the Intelligence Service.

In the old days the spy system was badly done or not done at all, but Kitchener saw to it that it should be both efficient and economical. It was a pure piece of luck that Slatin Bey, an Austrian officer, who had been for twelve years a prisoner of the Mahdi, should have made his escape. He arrived in Cairo in March, 1895, bringing information of the greatest value as to the position at Omdurman itself.

But Kitchener did not depend on pieces of luck like that. His secret service system covered all the way up to Omdurman, and all the little rills of information sent in by his numerous spies in their various disguises combined to disclose to him all he wanted to know about the different tribes, their military effectiveness, the jealousies of their local leaders, and the position and strength of the Dervish forces.

Nevertheless, Slatin's story, though it probably did not tell Kitchener much that he did not know before, was particularly

valuable because it exerted a profound effect upon opinion at home. Many people were then for the first time enlightened as to the true character of the hideous tyranny of which Omdurman was the centre.

The second great instrument in the hands of Kitchener was the military railway. One of the most brilliant of war correspondents declared that the battle of the Atbara was really won in the workshops of Wady Halfa.

First, Kitchener built the railway from Sarras to Kosheh, a distance of seventy-six miles, in four months, and this enabled him to conquer the Dongola province, which was one of the granaries of the Nile basin.

The Dongola Expedition, which had long been prepared for, was perhaps forced a little earlier by the defeat inflicted on the Italians by the Abyssinians at Adowa in February, 1896.

The first action was at Ferkeh, in the Soudan, on June 7th, 1896, in which Kitchener, by a daring night march, surprised and utterly routed the Dervishes. He had learnt a lesson in the little engagement at Handoub eight years before, and this time his dispositions were hardly open to criticism.

Lord Cromer had urged the Sirdar to test the value of the Egyptian Army as soon as possible, and certainly both the

fellah and the black battalions came out of the test triumphantly. Their loss was only twenty killed, while the enemy lost at least a thousand, and about five hundred prisoners were captured.

But it was by no means all such plain sailing as this. There were floods and storms, rail-road breakdowns, and, most serious of all, a visitation of cholera. But the Sirdar pulled his army through, and, after fighting two more engagements with the Dervishes, succeeded in turning them out of the province altogether, and establishing a new frontier as far up the Nile as Merawi.

These successes seemed to infuriate the Khalifa, and by way of revenge the Jaalin, a gentle, peaceful tribe, were almost wiped out by horrible massacres.

Some years afterwards a distinguished officer, who preferred to remain anonymous, published in a London paper an interesting account of an incident which occurred just before the advance on Dongola, showing the kind of determination which animates Lord Kitchener when in face of a difficulty:—

“The final advance on Dongola had been fixed. The day was appointed for our start from the cholera-stricken camp at Kosheh, and all the General's plans, which, as a general's plans must be,

were largely dependent on transport arrangements, had been elaborated.

"And then unexpectedly a whole string of miscalculations occurred. First, a column of fourteen hundred men who were being marched across a neck of the desert to Kermep (a distance of forty-five miles) were caught in a terrible Soudan dust and thunder storm, and were so nearly annihilated that only sixty men were able to march into camp. Next, the same storm filled a valley twelve miles wide with so great a volume of water that the whole of the bank of the permanent way of the Soudan Railway was washed away and the rails left festooned to the rocks thirty feet above the desert track, while in no place was there less than twelve feet of water on what had been the permanent way.

"Well, Lord Kitchener rose, as he has always done, to the situation. Many a man would have wilted before such a complicated series of evils. But 'K.,' taking with him 'Jimmy' Watson and Lord Edward Cecil, boarded a pilot engine and steamed for the scene of the disaster, where on his arrival he at once started to reconstruct the wrecked line, carrying it round an altogether different section of rocky desert. To accomplish this his men were forced to dive into twelve feet of water and tear up rails and sleepers and carry them to bank, while the indefatigable 'K.' in his shirt-sleeves aided and encouraged them. As a result, fourteen miles of line were laid over the newly-surveyed ground in twenty-four hours, and the interrupted supply of food and war material was at once continued."

Yet another excellent true story from the same quarter may be quoted.

Lord Kitchener, learning that the last of his three stern-wheeler gunboats was about to be completed, came to be present at the trial which had to be made of its multitube boilers:—

“An army of men were busy painting and furnishing up this hideous iron tank that we called a gunboat. We were to make our start on the morrow, and the headquarters camp was to move that same night. And then suddenly the whole side of the boiler blew out, leaving the vessel as useless and as harmless as a dead crocodile. ‘Great God,’ cried Kitchener, ‘what have I done that all these horrors should happen to me?’

“But the momentary outbreak over, the masterful man’s indomitable pluck asserted itself. How many people worked and how strenuously during the night that followed I cannot say, but the next afternoon saw a special—an ‘extra special’—train steam into Kosheh laden with a new multitube boiler, which was hoisted into position and adjusted and tested in record time.

“I remember that I stood with Lord Edward Cecil (who was Lord Kitchener’s A.D.C.) watching this anxious operation. ‘Well,’ said Lord Edward, ‘if anything goes wrong again I shall ride straight out into the desert with two days’ rations and try to find the Khalifa. I take it that in the circumstances he will be pleasanter company than the General.’”

## CHAPTER V

### THE ATBARA

It has been said that the battle of the Atbara was won in the workshops of Wady Halfa. Probably, never did Kitchener show so clearly his foresight and originality of mind as in the case of the Soudan military railway. All the wiseacres were convinced that a railway from Halfa across the desert to Abu Hamed was an impossible enterprise. Besides, a good deal of money had been already spent in the railway to Kosheh along the river. That was the apparently obvious route; it was madness to attempt to lay over 230 miles of line in a waterless desert.

But Kitchener thought differently. He boldly discarded the Kosheh route. It had done very well for the conquest of Dongola province, but it would be too long and too costly for his present purpose. He saw that a straight route across the desert, from Nile to Nile, would be both shorter and cheaper.

The really serious objection lay in the absence of water. Here undoubtedly the Sirdar's old surveying experience helped

him enormously. He had gone out and had a look, and had found, not only that there was a comparatively stable strip which would carry his rails and sleepers, but also from certain indications strong reason to expect that he would get water. As a matter of fact his engineers found water at the third boring, and this certainly made easier the work of building the line.

But it is impossible to suppose that Kitchener would have failed to build the line even if he had never found any water. The man who was capable of launching a military railway in a desert, at a time when the other end of the yet unbuilt line was still held by the enemy, was not likely to be daunted by the extra difficulty which would have been entailed by the necessity of bringing up water from the base.

In August, 1897, Major-General Hunter's column took Abu Hamed, the soldiers thus getting in before the railway engineers. But by November the line reached Abu Hamed, and it now only took a day to get to Berber, which had been seized by Hunter, instead of weeks.

Still, there was no delay. Immediately the Sirdar drove the line on to the Atbara, 150 miles through a country where there was no wood, and the line had to bring up its own materials as it advanced. It was

a great feat of railway building and was only possible because the Sirdar knew how to choose his human instruments.

It is interesting to recall that in Wolseley's campaign Kitchener was Intelligence Officer. During the summer of 1884 he was at Korosko, negotiating with the sheikhs in view of an advance across the desert substantially by the very route which he himself took some thirteen years later.

Indeed, the idea of an advance across the desert was as old as the hills, but it was left to Kitchener to see that an advance without building a railway as you went on was simply equivalent to making a raid—the old policy of brilliant dashes followed by retirement. With a railway he could not only bring up supplies and reinforcements, but also gunboats in sections to be put together and launched on the upper reaches of the Nile. These gunboats of his played a considerable part in the ultimate triumph.

The fateful year of 1898 opened with everything going very well. In February Kitchener made a tour of inspection in which he covered 530 miles in less than 40 hours.

But at the same time the Sirdar had none too many troops under his command, chiefly for the reason that he had to garrison Korti and Merawi, as well as Kassala,

in order to prevent the Khalifa from striking at the newly recovered province of Dongola across the desert.

These garrisons—though to their disgust they never saw the enemy at all—nevertheless played an indispensable part in the victory, for they held the westward horn of the semi-circle in which the Sirdar was enclosing the Khalifa.

The Sirdar had some notable leaders under him—Hunter, Hector Macdonald, Maxwell, Lewis, and Gatacre; the force consisting altogether of about 13,000 men, with 52 guns. The Intelligence Department was under the brilliant direction of Wingate, whose knowledge and experience of the wily native was not inferior to that of the Sirdar himself.

We must not linger over those trying weeks, which, as every soldier knows, form the most difficult part of soldiering, when the enemy would not come out and fight and his exact position had to be located.

One thing must be mentioned, namely, the boot scandal. Owing to the peculiarities of the climate the Egyptian Army use a riveted boot, but the boots supplied to the British regiments had not even a toe-cap, and a month's marching saw the last of them. G. W. Steevens, the famous war correspondent, thus bitterly comments :—

"It is always the same story—knavery and slackness clogging and strangling the best efforts of the British soldier. To save some contractor a few pence on a boot, or to save some War Office clerk a few hours of the work he is paid for not doing, you stand to lose a good rifle and bayonet in a decisive battle, and to break a good man's heart into the bargain. Is it worth it? But it is always happening; the history of the Army is a string of such disgraces. And each time we arise and bawl, 'Somebody ought to be hanged.' So says everybody. But nobody ever is hanged."

Here we may quote the brilliant pen-portrait which Steevens gives of the Sirdar himself, with its curious anticipation of Kitchener sweeping out the then unreformed War Office:—

"Major-General Sir Horatio Herbert Kitchener is forty-eight years old by the book: but that is irrelevant. He stands several inches over six feet, straight as a lance, and looks out imperiously above most men's heads; his motions are deliberate and strong; slender but firmly knit, he seems built for tireless, steel-wire endurance rather than for power or agility: that also is irrelevant. Steady, passionless eyes shaded by decisive brows, brick-red rather full cheeks, a long moustache beneath which you divine an immovable mouth; his face is harsh, and neither appeals for affection nor stirs dislike.

"All this is irrelevant too: neither age, nor figure nor face, nor any accident of person, has any bearing on the essential Sirdar. You could imagine the character just the same as if all the externals were

different. He has no age but the prime of life, no body but one to carry his mind, no face but one to keep his brain behind. The brain and the will are the essence and the whole of the man—a brain and a will so perfect in their workings that, in the face of extremist difficulty, they never seem to know what struggle is.

“You cannot imagine the Sirdar otherwise than as seeing the right thing to do and doing it. His precision is so inhumanly unerring, he is more like a machine than a man. You feel that he ought to be patented and shown with pride at the Paris International Exhibition. British Empire: Exhibit No. I., *hors concours*, the Soudan Machine.

“It was aptly said of him by one who had closely watched him in his office, and in the field, and at mess, that he is the sort of feller that ought to be made manager of the Army and Navy Stores. The aphorist’s tastes lay perhaps in the direction of those more genial virtues which the Sirdar does not possess, yet the judgment summed him up perfectly. He would be a splendid manager of the Army and Navy Stores. There are some who nurse a desperate hope that he may some day be appointed to sweep out the War Office. He would be a splendid manager of the War Office. He would be a splendid manager of anything.”

At last came the 8th of April, which happened to be Good Friday. The Khalifa’s zariba had been located, and as Steevens says :—

“All England and all Egypt, and the flower of the black lands beyond, Birmingham and the West

Highlands, the half-regenerated children of the earth's earliest civilisation, and grinning savages from the uttermost swamps of Equatoria, muscle and machinery, lord and larrikin, Balliol and Board School, the Sirdar's brain and the camel's back—all welded into one, the awful war machine went forward into action."

The zariba was shelled for an hour and twenty minutes, and then the Cameron Highlanders led the charge, followed by the Seaforths. The enemy showed how well they had been trained, for they reserved their fire with extraordinary discipline until the right moment. The Scotchmen did splendidly, and so did the Lincolns and the Warwicks—in fact, all the British regiments. But, after all, one expects that.

What really made the battle mark an epoch was the behaviour of Lewis's half brigade of Egyptians. They stood and waited under heavy fire, and then they swept on to the zariba absolutely obedient to orders; and they did not charge with the bayonet a moment before they were told, though they must have been longing for the chance.

It is most touching to read of the joy and pride of their officers, who saw in those two hours of hard fighting the triumph of their years of training.

Both the Soudanese blacks and the Egyptians had had trial trips, so to speak,

under fire and had done well, but this was the first important engagement in which they showed that they need not fear comparison with the best white troops. No wonder their officers were ready to cry with joy and pride ; they had themselves charged on foot and clear ahead of their men, as is the immemorial custom of all fighting chiefs of the Soudan.

But the Dervish army also fought gallantly, firing as they fled, and we had to mourn the loss of five officers and twenty-one men killed, and eighteen Egyptian officers and fifty-one men killed. The Dervish leader, Mahmoud, however, was captured, with many prisoners. Altogether the Dervishes must have lost at least three thousand men killed on the spot, including all their Emirs.

After the battle the Army began to understand the Sirdar's strategy. If he had waited for Mahmoud on the Nile, the fugitives could have escaped up stream ; whereas if he had waited lower down the river Atbara, they could still have got across to the Nile. But by giving battle where he did, he only left those Dervishes who escaped thirty miles of waterless desert to cross before they could reach water, and even then they would stand a considerable chance of being wiped out by the Sirdar's gunboats.

The victory was certainly a neat one in its precision and completeness.

It is said that after the victory at the Atbara, which was very much a personal triumph for himself, the usually dry, unemotional Sirdar could not restrain his real joy. As Mr. Arnold White describes the scene, "His blue eyes sparkled, his movements were alert, he laughed, even shouted for joy, he shook hands with all and sundry; and the sudden relief of the great strain revealed the man of iron nerve as a man with a human heart."

From an interesting article written by a staff officer in *Blackwood's Magazine* we take the following striking story:—

"After Atbara, as we rode through the 'dem,' Lord E. Cecil joined us, and presently K. pulled up among the charred corpses on the burning ground to make some inquiries. Cecil made a grimace and pointed to the ground: it was strewn with Dervish shells lying about under our horses' hoofs and the hoofs of the chief's horse, with the grass on fire all around them. Neither of us spoke, but Kismet, destiny, or whatever it is that sits behind the crupper, impelled K. to move on, and a few minutes later a column of smoke shot up into the air—the shells had exploded. But K. had passed on—destiny had need of him still."

Mahmoud himself, although he obviously expected to be put to death, perhaps a

lingering death, showed a high courage which won him the respect and even admiration of his captors.

No one, it will be admitted, is less of a man to care for spectacular displays than Kitchener, but now, for political reasons, there had to be a kind of Roman triumph at Berber. He rode down the main street with his staff and his flag, and a clanking escort of cavalry. Behind him, in a clear space, came Mahmoud, with his hands tied behind his back, holding his head up bravely, but still a prisoner with all his power broken.

The hordes of natives who had crowded into the town were convinced, as they would never have been convinced by any other argument; the white man had really conquered, and Mahmoud, who had only the year before massacred the Jaalin, was beaten. And the lesson of the barbaric show was driven home by the black battalions who followed, the guns and camel corps, every arm of the conquering force.

## CHAPTER VI

### OMDURMAN AND AFTER

So far, so good. But the work was not yet done.

The force destined for Omdurman consisted of two infantry divisions—one British and one Egyptian—a regiment of British and ten squadrons of Egyptian cavalry; with British and Egyptian artillery, including two siege guns. On the river were six fighting gunboats. There were also eight companies of camel corps, and, needless to say, Kitchener had looked after the transport, medical and supply service.

The Khalifa had now his back against the wall. He could not flee, except to certain death at the hands of his own followers. So he had to give battle.

It came on the 2nd of September, and was fought from 5.30 a.m. to 11.50 a.m. The Dervishes who numbered some 50,000, put up a desperate resistance, as was shown by our casualties. The 21st Lancers, who delivered a magnificent charge against odds, suffered particularly. Steevens declares that no white troops could have faced the torrent of death which poured from our

men for five minutes, and yet the Baggara and the blacks came on. They were hurled down by companies, whole lines were stopped dead, but in perfect formation, by our shrapnel, but still other lines came on and on with astonishing gallantry. •

The rest of the story, the magnificent action which Broadwood, at the head of the Egyptian cavalry, fought to contain some 15,000 unsuspected Dervishes on the heights of Kerreri, and the glorious charge of the 21st Lancers through an unsuspected ambush, is well known.

Dramatic indeed was the last stand of the Khalifa's staunchest troops fighting under his own black banner.

"Our men," says Steevens, "were perfect, but the Dervishes were superb—beyond perfection. It was their largest, best, and bravest army that ever fought against us for Mahdism, and it died worthily of the huge empire that Mahdism won and kept so long."

It is profoundly interesting, too, to read the account of a distinguished German officer who accompanied the Soudan Expedition on behalf of the Berlin General Staff. This is how he describes the Sirdar :—

"Certainly the most striking figure in the corps of officers attached to the expedition army was the

Sirdar, then Major-General Sir Herbert Kitchener. His exterior made him conspicuous—tall, slender figure, with a deeply-bronzed and stern visage. He was in 1898 only in his forty-eighth year, and the seventeen years of activity under an Egyptian sun had made no impression upon the elasticity of his sinewy frame."

Again the same writer says:—

"I seldom saw Kitchener riding at a gallop during the battle, but when he did, even over places covered with great stones, he rode like an expert sportsman. He is held to be one of the best horsemen in an army where every officer is more or less a good rider. Without in the least being guilty of bravado, the Sirdar seemed absolutely insensible to personal danger. The entrance to Omdurman was not much less than a mad piece of bravery. His coolness had something humorous in it. For example, when the guns on all the ships were roaring away, Kitchener stopped to light his cigarette quite unconcerned—in fact, carefully noting which way the wind blew."

The slaughter was terrible. The official estimate of the enemy's casualties were over 11,000 killed, 16,000 wounded, and 4,000 prisoners. Those who are inclined to call this butchery should remember that not a man was killed who was not resisting, and very few indeed who were not actually attacking.

To show what kind of fellows they were, especially the Baggara, it may be mentioned

that for days after the fight it was not safe for any white man to go into Omdurman unarmed. A batch or two of snipers had to be taken out and shot before decent order could be maintained. Omdurman could only understand massacre; it could not understand the Sirdar's moderation in refraining from putting all the inhabitants to the sword.

As for the British casualties, they may be put at 131 British and 256 native; an astonishingly low price to pay for such a victory. The numbers show that the enemy's fire was too high.

We certainly owed much to the bad generalship of the Khalifa. If he had attacked us by night, he might easily have got inside our position, and his fanatical troops, with their contempt for death, would have been terrible indeed at close quarters. But he chose the one form of fighting which hardly gave him a chance of success. And yet, even when the mass of his army was dead or captured, he tried one last desperate throw, and when that failed he fled and struck south-west. At any rate he was finished, and the last Mahdist garrison, which was at Gedarif, under the command of the Khalifa's cousin, was neatly rounded up by Colonel Parsons.

Of what the British found in Omdurman there is no need to say much. It is des-

cribed by Steevens as just a planless confusion of blind walls and gaping holes, shiftless stupidity, contented filth and beastliness. The whole city was a huge harem — women from every quarter of Africa, who came out to salute their new masters. Men were few and far between, but all of them, Arabs and blacks who had been trying their best to kill us in the battle, now professed eagerness to take service under our colours.

Two things remained to be done. The Mahdi's tomb, a gorgeous mausoleum which the Khalifa had built in honour of his predecessor, was violated and the Mahdi's body flung into the river. Probably for no action in his life has Kitchener been more severely criticised than for this. But certainly enough has already been said to show that Kitchener is the last man in the world to have done such a thing if he had not known that it was politically necessary — every bit as necessary as that barbaric demonstration at Berber which followed the battle of the Atbara.

The other thing to be done was to hold a memorial service for Gordon, which should mark the achievement of all those long years of waiting and preparation.

This ceremony, among the ruins of Gordon's palace, had an impressiveness too deep for words, and there were those who

said that the cold Sirdar himself could hardly speak or see as General Hunter and the rest stepped out, according to their rank, and grasped his hand.

Honours in plenty came to the Sirdar, as well as to his gallant captains. He was raised to the peerage as Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, and on returning home was fêted as a national hero.

But all the time he was characteristically thinking of the next thing to do. He had given the Soudan peace and permanent security for the future so far as human foresight could penetrate, but he saw that if she was to reap the full fruits of the victories that had been won by the sword she must have education. And so he conceived a great scheme of establishing a Gordon Memorial College at Khartoum, but he hesitated before launching it, fearing that he would not get the money needed.

Mr. G. W. Smalley, the veteran American journalist, relates that he was spending a week-end with Lord Kitchener as a fellow-guest at Mr. Ralli's beautiful place in Sussex :—

“ He wanted £100,000, and he doubted whether he should get it. In vain his friends urged him to make his appeal. ‘No,’ said Lord Kitchener, ‘nothing less than £100,000 will be of any use. It is a large sum. I should not like to fail, and if they gave me only part of the amount, to have to

return it.' He was told that his name would be enough. It was the psychological moment. Delay would only injure his chances. Lord Glenesk offered Lord Kitchener £1,000 across the dinner-table, and other sums were offered there and then, and the support of two powerful newspapers was promised. Still he hesitated, and still he repeated, 'I should not like to fail.'

"At last one of the company said, 'Well, Lord Kitchener, if you had doubted about your campaign as you do about this you would never have got to Khartoum.' His face hardened, and his reply was characteristic of the man: 'Perhaps not; but then I could depend on myself, and now I have to depend on the British public.' But he did ask for the money, and got all, and more than all he wanted, with no difficulty whatever. It appeared that the British public also was to be depended on."

Mr. Smalley went on to talk to him about the extraordinary difficulties involved in governing the 1,200 islands in the Philippine group, which had but recently been annexed by the United States. Lord Kitchener listened to all this, thought a moment, looked across the table, and said, "I should like to govern them for you."

But to return to Gordon College. Lord Kitchener's appeal is rather a long document, and bears the deep impress of the writer's enthusiasm for the teeming populations whom he had set free. Of the Soudan, he wrote:—

"That region now lies in the pathway of our

Empire, and a numerous population has become practically dependent upon the men of our race. Henceforth, a responsible task is laid upon us, and those who have conquered are called upon to civilise. In fact, the work interrupted since the death of Gordon must now be resumed. It is with this conviction that I venture to lay before you a proposal which, if it meet with the approval and support of the British public and of the English-speaking race, would prove of inestimable benefit to the Soudan and to Africa."

He went on to say that the area of the Soudan comprise a population of upwards of three millions, of whom it might be said that they were wholly uneducated. The dangers arising from that fact were too obvious and had been too painfully felt during many years past for him to dwell upon them. In the course of time no doubt an education of some sort, and administered by some hands, would be set on foot. But, if Khartoum could be made forthwith the centre of an education supported by British funds and organised from Britain, there would be secured to this country indisputably the first place in Africa as a civilising Power, and an effect would be created which would be felt for good throughout the central region of that continent.

Accordingly, he proposed that at Khartoum there should be founded and maintained with British money a College, to be a pledge that

the memory of Gordon was still alive amongst us, and that his aspirations were at length to be realised.

The system would need to be gradually built up. It would begin by teaching the sons of leading men, the heads of villages, and the heads of districts. They belong to a race very capable of learning and ready to learn. The teaching, in its early stages, would be devoted to purely elementary subjects, such as reading, writing, geography, and the English language. Later a more advanced course would be instituted, including a training in technical subjects specially adapted to the requirements of those who inhabit the valley of the Upper Nile. The principal teachers in the College would be British, and the supervision of the arrangements would be vested in the Governor-General of the Soudan. There would, of course, be no interference with the religion of the people.

This scheme caught the imagination of the British people, and, as Mr. Smalley says, Kitchener got his £100,000 and even more; as a matter of fact, £20,000 more. The late Lord Salisbury frankly told him that he could only look to rich men for help, but Kitchener disagreed and he did his best to press his appeal to all classes of the nation.

Of course, there were the usual criticisms,

and the truly imaginary danger of over educating the Soudanese was expressed in some amusing verses :—

Your plan is large, and people shout  
 That to your credit it redounds,  
 And so beyond the smallest doubt  
 You'll get your hundred thousand pounds ;  
 Just now the very word " Egyptian "  
 Would draw a generous subscription.

But while throughout a glad Soudan  
 You plant the leafy knowledge-tree  
 And lead the cunning coloured man  
 To mastery of A.B.C.,  
 Whatever blessings may await him,  
 Oh ! do not over-educate him !

So, ere you sail for far Khartoum  
 With all that money in your purse.  
 I must with diffidence presume  
 To proffer you my simple verse,  
 And pray you never will endeavour  
 To make the Soudanese too clever !

Kitchener laid the foundation stone of the College in January, 1899. Then came his call to South Africa, and with that grand piece of work behind him he returned to Khartoum in November, 1902, to declare the College open.

It only remains to tell briefly the story of Fashoda. This is a post on the White Nile which had been occupied by a French officer, Captain Marchand, with a small force from the French Congo at the end of 1897.

After the battle of Omdurman Kitchener found Marchand still in this post, the strategic importance of which was very great. Kitchener had the news from Dervishes, who, having been repulsed by Marchand at Fashoda, had retreated northwards. The way in which the Sirdar dealt with this most awkward situation seems to show that if he had not been a soldier he would have made a great name as a diplomatist.

The Sirdar took a flotilla of some ten steamers with 2,000 men, and appeared before Fashoda. Marchand was then formally invited on board the Sirdar's vessel. Kitchener was sitting alone high up on the bridge, and the two men shook hands cordially. The conversation which followed is thus reported by Marchand himself:—

“‘I have come to resume possession of the Khedive's dominions,’ Kitchener began.

“‘Mon Général, I, Captain Marchand, am here by order of the French Government,’ was the reply. ‘I thank you for your offer of conveyance to Europe, but I must wait here for instructions.’

“‘You do not wish to retire after the magnificent explorations you have completed?’

“‘No, General. I am waiting for orders.’

“‘It is a long time since you had any news from France?’

“‘Some months, General; but my orders are to wait here.’

“‘Major, I will place my boats at your disposal to return to Europe by the Nile.’

“‘General, I thank you, but I cannot accept your offer. I am waiting for orders from my Government.’

“‘A good many things have happened since you started on your journey.’

“‘General, whatever may have happened, France, who is not in the habit of abandoning her officers, will send me orders.’

“‘I must hoist the Egyptian flag here,’ Kitchener next said.

“‘Why, I myself will help you to hoist it—over the village.’

“‘Over your fort.’

“‘No, that I shall resist,’ was the French officer’s reply.

“‘Do you know, Major, that this affair may set France and England at war?’

“I bowed, without replying. General Kitchener rose. He was very pale. I also rose. Kitchener gazed at his 2,000; then at my fort, on the ramparts of which the bayonets gleamed.

“‘We are the stronger,’ Kitchener remarked after his leisurely survey.

“‘Only a fight can settle that,’ was Marchand’s reply.

“‘Right you are,’ was the Englishman’s reply, ‘come along, let’s have a whisky and soda.’”

Marchand also learnt of the fall of the French Government, and with it that of M. Hanotaux, the Minister who had sent him on his mission.

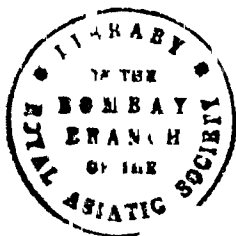
Nevertheless, it is terribly true that the incident did bring England and France within measurable distance of war. However, both in London and in Paris there was no bungling, and the affair ended in the retirement of Marchand with every circumstance of honour; though, naturally enough, the incident left a coldness in Anglo-French relations for a good long time to come.

Marchand himself conceived the highest admiration for Kitchener, and for other British officers. "We were like comrades everywhere," he said; on his side, too, Kitchener fully appreciated Marchand's remarkable exploit in getting to Fashoda at all. In a despatch to Lord Cromer he wrote :—

"It is impossible not to entertain the highest admiration for the courage, devotion and indomitable spirit displayed by M. Marchand's expedition, but our general impression was one of astonishment that an attempt should have been made to carry out a project of such magnitude and danger by the despatch of so small and ill-equipped a force, which—as their commander remarked to me—was neither in a position to resist a second Dervish attack, nor to retire; indeed, had our

destruction of the Khalifa's power at Omdurman been delayed for a fortnight, in all probability he and his companions would have been massacred.

"The claims of M. Marchand to have occupied the Bahr-el-Ghazal and Fashoda provinces with the force at his disposal would be ludicrous did not the sufferings and privations his expedition endured during their two years' arduous journey render the futility of their efforts pathetic."



## CHAPTER VII

### THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR

WE come now to the South African war, that amazing story of mishaps and mistakes, of feats of gallantry equal to the most glorious in our history, of tragic unreadiness, of over-weening confidence and the depths of depression, and then an ultimate muddling through to a firm and stable peace. But if it had not been for Kitchener should we even have muddled through?

Of the origin of this prolonged campaign, which cost the Empire what seemed then an appalling expenditure of blood and treasure, we need here say nothing; it is only necessary to note that the war took its rise in fierce political animosities, with the result that the nation was, at any rate at first, not completely united, as was happily the case in the war with Germany. There were people who thought that England's hands were not clean, and that the war was a mine-owners' war, simply designed to appropriate the territories of the Boer Republics on account of the gold that had been discovered there.

However that may be, when once war

had been declared by the rejection of the Boer ultimatum on October 11th, 1899, the country as a whole prepared itself for an easy conquest. It was thought that there would be a sort of military parade to Pretoria, and even the most pessimistic soldiers declared that they would be back for the Derby. We made the fatal mistake—a mistake made also by Germany—of underrating our enemies.

The country was quickly disillusioned. White held Ladysmith, and Kimberley offered a gallant resistance; but the operations in Natal soon showed that the Boers could stand up to our men, and, what was more serious, knew how to fight and run away and come back to fight again.

The Commander-in-Chief, Sir Redvers Buller, reached Cape Town on October 31st, and British spirits were revived by the battles of Belmont, Graspan, and Modder River, in Cape Colony. But then came the reverse at Stormberg, the disaster of Magersfontein, and, as a climax, the battle of Colenso, in Natal, when Buller's advance was checked with the loss of twelve guns and many casualties.

All this in one week—"black week" as it was quickly named—and the nation woke up to the truth that this was no military parade but a real war.

It was then that Lord Roberts, in the

midst of his grief for his only surviving son, who had been mortally wounded at Colenso, came to the rescue in his country's need, and was appointed to the supreme command in South Africa.

Few people are aware that at the outset of the war Kitchener advised the Government that the business would be a long one. His views were courteously heard, but were not acted on, and, as so very nearly happened when the war with Germany broke out, the great soldier was actually sent back to Egypt. Among his officers, many bemoaned with bitterness their bad luck at being sent to the Soudan instead of to South Africa. "Have patience," observed the Sirdar, drily. "We shall all be wanted there before long."

The optimists who refused to believe that Kitchener would ever be needed in the South African war, were reinforced by others, who with great ingenuity pointed out that Kitchener's profound knowledge of warfare in North Africa made him quite unfitted for a command in the sub-continent where the conditions were wholly different. Indeed, the story goes that when one of Kitchener's men anxiously asked a noted statesman if there was any chance of the Sirdar's being sent out to the Cape, the other answered, with a twinkle in his eye, "Let us hope not."

He might embarrass us terribly. He is just the sort of man who, when he got to Pretoria, might send old Kruger's head on a charger to Madame Tussaud's."

But, whatever the experts thought, the nation felt an immense relief when on December 19th there came the following statement from the War Office:—

"As the campaign in Natal is, in the opinion of her Majesty's Government, likely to require the presence and undivided attention of Sir Redvers Buller, it has been decided to send Field-Marshal Lord Roberts to the Cape as Commander-in-Chief in South Africa with Lord Kitchener of Khartoum as his chief of staff."

On that same day Kitchener left Omdurman; forty-eight hours later he was in Cairo, where he embarked on the cruiser *Isis* for Malta. At Malta he transhipped to the *Dido* for Madeira, and there he caught up on December 27th the *Dunottar Castle* with Lord Roberts on board.

How Lord Kitchener took up and carried through that stupendous task in South Africa can hardly be better summed up than in a story which went the rounds in Cape Town towards the end of the war.

When Kitchener first came out, in answer to the invariable question as to when the war would end, he replied, "When we have whipped the Boers."

A year later the same question visibly annoyed him, and he would answer shortly, "When the Boers learn that they have been whipped." As the end of the mighty struggle was approaching, his answer to the same question ran, more slowly, more gravely, "When we have found a way to reconcile the Boers to being whipped."

Endless stories were told, some perhaps invented, but many probably true, indicative of his character and terse, if rather grim, wit. On one occasion, when instructing one of his aides-de-camp to communicate with a distinguished general officer, famous for the violence of his language, "But not over the wires," he observed; "they might fuse."

Another story which went the round of the Army, is that on one occasion, when busily occupied with his chief staff officer, the General was much disturbed by the eccentric proceedings of a galloper who kept riding up and down in front of the General's quarters, kicking up a tremendous dust. At last Kitchener turned to one of his young men and said quickly, "Go out and see who that fellow is, and if he is not a duke, an Imperial Yeoman, or a C.I.V., tell him to go to blazes, will you?"

On the whole the Yeomanry were

splendid and did wonders, but just at first some of them did not show up very well, probably owing to the inexperience of their officers. The story goes that a force of Colonials and Yeomanry was told off to capture a small laager. A friendly Boer offered to show them the way, and as a result, when morning came, the British were surrounded. There was, however, a gap in the cordon, and for this gap the Yeomanry made, leaving their comrades with the guns. They made their way to General Clements's camp, and he wired to Kitchener, "A company of your Yeomanry has turned up. What shall I do with them?" Quick came the reply, "Keep them as far from me as they kept from the Boers."

That Kitchener, when fighting, does not like interference from civilians was amusingly shown when the Governor of Natal telegraphed to him: "My Ministers and I consider that we should be vouchsafed further news." And the curt reply was:—"I do not agree with either you or your Ministers.—K."

Lord Kitchener has one peculiar gift which is characteristic of most if not all leaders of men. His mere presence seems to act like a tonic on those of his subordinates, whatever be their class or rank who have gone, to use an expressive word, "stale."

When he landed in South Africa it is an open secret that the Army, who had been fighting for so long and in so bewilderingly new a way, had become terribly stale, and there were many in a position to know who declared that all troops in the field would have to be relieved and stiffened by the addition of quite fresh regiments from home.

These pessimists, however, soon found out their mistake. The very men who were declared to be, as regarded their morale, "sick to death of it all," roused themselves into splendid mental and physical vigour. One young soldier wrote home to his mother that when Kitchener appeared it was exactly as if the old War God of the Greeks made his mighty hand felt. Another described him as "the personification of distilled vigour."

Roberts and Kitchener arrived at Cape Town on January 10th, 1900.

The first business of the Chief of the Staff consisted of the organisation of supply trains and ammunition, as well as a constant stream of reliefs up to the front; while Roberts was conceiving that bold sweep up Cape Colony and the Orange Free State on the left, which ultimately brought us through.

The confusion at Cape Town was so great that not even Kitchener himself could get ready for the advance in less

than a month. Meanwhile, there was the appalling muddle and disaster of Spion Kop, in Natal, followed by the capture and then the inglorious loss of Vaal Krantz.

But in February Roberts started, and relieved Kimberley. On the anniversary of Majuba Cronje surrendered unconditionally at Paardeberg; and on the last day of the month Ladysmith was relieved. In March Roberts entered Bloemfontein, and after much more fighting, the tide of success swaying first to one side then to the other, Mafeking was relieved in the middle of May. On the last day of the month the British entered Johannesburg, and Pretoria was captured in the first week in June.

Roberts then advanced east to join hands with Buller, the Boer Republics were annexed, and in September President Kruger and the other Boer officials fled to Lorenzo Marques, in Portuguese territory. By December it was thought that the war was practically over, and Roberts left for home, leaving Kitchener in supreme command.

Alas! the war was by no means over. All through the year 1901 and the first five months of 1902 the Boers carried on a really brilliant guerilla warfare, in which British successes alternated with British

disasters. Of all the Boer leaders, De Wet gave the most trouble, but at long last the British terms were accepted by the Boer delegates, and signed by Lord Kitchener and Lord Milner at Pretoria, on May 31st, 1902.

Characteristically Lord Kitchener issued a message congratulating the Boers on the good fight they had made, and welcoming them as citizens of the British Empire.

Kitchener himself was promoted full general, received the thanks of Parliament and a grant of £50,000, and was created a Viscount. These rewards were certainly not excessive, though it is a mistake to contrast them with the greater rewards bestowed on Lord Roberts. Each did what the other could not have done. Kitchener made Roberts's strategy possible, but there can be no doubt that of the two Roberts's work was the greater.

To say this is not to belittle Kitchener's great services, and especially his dogged perseverance. Through those long, nerve-racking months he dealt with ninety mobile Boer columns operating over an area nearly three times as large as Germany was then. He had to work, for the first time in his life, with an army organisation for which he was in no way responsible, and which would certainly

have been more efficient if he had been responsible.

He had to improvise much, to put up with what he could get, rather than with what he wanted; while in the field he had forces whose devotion and gallantry were beyond all praise, but who had never had experience of the guerilla warfare to which the Boers treated them. The enemy would never give pitched battle, but would hang on the flanks of the heavy British columns, taking every chance of capturing outposts and cutting off convoys, and so providing himself with the stores which he needed so sorely.

The difficulties were extraordinary, and only to be properly understood by those who know South Africa and what may be called the psychological conditions which prevailed at the time.

There is no doubt that the Boers had been encouraged to expect help from Germany, which it is now known they would have received if they had at any moment succeeded in breaking through to the sea. The nation did not then know how nearly the Boer war developed into a European coalition formed to crush us. Nothing but the determination of the Tsar to keep the peace in Europe saved us from a gigantic struggle for our whole position as a world Power.

It must be remembered, too, that the Boers conceived themselves to be fighting, not only for their hearths and homes, but for their very existence. From certain Continental sources they had been fed with a stream of lies about the British; most of them unquestionably believed that if they were finally defeated they would be one and all put to the sword. Naturally, therefore, they fought to the last gasp.

It must also be remembered that Kitchener had to provide, not only for the prisoners of war—of whom altogether about 32,000 were taken—but also for the Boer women and children.

Here we touch ground of bitter controversy. It will be obvious from what has already been said that Kitchener is the last man in the world to exercise pressure on an enemy through his weak dependents. He could not leave these helpless creatures perhaps to starve and in any case to suffer great hardships; while for military reasons he was anxious to prevent them from assisting the enemy. This, it must be remembered, the Boer women were both able and eager to do; practically all of them knew how to handle a rifle, and they constituted a serious addition to what may be called the sniping strength of the enemy.

What Kitchener did was to put them in

vast concentration camps to the number of nearly 75,000. For this he was bitterly denounced, not only by interested Anglo-phobes abroad, but also by humanitarians and sentimentalists at home; the mortality was said to be terrific, and the treatment of the women and children positively inhuman.

As a matter of fact Lieutenant Malan, General Viljoen's aide-de-camp, visited the concentration camp at Middleburg in September, 1901, and reported its condition satisfactory. In the following July a Committee of medical women and others, headed by Mrs. Fawcett, arrived in South Africa and visited all the camps. Their report as to food, hospitals, etc., was favourable, and they attributed the high mortality which prevailed at one time to an epidemic of measles, and to the ignorance of hygiene shown by the Boers themselves.

Early in July, 1901, it became evident that Kitchener thought some new departure was needed to bring the Boer resistance to a speedy end. His army had been marching and counter-marching over seemingly endless stretches of veld, hunting among innumerable kloofs, striving to penetrate the recesses of the dense bush, and silently moving in the night in the hope of surprising the enemy. The columns swept

this way and that, sometimes in detail, sometimes in a grand movement, and though they continually picked up small bodies of the enemy, the achievement of the main end seemed to be far off.

In these circumstances Kitchener organised a system of block-houses on a larger scale than had ever been attempted before. He threw a line of these defensible posts across the Orange River Colony, from Jacobsdal to Ladybrand, and he afterwards extended them along the Transvaal and Orange River Railways, and again along another line in the north portion of Cape Colony, where, it may be added, disaffection had long been rife and the Boers had received important aid from rebel colonists. Yet another line ran from Frederikstad to the source of the Mooi River, and thence along the Magaliesberg to Commando Nek. In the Transvaal he set the South African Constabulary to work, building a line of posts to the east of Pretoria.

The block-houses were placed as a rule at intervals of a mile, sometimes less. "Not only," wrote Kitchener, "do they protect our communications and render inter-communication difficult between the different portions of the Boer forces, but they serve as barriers against which our mobile columns are able to drive bands of the enemy and force them to surrender."

They also enabled him to sit in Pretoria, the embodiment of steady, remorseless fate, like a spider in his web, in touch with every part of the vast field of operations. Well has it been said that the "drives" which reduced the commandos of De Wet and Delarey to wandering bands were not less pitched battles than the holocaust of Omdurman.

It is interesting to study Lord Kitchener's literary style in the numerous despatches which he wrote throughout the war. His telegraphic despatches are extraordinarily terse and yet individual. He says what he has to say plainly, and always with proper regard to the niceties of language; there are no clichés or worn-out phrases such as specialists are so apt to use when they take pen in hand. At one time he was much abused for using the term "bag" to denote captures of men, arms, and live stock, and in this point he surrendered to his critics.

Kitchener has no love for war correspondents as a class, though he has always admitted some notable exceptions. The kind he particularly abhors is the emotional, exuberant type.

For example, on July 11th, 1901, he telegraphed, in answer to an enquiry from the War Office about an engagement at a place called Warmbaths:—

"It is not possible for me to see all the Press telegrams which pass, and I did not know of this telegram when your telegram reached me asking if Beyers' commando had been discomfited, to which, as his commando had nothing to do with this skirmish, I replied in the negative.

"You can judge from the weekly returns I am sending of killed and wounded and captured that where the country is being cleared many skirmishes against detached parties of the enemy must necessarily take place: but I do not telegraph the action to you unless it is important, or has some definite result. Otherwise the number of telegrams sent would be great, and you might be easily misled as regards the results secured.

"For instance, in this very case the officer in command gave the Press correspondent a rather glowing account of the action.

"I don't approve of the inclination to magnify an unimportant skirmish into a British victory that exists in the Press, and though I find it difficult to control this, certainly I do not encourage it in any way."

It is to be noted that Kitchener's anger with the correspondent does not prevent him from candidly admitting that the officer in command was also to blame.

In some correspondence he had with General Botha and ex-President Steyn, which was published in September, 1901, Kitchener showed himself a neat controversialist. To Mr. Steyn he says:—

"Your Honour must be aware that the invasion

of British territory which took place after the unjustifiable declaration of war would not be allowed to pass without due punishment, and when your Honour states that you place your trust in God, I cannot help thinking that you have overlooked the passage in God's Word that 'They that take the sword shall perish with the sword.'"

Kitchener has always shown a due respect for his adversaries. It is known that he early formed a high opinion of De Wet—indeed, he is reported to have said of this redoubtable enemy, "Give me one man like De Wet and I will send home one-third of our Army"—a brilliant pendant to the oft-quoted remark of De Wet's, that he would give Lord Roberts three months to catch him, Lord Kitchener three days, and General — all his life!

The *Gazette* of July 18th, 1902, contained Kitchener's final despatch on the operations in South Africa. It was dated Pretoria, June 1st, and was naturally a rather long document. One passage, however, may be quoted because it is in itself a fine tribute to the nature of the man who wrote it:—

"The protracted struggle which has for so long caused suffering to South Africa has at length terminated, and I should fail to do justice to my own feelings if, at this moment, I neglected to bear testimony to the patience, tenacity, and heroism which have been displayed by all ranks of his Majesty's

## THE SOUTH AFRICAN WAR III

forces, Imperial and Colonial, during the whole course of the war. Nothing but the qualities of bravery and endurance in our troops could have overcome the great difficulties of this campaign, or have finally enabled the Empire to reap the fruits of all its sacrifices.

"It is satisfactory to feel that the war, already prolonged beyond all reasonable justification, has terminated without the exasperation that must certainly have resulted from a further prolongation of a useless guerilla struggle, and I feel that a tribute of respect is due to those of the Boer leaders who, facing privation and danger at the head of their commandos up to the very last moment, have at length been manly enough to bow to the inevitable, and far-seeing enough to accept the generous terms accorded by His Majesty's Government.

"The fact that a spirit of conciliation has marked the concluding phase of the negotiations may well induce a hope that the agreement just signed will lead at an early date to a final reconciliation between the British and Dutch races in South Africa."

At a luncheon given in honour of Lord Kitchener just before his departure for home, he made a remarkable speech which proved him—if indeed proof were needed after his masterly handling of the Fashoda incident—as good a diplomatist as soldier.

In this speech he spoke very warmly, not only of the Cape Colonists, who naturally had British sympathies all through the war, but also of the Cape

farmers, who were deeply moved by strong feelings of race and kinship with the enemy. And he went on to deliver an eloquent apologia—one of peculiar interest at the present time—for martial law:—

“Among the many of all grades and ranks who have criticised martial law I have not noticed one who has calmly stated the question, and considered how many of these poor ignorant farmers, now sitting comfortably at home in their farms, if they had not been protected by the influences of martial law, would have been now either actually or politically dead. Martial law has protected the people from that fatal path which they were being encouraged to follow, and which led only to battle, murder and sudden death. In a minor degree martial law has been effective in stopping arms and munitions from reaching the hands of our enemies.”

He concluded his speech with the following fine words:—

“Now that peace has come I earnestly urge you all to put aside all racial feeling, all ‘Leagues’ and ‘Bonds.’ Boer and Briton alike have had the horrors of war brought home to them. They have had a good fight and they have shaken hands over it, and now they are working as one man to set right the disasters that occurred during the struggle.”

How nobly this ideal was afterwards realised in the Union of South Africa is not the least glorious page in the story of the Empire.

Before leaving Cape Town, in answer to an address from the Irish Society, Lord Kitchener spoke most feelingly of "the noble manner in which the Irish regiments maintained the honour and glory of the Old Country," and he alluded to the deep affection he had for "the country in which I was born."

Many of us can remember the amazing reception accorded to Lord Kitchener on his return from South Africa in July, 1902. Pages might be filled with the accounts of the honours showered on him; we have already mentioned some of them.

The decoration of the then new Order of Merit was pinned on his breast by King Edward himself. On his advancement in the peerage he chose the title of Viscount Kitchener of Khartoum, of the Vaal in the Colony of the Transvaal, and of Aspell (where his mother was born), in the county of Suffolk.

Very impassive he may have appeared to the cheering crowds—indeed it is on record that at one moment he actually put up his hand to try and hide one side of his face from the serried ranks of his eager fellow-countrymen who had turned out in thousands to welcome him—and yet he must have been a proud man on the day of his triumphal return. When he had left England, the cheers for the victor of

Omdurman were still ringing in his ears; now he returned to be acclaimed as the man who had done more than anyone, with one exception, to bring peace to South Africa.

The first of the many speeches he was compelled to make in answer to public presentations and congratulations, was delivered at Southampton.

"It is to the rank and file of the Army," he said, "that the country now owes the happy conclusion of the war. It will soon be your pleasant duty to welcome them back, and I hope you will remember Lord Roberts's appeal and let your welcome be of a non-alcoholic character."

Sir John French and Sir Ian Hamilton spoke on the same occasion, and the latter evoked rapturous cheers when he observed that with a Commander like Lord Kitchener all that the chief of his staff had to do was to smoke his pipe.

After that came the wonderful welcome prepared by London. Every class was represented, and at the station waiting for Kitchener was his old friend and beloved chief, Lord Roberts, as well as the then Prince of Wales, our present King.

Of peculiar interest on that day were the Colonial and Overseas contingent, and the London crowd were also much attracted by the sight of 150 Japanese sailors, who were

given an excellent position on Constitution Hill, not far from the Indian troops and the Grenadier Guards.

At the luncheon at Buckingham Palace which followed this triumphal progress through the London streets, Lord Kitchener sat on the right of the Prince of Wales—King Edward being at the time still laid up after his serious operation—the Duke of Cambridge was on the Prince's left, and Lord Roberts immediately opposite. It is curious now to recall the fact that among the table ornaments specially brought up from Windsor was a splendid piece of gold plate presented by the German Emperor to our Sovereign.

Later on Lord Kitchener went on a kind of triumphal tour of our great manufacturing cities, and it was said that at Sheffield he would have been presented, among other gifts, with a maxim gun if he could have carried it away with him. At Ipswich the popular hero was made the first freeman of the Borough for a hundred years, his name following those of Wellington, Nelson and Marlborough. And society fêted him, not to its heart's content, but, as far as he would allow it, in a fashion possible in no other country in the world.

But he did not forget his old friends and comrades, and among the few public dinners

he consented to attend was that of the Royal Engineers.

It was characteristic of the man that he contrived to leave England in the quietest of all possible ways. Attended only by his man-servant, he left Victoria on October 17th, 1902, for Paris. The railway officials were quite unaware of the identity of "Mr. Cook," for whom a compartment had been engaged, and only a few people on the platform recognised him and cheered as the train was moving out of the station.

In Paris also he was a good deal fêted by his French friends. Although he refused to receive any journalists, the Press was very friendly—indeed, the *Temps* made the happy remark: "Since yesterday there has been in France one ex-French soldier the more; his name is Kitchener, and he resides at the British Embassy."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE INDIAN REVOLVER

"AT Simla and Calcutta," says Ali Baba, in his amusing description of his tour in India, "the Government of India always sleeps with a revolver under its pillow. That revolver is the Commander-in-Chief. There is a tacit understanding that this revolver is not to be let off; indeed, sometimes it is believed that it is not loaded.

When "K. of K." went to India as Commander-in-Chief, everyone knew that that particular revolver was very much loaded, and most people thought it would be let off. It was let off, and there was a great upheaval. Things were done which had been talked about for years, and the air was filled with the lamentations of people whose enjoyment of comfortable billets was unceremoniously disturbed. It is what always happens when an energetic new broom sets to work, but things settled down quickly, and the malcontents discovered that after all the Army had survived the surgical operations performed on it. Others indeed perceived that Kitchener's

surgery had given the patient new life and vigour.

It must not be thought that he was indifferent to the traditions of his great office. What soldier would not be proud to hold the command once held by Napier and Clyde and Strathnairn, and in more modern times by Roberts, Lockhart and White? Kitchener was far indeed from cutting himself adrift from the glorious traditions of the past; on the contrary, he continued and developed them, accomplishing much that those great captains had themselves striven for without avail.

Seven years Lord Kitchener spent in India, from 1902 to 1909.

It is unfortunate that his fellow-countrymen do not know more about this period of his life, for it was of the greatest importance, not only on account of what he did for India, but also of what India did for him. The experience which he then gained of handling vast problems of army organisation was unquestionably an ideal preparation for the great office which even at that time he seemed destined one day to fill—that of War Minister at home.

With all their pride in India, with all their consciousness that they are the nation who hold more than any other "the gorgeous East in fee," the mass of Britons have only a general idea of the whole

romantic adventure of their country's rule in India, of the miracles which are daily accomplished, and of the extent to which our position as a world power is bound up with the fortunes of that vast continent.

Without going into too great detail or into forbidding technicalities, it will be possible to explain with sufficient clearness exactly what Lord Kitchener did in India as Commander - in - Chief. Briefly, he doubled the hitting power of the Indian Army, and made it available in a shorter time; and he left it better trained, better armed, better paid, and more contented than he found it.

It is almost incredible, but it is actually a fact, that when he arrived in India he found that the distribution of the Army had been hardly changed at all since the Mutiny. Regiments were distributed all over the continent without relation to any possible, or even probable emergency, but simply because here the cantonments were big enough, or there the climate was agreeable.

The same entire lack of any unifying purpose was shown in the arrangement of the ammunition columns, which, it is true, existed, but were so placed that had there been a sudden call to arms their practical value would have been enormously diminished.

But what was in Lord Kitchener's own

opinion the worst feature was the division of authority, and it was on this point that Lord Kitchener had his famous battle with Lord Curzon, who was then the Viceroy.

There is no need to go into the details of that Homeric struggle; suffice it to say that Lord Kitchener's plans for army re-organisation were most warmly supported by Lord Curzon up to the point when the question of the Military Department arose.

Lord Kitchener found a state of things which he thus described to Dr. Fitchett, the author of "Deeds that Won the Empire."

"I gave one set of instructions to a general upon a certain subject, and the Military Member of Council gave another set of instructions to the same general on the same subject. What was that unhappy officer to do—except perhaps do nothing!

"I am responsible for the efficiency of the Army in India, but I had no opportunity of explaining my own plans to the supreme authority, the Indian Government; they had to be filtered through the lips of another military officer. There is no question as to the right of the Government of India to decide finally on questions of policy; the civil power is, of course, supreme. All I contend for is that it must be adequately informed as to the plans which I, as the responsible expert it employs, think necessary for the efficiency of the Army.

"There has been much talk of a design on my part

to set up a military autocracy—nothing can be more untrue. But I must work under conditions which enable me to discharge the trust put in my hands by the Civil Government, and one of these conditions is that I must be allowed to put adequately and personally my own plans before the Government to which I am responsible."

These words were used by Lord Kitchener before the fall of Mr. Balfour's Government in 1905. That Government had, on the whole, supported him. Lord Midleton (then Mr. Brodrick) gave him almost all he wanted. He placed a newly-named Army Department under the Commander-in-Chief, charged with all the powers and duties of the old Military Department excepting only those relating to supply. This was entrusted to a separate department, the head of which became an ordinary member of the Viceroy's Council. Thus the old Military Member of Council was abolished, with all the waste and friction entailed by the system of dual control.

The compromise worked well while it lasted; but after some three years it was seen that the separation of the supply branch was not really necessary and only caused needless expense.

By that time the Liberals had returned to power, and Mr. John Morley, as he then was, was Secretary of State for India.

It is one of the curious ironies of history that Lord Morley, who felt impelled to resign on the outbreak of the war with Germany, should have so strongly supported Lord Kitchener in India that he actually himself proposed the abolition of the Supply Department, its duties being distributed among the various divisions of the head-quarter staff.

Needless to say, Lord Kitchener did not wait for the settlement of this question of dual control before setting on foot various other reforms which lay ready to his hand.

He began by redistributing the forces with one simple object, the defence of India. Perhaps, to a superficial observer, there would not have appeared to be very much difference in the position of the various units, but really there was the greatest difference in the world. There was method and intelligent order in the grouping. Every general of division was given a complete and balanced force to command, and the strategical positions were such that if war broke out each division would be ready for instant movement, in close proximity to the necessary railway communications.

At the same time, such was Lord Kitchener's foresight, each division would leave behind it an adequate force to support the Civil Government in the event of

trouble with the natives—a possibility which must always be taken into account in the complex problems of Indian administration.

In the year 1907 Lord Kitchener completed his edifice of re-organisation by dividing the whole of the Indian forces into a Northern and a Southern Army, each under a full general with a suitable staff.

It is difficult for a civilian to realise the enormous mass of detailed work which this building up again from the foundation entailed on that one brain. It could not have been done if the Commander-in-Chief had not possessed that personal magnetism which inspires subordinates and draws out of them their very best work, making them the most loyal and devoted of allies. Lord Kitchener himself, too, would be the first to acknowledge the valuable help he received from the Civil Government, with whom he worked at every stage in full harmony.

So much for the broad, general aspects of this marvellous achievement. It remains to give some idea of what Lord Kitchener did for the regiment and for the individual soldier.

Of course, in so complex an organisation as the Indian Army, with its extraordinary mixtures of race and colour, a good deal of routine office work, which the outsider is apt to call "red tape," is necessary. But

it is a thing which is very apt to grow, and just as Lord Curzon ruthlessly cut it down to a minimum in the Indian Civil Service, so Lord Kitchener in the Army resolved that the soldiers should be soldiers and not clerks.

The Commander-in-Chief struck his most damaging blow at red tape when he arranged for the proper grading of responsibility, which at one swoop destroyed that perpetual reference to headquarters which was the bane of the old system.

To begin with the young officers, the subalterns and lieutenants; for them the regiment, and not the garrison class, became the training school. Garrison classes in general were abolished on the ground that they tempted officers to cram for their promotion examinations; they were only retained for the purpose of giving another chance to such officers who failed to pass direct from their regiments. Commanding officers were made responsible for the training of their young officers, just as the non-commissioned officers have to lick the recruits into shape.

By this ingenious device, and by not abolishing the garrison classes entirely, Lord Kitchener avoided any danger of injustice to young officers who might be unlucky enough to have incompetent commanding officers. If the younger officers of any regiment failed

to pass direct from the regiment, and afterwards succeeded in passing from the garrison class, the inference was irresistible that the commanding officers were to blame, and they were usually got rid of with all despatch.

Next, just as Lord Kitchener made the commanding officers responsible for their juniors, so he made the generals of districts responsible for the commanding officers of regiments.

"Troops," he said, in a memorable Army Order, "must be accustomed to regard their generals not necessarily as hostile critics, always on the look out for something to find fault with, but as their trusted leaders in war, their instructors in peace, and at all times their ready helpers, able and willing to promote their welfare and to spare no effort to increase their preparedness for the stress of active service. To be regarded as leaders, generals must be competent to lead; to be accepted as instructors, their professional knowledge must be undoubted, and this entails on them the obligation of increasing study and of constant practical application. In this way alone can they properly prepare their troops for war, and at the same time so train themselves as to be able adequately to discharge the great responsibilities which will devolve upon them when called upon to command in the field."

Obviously this new scheme had the supreme merit that whereas in the old

system, if anything went wrong, it was usually found to be nobody's fault, now it became comparatively simple to fix the blame on the right shoulders.

It was equally obvious that special help must be given to enable these new responsibilities to be adequately undertaken. Lord Kitchener, therefore, founded the great Staff College at Quetta, and he also considerably increased the strength of the general staff, and precisely defined the duties attached to each post. In this way regimental officers were relieved of a good deal of office work.

To show the kind of thing that Kitchener had to reform, it may be mentioned that when he came to India he found each general provided with two staff officers, one of whom belonged to the Adjutant-General's branch and the other to that of the Quartermaster-General — an arrangement which secured the maximum of friction with the minimum of efficiency.

It is hardly necessary to say that the staff of an army is like the brain and eyes of a man, and it is concerned with the larger problems of strategy and tactics, whereas the regimental officer's duties are practically confined to making his regiment efficient and able to play the part assigned to it by the staff in actual warfare.

Actual warfare was always the key-note

of Lord Kitchener's reforms. His ambition was that if the "real thing" came like a thief in the night, as it usually does, it should find the Indian Army instantly prepared, every man knowing where to go and what to do.

He accomplished this without increasing the numbers of the Army to any appreciable extent, but simply by intelligent and economic rearrangement of existing forces. Some inefficient units, it is true, had to be mustered out, and the regiments retained were renumbered on a single roster, so that all might feel that they stood on an equal footing.

Such in outline were the reforms so far as they affected the officers. We now turn to the humble private.

It has been already mentioned that Lord Kitchener always took into account the possibility of native disaffection, and always worked in collaboration with the civil authorities in the matter of distribution of regiments.

With the cordial support of the Secretary of State for India and his Council, he greatly benefited the material position of the sepoy; the pay of all ranks was much improved; a higher pension scale was established; the clothing regulations were altered in the interest of the soldier; kit money was raised, and boot money

allowed. In this and other ways Lord Kitchener not only made the Army more efficient by getting a better class of recruit, but he also scotched in advance various insidious attempts made from time to time to undermine the loyalty of the native soldier.

He also greatly widened the areas from which the native units were recruited. Here he was much helped by the loyalty of the great feudatory Princes of India, as well as by the firm friendship of the Himalayan kingdom of Nepaul. The battalions of Gurkhas, those first-class fighting men whom we read about in Kipling, were increased, and the not less gallant Sikhs were similarly encouraged. Other warlike native tribes, which had not previously been drawn upon, were utilised, such as the Rajputs of Jodpore, and the Jats of Bikanir.

At the same time Lord Kitchener did not take any risks. For example, he did not touch the cardinal principle of keeping the artillery mainly in the hands of white gunners—indeed, during his tenure of office, the number of native batteries were actually diminished.

The thoroughness of his work was extraordinary. Much that he did was obvious enough, and had, as we have said, been talked about for years, but it was

left to Kitchener to get it done. Thus, he started factories at various convenient centres for the supply of material of war, not only guns and ammunition, but uniforms, saddles, and all manner of other things which an army needs, his object being to make the Army self-supporting in time of war.

He also realised that great lesson of military history that disease is a greater danger to every army than the bullets and shells of the foe, and the medical service received from him every possible encouragement, with the result that the waste in the Army from this cause was greatly reduced.

Lord Kitchener himself would be the first to acknowledge that much of his efforts would have been futile had he not been loyally supported by Lord (then Mr.) Haldane, who was Secretary of State for War at home. The Commander-in-Chief in India depends for his white troops entirely on the home authorities, and it was certainly a most fortunate thing for England that the two men understood one another so well and worked together so harmoniously, as they did again afterwards when the war with Germany broke out.

It should be mentioned that Lord

Kitchener entertained a good deal in India.

Much curiosity had been felt in Anglo-Indian society as to his intentions in this matter. It had been rumoured that he intended to "cut" as far as was possible all entertainments, but it was soon found that this was a great mistake. He felt that a magnificent hospitality was part of the traditions of his office; at the same time he had a shrewd idea that it would indirectly help him to achieve his plans of Army reform. At one great State ball, he himself appeared in the beautiful costume of a general officer of the year 1803, that is, a red coat with epaulettes and gold lace, and quaint long pointed lapels turned back with black and striped with gold.

In the summer of 1903 Lord Kitchener took a charming place called Wildflower Hall, six miles from Simla, out on the Mahasu ridge; and it was while coming back from this place, but fortunately in a tunnel and not on the open, unprotected hill-side, that there befell a serious accident which might easily have cost him his life.

Lord Kitchener's term of office in India came to an end in 1909, and in the same year he attained the highest rank in the Army, the *bâton* of a field-

marshal being conferred on him by King Edward.

It was natural that even then a strong feeling should be expressed that this great organising brain should be utilised at the nerve centre of the whole British Empire—in other words, that he should be appointed Secretary of State for War. Rumour declared that certain highly placed officials at the War Office did not look forward to this prospect with any satisfaction. However that may be, it is clear that the difficulties of placing a professional soldier in a political office in time of peace proved too great; and it was also obvious that Lord Kitchener could not accept any other post at Whitehall in which he would not have practically a free hand.

In these circumstances, Lord Kitchener characteristically did the next best thing. He went on a tour round the world, observing, noting, suggesting, encouraging—all with the single idea of increasing the readiness of the Empire as a whole for the great test of war.

Although Lord Kitchener could not spare very much time for his visit to the United States, he thoroughly inspected the great Military Academy at West Point. So high an opinion did he form of it that he recommended it both to

Australia and to New Zealand as a model for the training of cadets. He found those two Dominions keenly interested in the problem of self-defence, and for them he drafted a scheme which would in due course make them secure against attack, and no longer dependent on the mother country for instant aid in the event of danger.

It was the same with Canada, where, after listening and looking, he left suggestions and ideas of the most fruitful kind for the men on the spot to work out. Nothing seems to have irritated him except only the suggestion that England was decadent. To his old friend, Mr. Bennet Burleigh, the veteran war correspondent, whom he had known of old in Egypt, he confided his considered opinion:—

“England,” he said, “is not decadent, whatever anyone may say or think. Her sons are as good as ever and as full of heart, and she is quite able under God to determine her own destinies. She needs help from none, children or strangers, and can quite take care of herself. She is yet full of the youth of days, and I assure you in no sense decadent.”

In his “Memorandum on the Defence of Australia” Lord Kitchener went to

what may be called the root of the Citizen Forces Bill:—

“The first and imperative principle of the enrolment and maintenance of an efficient citizen force is that the nation, as a whole, should take a pride in its defenders, insist upon the organisation being designed for war purposes only, and provide the means for properly educating, training and equipping their officers and men. Unless these requirements be met, no military system can be devised which will be other than an illusion and a source of waste of public funds.”

Of his stay in New York a story is told which much delighted the Americans concerned. It is said that at the hotel where his American friends had arranged he should stay, he was given a very bad room. Thereupon his host who had accompanied him rushed down to the office and observed indignantly, “Don’t you know who Lord Kitchener is?” “No, I don’t,” was the reply, “but I can guess. He’s one of those aristocratic British Johnnies who has come over to steal one of our prettiest and richest girls.” The story ends that Mr. Wilson enlightened the clerk, and Lord Kitchener was quickly accommodated with the best suite of rooms in the hotel.

Of more serious import is the account of a conversation which Kitchener had

with a distinguished American on this visit. He observed that the outlook throughout the civilised world had never been more hopeful for peace than at that time, but he made the significant remark that "the surest safeguard for peace is to be always ready for war." And he added, "In the Army and Navy of the future, the Navy must be the first consideration. In defence or offence the Navy must be in the first line; but one nation cannot 'whip' another without an Army."

Naturally Lord Kitchener found Japan intensely interesting. He particularly admired the Japanese infantry, whom he pronounced to be ideal active soldiers, with an admirable quickness and aggressiveness in the field. The Japanese themselves received the famous English soldier with extraordinary honours, and at a great parade in honour of the Emperor's birthday he rode at the head of a brilliant staff just behind the Emperor himself.

Lord Kitchener returned to England in April, 1910, and was appointed a member of the Committee for Imperial Defence which had been originally established by Mr. Balfour with the object of having a central authority to consider all questions—naval, military, diplomatic, commercial, and economic—involved in the complicated

business of defending our world-wide Empire.

His next appointment, that of His Majesty's Agent and Consul-General in Egypt, is important enough to deserve a chapter by itself.

## CHAPTER IX

### ON GUARD IN EGYPT

THE next chapter in Lord Kitchener's career opens with his appointment as British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt, the position in which Lord Cromer performed his wonderful work of regeneration.

There is in this succession a striking dramatic fitness not often seen in human affairs, and perhaps we may say without too much insular pride, not often seen in the history of other nations. For in spite of our many wars, we are essentially a peace-loving people, and to us it seemed quite natural that the organizer of victory in the field should be set to continue and develop his work by organizing as a civilian the fruits of his victory.

But before this return to Egypt there was a good deal of manœuvring behind the scenes. No man could have achieved as much as Lord Kitchener had without making enemies among people to whom his forcible methods for securing efficiency proved inconvenient. It was widely believed at the time that the great object of those who feared him was to prevent

him from being installed at the War Office with a practically free hand.

However that may be, the facts are that after his return from India Lord Kitchener accepted the post of Commander-in-Chief and High Commissioner in the Mediterranean, which had been created in 1907. The Duke of Connaught, who was the first occupant of the post, had resigned, expressing with characteristic bluntness the view that the services rendered did not justify its retention. The command as held by the Duke included the British troops in Egypt, Malta, Gibraltar, Cyprus, and Crete, but various modifications and additions were to be made to it on Lord Kitchener's appointment. The title of High Commissioner was to be dropped, and the duties of inspecting the military forces overseas, except in India, were to be added.

In July, 1910, the country learnt with some surprise that Lord Kitchener did not desire to take up the Mediterranean command, which was in consequence conferred on Sir Ian Hamilton. It was understood at the time that Lord Kitchener would have accepted the position of Viceroy of India if it had been offered him, and this solution was ardently desired by the bulk of Anglo-Indians, both the official and the mercantile classes.

The country certainly felt uneasy at the idea that Lord Kitchener's services were not to be utilised in any way, and it did not seem at all sufficient that as a field marshal he remained on the active list of the Army.

Just at this moment Sir Eldon Gorst, who had succeeded Lord Cromer in Egypt, died, and the country then learnt with relief that he was to be succeeded in turn by Lord Kitchener.

In this attempt to describe and estimate the new British Agent's administration, the writer wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to a most able and well-informed article contributed to the *Fortnightly Review* by Sir George Arthur, Lord Kitchener's intimate friend and old comrade in arms.

The office of British Agent, as is well known, is one of extraordinary power and influence, although technically it is not even of ambassadorial rank, but the official salary assigned to it, namely, £7,000 a year, sufficiently indicates its real importance. The occupant of that post is really the arbiter of Egyptian policy, and is responsible under the British Government for the administration of Egypt and the Soudan. The allegiance of Egypt to its suzerain, the Sultan, is no more than nominal, and the Khedive in theory decides the policy of his Government, but practically

he must accept the advice of the British Agent.

It is only necessary to add that Egypt covers an area of 400,000 square miles, with a population of over 10 millions, and that the Soudan has an area of 950,000 square miles, with an estimated population of  $2\frac{1}{2}$  millions, to show that the responsibilities are enormous.

Lord Kitchener's qualifications were questioned in the House of Commons, apparently because he is a soldier. But Sir Edward Grey crushed the critics with weighty words. He said :—

“It is a civil appointment. I am confident that the qualities possessed by Lord Kitchener, his special knowledge and experience in Egyptian affairs, and his impartiality and capacity make the appointment one which will command general confidence. He has shown great capacity, not only as a soldier. The appointment in Egypt is an exceedingly difficult one to fill, as everybody knows. It requires special knowledge, special experience, and special qualities. I do not know of anyone who possesses that special knowledge and experience and those qualities in so high a degree as Lord Kitchener.”

As a matter of fact, what Sir Edward Grey could not explain was that Lord Kitchener was not only the best man but actually the only man possible for the post in the critical times which were

coming. How many of those who criticised the appointment had any idea of what was about to happen?

September 29th, 1911, was Lord Kitchener's first day in Cairo as British Agent. On the very next day Italy sent her ultimatum to Turkey, and on October 1st she declared war on the Ottoman Empire, of which Egypt technically forms a part.

Those who are in the habit of looking far ahead in foreign politics always knew that when the favourable moment came Italy would strike for the Turkish province of Tripoli, lying opposite to her on the North African coast, which she had long coveted. It was the failure of German ambitions in Morocco which undoubtedly hastened Italy's decision, because she feared lest Germany in her disappointment might seek to anticipate her.

The Italian declaration of war obviously placed England in a delicate position between the belligerents. Her friendship with Italy was sincere and of long standing, but her relations with Turkey, and still more the position of Egypt as Turkey's vassal, seemed almost to force her to allow the march of Turkish troops through Egypt. It is clear now that before declaring war Italy had arranged

with England that Egypt should be absolutely neutral; and that she delayed the opening of hostilities until Lord Kitchener had arrived in Cairo.

The situation which confronted Lord Kitchener on his arrival in Egypt was thus, if not to be called a crisis, at least one which required firm handling. It is easy enough to say that all he had to do was to keep Egypt quiet, but it was quite another thing to do it. He did it, partly by the prestige of his personality and past achievements, partly by the exertion of those diplomatic powers which he had shown before, notably in the Fashoda incident, and also in South Africa.

The greatest danger to be feared was an explosion of religious feeling, for the Mahommedans of Egypt look to the Padishah at Constantinople much as Roman Catholics all the world over look to the Prisoner of the Vatican. Most fortunately the Egyptians believed—whether rightly or wrongly, who can say?—that Lord Kitchener's sympathies in the war were entirely with the Turks, and they felt, as Orientals always do, a kind of fatalistic confidence in the strong man.

Lord Kitchener found the elements of hostility to British rule were growing to a dangerous pitch, but by his tact and firmness he carried Egypt through what

we now see to have been one of the most critical moments in her history. His diplomacy was almost amusingly bland and amiable.

For instance, a number of Egyptian officers came to him asking for permission to volunteer for active service in the Turkish Army.

Lord Kitchener replied that he would be delighted to give them permission, but he was obliged to point out that their posts thus left vacant would have to be filled by junior officers, and they themselves would probably find on their return that they had been put on the retired list—not by any action or wish on his part, but simply by the natural effect of promotion in the junior ranks. He advised them therefore as a friend to give up their ambition and stay at home, which they accordingly did.

There came also a deputation of Mahomedan notables, who suggested that Egypt should send several regiments to the aid of the Turks.

To them Lord Kitchener was equally polite and accommodating. He said he would have no objection at all, but it was necessary to explain that no Egyptian regiments could be spared unless they were replaced, and as fresh native regiments could not be improvised on

the spur of the moment, it would be his duty to send for an equal number of British regiments from home. This idea was so unwelcome to the notables that they withdrew in some confusion.

Yet a third deputation arrived, composed this time of warlike Bedouin chieftains, who requested permission to send what we should call the fiery cross through their tribes and take them in strength into Tripoli to fight the Italians.

In reply, Lord Kitchener began by paying the chieftains a number of skilful compliments on their warlike qualities, which, coming from him, naturally put them in a very good humour. But he went on to point out that as their tribes were nomads they had been hitherto exempt from service in the Egyptian Army. Now, however, that they showed such keen desire for fighting it could not be doubted that Egypt had need of their services, and he would see that in future they were subject to the conscription law. It is said that he drove home this thunderbolt with the merest suggestion of a wink, which the chieftains were quite capable of interpreting as a hint that they had better keep quiet. Needless to say, the chieftains took the hint.

These are examples of the tact with which Lord Kitchener met the crisis. He

actually managed to enlist the sympathies of the more moderate native Press. It is true that he made all preparations to suppress any native journal which published anything in the nature of incitement to disturbance, and in one or two cases he was compelled to go as far as suppression; but on the whole the tone of the native newspapers was quite astonishingly friendly to England.

This is really a marvellous achievement, when we reflect that not only was Christian Italy attacking Moslem Turkey, but Christian France and Spain were dividing up Moslem Morocco, and Christian Russia was threatening an advance into Moslem Persia.

Even as it was, an ugly riot broke out in Alexandria when reports came that the Turks had driven the Italians out of Tripoli, and that the war was at an end. The mob, very naturally, took to "mafficking" and hustled all the Italians they met. Unfortunately a group of Italians retaliated, firing on the mob with revolvers, and killing two or three natives. The police managed to control the situation that day, and on the morrow, when efforts were made to renew the trouble, the municipal fire brigade restored order by turning their cold cascades on the disturbers.

All the same, Lord Kitchener was not running any risks, and it was found convenient at that exact moment to land a force of marines and bluejackets from the warships at Alexandria, ostensibly for the purpose of carrying out instructional exercises. Unfortunately an exaggerated idea of the situation was conveyed to the London Press, but it only had the effect of preventing a number of nervous English tourists from paying their usual winter visit to Egypt.

The next difficulty was the desire of the Porte that a Turkish Prince should go to Egypt to greet a certain Royal personage who was passing through the Suez Canal. Lord Kitchener consented with alacrity, and the Prince arrived. Fortunately it turned out that he had lived for many years as a prisoner in Constantinople and his manner was awkward and his personality insignificant. Altogether he contrasted most unfavourably in the eyes of the critical Egyptians with his host, the Khedive. Lord Kitchener took care to regulate the visitor's public appearances in such a way that there should be no excuse for anti-Italian rioting. In fact, the princely visit proved a blessing in disguise, for it increased the confidence of the Egyptians in the English, and also their confidence in their own superiority to the Turks.

In January, 1912, the Arabs of the eastern desert which lies between Syria and Egypt began to be restless and seemed likely to make an attempt for Tripoli. Lord Kitchener did not hesitate a moment. He built forts along the Suez Canal, and sent troops to hold them.

In this and in other ways England demonstrated her friendship for Italy, of course with a view to the great war with Germany which even then was known to be imminent. The fruits of this policy were plain for all to see in the securing of Italian neutrality when the great war did break out.

The risk of trouble with Turkey, though appreciable, was perhaps not so great as it might seem, for we had always in our hand the weapon of the Egyptian tribute of £680,000 a year, which had been punctually paid for some thirty years. Turkey could hardly afford to risk the loss of that substantial revenue. The gravest danger was that of a rising in Egypt, and this Lord Kitchener succeeded in averting.

## CHAPTER X

### THE THUNDERBOLT OF WAR

No true Briton can look back altogether with complacency on all that preceded the outbreak of the great war with Germany.

The bulk of the nation, and indeed of the Empire, was not quick to read the signs of the times. Most of us had been living in a dream-land, confident that the formidable German war machine would never be set in motion against us, however ardently the German war lords desired to try conclusions. The Emperor had been a pretty frequent visitor, and he had always come with fair words of peace on his lips. He almost succeeded in making himself popular, and Anglo-German relations seemed to be steadily improving.

Those who knew that war was only a question of time were scouted as alarmists, or as "militarists" harbouring the fell design of imposing conscription on a free people. People even thought that Prussian militarism was an artificial thing. They pointed to the vast and growing strength of Socialism at the elections, and declared that the German military chiefs could not count

on the support of a united Empire, which, besides, owing to the staggering burden of taxation, could not bear the economic strain of a great war.

It is now clear that in deciding for war the Emperor and his advisers must have been altogether misled by their own elaborate secret service corps. The critical situation in Ireland caused by the formation, in flat defiance of the law, first of the Ulster Volunteers and then of the rival Nationalist force was totally misunderstood in Berlin.

The German Government evidently imagined that on the outbreak of war a large portion of the British Army would have to be retained to keep order in Ireland. Little did they foresee that at the first menace of war Irishmen of all classes and creeds would throw their political differences to the winds, that every Regular soldier in the island would be released for active service.

The behaviour of Mr. Redmond and Sir Edward Carson delighted but did not surprise the British Empire. In Berlin it must have been regarded with amazement.

Berlin was also probably counting on the spread of serious labour troubles in this country. Here, again, the Germans were grievously disappointed. The common danger drew capital and labour together as if by magic, and within a few days after the

outbreak of war not a single industrial dispute remained unsettled.

Even the militant suffragist agitation had raised extraordinary hopes in the enemy's breast. It seemed to confirm the theory that Britain was hopelessly decadent, for, as is well known, the Prussians have a very poor opinion of women in general.

But these and similar considerations which might be mentioned only weighed in deciding the moment for Germany to strike. The root cause of the war lay in the profound conviction of Germans that they were superior to all other peoples and races, and that the leadership of Europe and ultimately of the whole world was theirs as of right. Everywhere throughout the world they found Great Britain in their way. She held India, Canada, and Australia, she possessed the best bits of Africa, and thanks to her Navy her merchant ships traded in security all over the globe. Germans thought that Britain's position as a world-power was the result of luck. They did not realize that a country may gain territory by sheer luck, but she wants something more than that to keep it and develop it.

Probably the greatest surprise in store for Germany was the attitude of India. She felt justified in reckoning, if not on a general rising of the various native races, at least on most embarrassing outbreaks

which would keep every white regiment busy.

We all know now what a mighty wave of passionate loyalty swept over the whole of India, obliterating in a moment the barriers of race and creed and political agitation. Never has Parliament been more deeply stirred than by the reading of the Viceroy's telegram announcing the offers of service made by the great feudatory princes, the nobles, and the peoples, all alike burning with enthusiasm to fight for the British Raj. The dearest wish of the most warlike races of India, Sikh and Gurkha, Rajput and Pathan, was gratified by the decision to place native regiments in line with British soldiers against Britain's foe. It was a decision which may prove to have momentous political as well as military consequences.

Altogether, Germany miscalculated, misunderstood the spirit of the British race and of all those other races whom we have drawn into our loose yet amazingly strong polity. She also miscalculated our sentiment of honour. She reckoned on keeping us neutral while she first crushed France, that she might then crush us at her leisure.

The memorable week beginning Saturday, July 25th, 1914, opened normally. There were some who still felt acute anxiety as to

the Irish situation, but it was generally believed that a real settlement would be found during the coming Parliamentary Recess. The London season, which was just concluding, had been brilliant in that particular fashion which brings prosperity to so many industries. Society, in the at once narrow and wide sense of the word, was gathering for a delightful week at Goodwood; the King was expected at Cowes; and among other yachts anchored in the Solent was that of Prince Henry of Prussia. His Imperial Highness was already in England, paying a number of country house visits, and several German princesses were living, in happy semi-*incognito* with their children, at English seaside resorts.

True, there were people, especially in the diplomatic world, who were becoming uneasy concerning the Austro-Servian imbroglio. Austria-Hungary had sent a menacing note to its smaller neighbour, asking for an answer within forty-eight hours. But to that note Servia sent a very conciliatory reply, yielding practically every point demanded of her. This was received, be it noted, on the evening of Saturday, July 25th. Thus, when Sunday dawned in London, those diplomatists and statesmen who had felt uneasy were reassured, and several of the more distinguished among

them joined a party gathered together in the country house of a great peer to do honour to the Kaiser's only brother.

On the Monday it became known that the first blood in the great Irish quarrel had been shed in Dublin during a street riot, which had resulted in the death of three persons and the wounding of many others. Thus the scene of interest was shifted for the bulk of the British people, including most of the Cabinet, from the Continent to Ireland. But among diplomatists and among those journalists who make a special study of foreign affairs, the Irish trouble was soon overshadowed by the grave news that Austria-Hungary had not accepted Serbia's Note in the spirit in which it had been sent.

With a feeling of dismay, and in some quarters, of incredulous amazement, politicians who were not blinded by the fair-weather assurances which began to pour forth from the German Embassy in London began to suspect that Germany had no intention of intervening to prevent a state of things which might soon destroy the peace of Europe.

The general public remained unaware of the growing seriousness of the international situation, and the Irish situation still held the field. Society meanwhile was at Goodwood.

This is not the place to tell the now

familiar story of Sir Edward Grey's unceasing and admirable attempts to keep peace with honour. We now know that many wise and temperate proposals were put forth during those days of strain and anxiety; and we also know that Germany firmly blocked, one by one, roads which might have led to settlement.

By Friday, July 31st, it was realised, even by those whom one may call in no carping sense the pro-German party, that everything now depended on the personal attitude of the Kaiser.

Was the great war-lord sincerely anxious for peace, as was declared with such constant and it may be said pathetic reiteration by the courteous, pro-English Ambassador, Prince Lichnowsky, and the wilier Baron Kuhlmann? Or was it true that the German Government, far from being taken by surprise, had all along known what Austria intended to do? Did the Kaiser feel that the "mailed fist" was in a position to strike and strike hard—all the harder as France was supposed to be in the throes of army reorganisation, as well as in the domestic turmoil brought about by the lamentable Caillaux drama?

Every hour now became increasingly fraught with the menace of war, and soon it was seen that war was certain on the Continent at least. The news from Berlin,

from Russia, from Paris—that from Vienna hardly counted—came like great blows of fate.

The Kaiser's stern decree that if Russia mobilised Germany would at once mobilise too, was naturally followed by a similar pronouncement on the part of France. France, however, acted with extraordinary discretion—indeed, it became perfectly clear that the French Government, though they declared themselves ready to meet the peril, were by no means anxious for the great war for which the French Army had been preparing for forty-four years.

On August 1st it was announced that Russia had ordered a general mobilisation, that Germany was instantly following the same course, and that France was beginning to discuss the necessity of doing likewise. It became known that the King had abandoned his intention of leaving London for Cowes, that Ministers had cancelled their week-end engagements, and that his Majesty had received, among other important visitors, Lord Kitchener of Khartoum, who happened to be spending a holiday in this country.

On Sunday, August 2nd, a Socialistic meeting was held in Trafalgar Square to protest against war; it broke up more or less in confusion, for the temper of London was beginning to be roused, though very

little was being said in the Press as to the part the British Empire was likely to play in the now fourfold quarrel.

On Monday, August 3rd, Sir Edward Grey, in the House of Commons, made what will remain as one of the great speeches of history.

In it he told, not only his immediate audience but the whole Empire, the full story of what Great Britain had done to secure peace. He made it plain that he viewed the awful crisis in which the whole Continent was now involved from the only point of view open to a British statesman, that is, from the point of view of our country's interests, honour, and obligations. He revealed, for the first time, the secret history of the Algeciras conference and of the Agadir crisis. While insisting on the fact that there was no secret engagement with France, he added—although there was no absolute undertaking—"let every man look into his heart and his own feelings, and construe the extent of the obligation to himself."

Then he went on to tell his hearers the events which had taken place during the last few hours. On Sunday he had given the assurance that if the German Fleet attacked the French coast or French shipping in the North Sea or in the Channel, he pledged the British Navy to give all the protection

in its power. He admitted that the German Government had declared themselves ready to abstain from attacking the Northern coasts of France if Britain would remain neutral, "but that," he added, "is far too narrow an engagement for us."

Sir Edward passed on to what was—though few of those who listened to him realised it at the moment—the crux of the whole masterly speech; he raised, that is, the all-important question of Belgian neutrality. He announced that, while France had promised to observe that neutrality, Germany so far had not declared herself, and that he had actually received news that day showing that Germany was threatening to push her troops on to Belgian soil; and he revealed the fact that our Sovereign had received an urgent telegram from the King of the Belgians reminding Britain of her treaty obligations to his kingdom.

After Sir Edward Grey had sat down, he was followed, not only by Mr. Bonar Law, but also, to the intense and moved surprise of the whole House, by Mr. Redmond. In a few brief words the Irish leader declared that the Government, if they cared to do so, might remove all the Regular troops from Ireland, leaving the Nationalists and the Ulstermen together to defend their coasts.

On the following day, Tuesday, August 4th, Mr. Asquith, in the terse,

clear tones which he uses when deeply moved, drily informed the House that the Government had sent Germany an ultimatum requiring her to respect Belgian neutrality. He added, almost as an afterthought, that the time allowed for the answer would expire at midnight.

On Wednesday, August 5th, England woke up to the knowledge that she was at war.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE HOUR AND THE MAN

WHETHER Lord Kitchener's presence in England at this crisis was altogether as accidental as it seemed will doubtless be known in time. It was certainly regarded as an extraordinary piece of good fortune by all those who had ever served either with him or under him in India and in Egypt. Proportionate was their dismay when it was learned that he was starting back for Egypt at the beginning of this momentous week. As a matter of fact he was actually on board a steamer bound for Calais when he was stopped by a wireless message and brought back to London.

Soon it became known to a small circle that he had again been about to start, and that once more his journey had been deferred, and there then arose in certain influential newspapers a very strong agitation in favour of his being appointed Secretary of State for War. The hour had struck and here was the man. What folly not to make use of him! What did constitutional pedantries matter?

On August 5th one of the great organs

of public opinion issued a strong appeal to the Government. It was headed:—

LORD KITCHENER.

*Keep him in England.  
The War Minister we need.  
Nation's strong demand.*

And the article, which was short and strong, ran as follows:—

“The nation will hear with incredulity that Lord Kitchener may return to Egypt on Friday.

It is our hour of trial, and we have among us our greatest organiser of war.

There is not a man in the Cabinet who thoroughly understands real war, save, perhaps, the First Lord of the Admiralty. Yet some people would discard the services of a proved master of war—an organiser of victory—because he is not a politician.

Britain fighting for her life, and Kitchener contemplating the Pyramids!

This must not, shall not be. The confidence of the nation is the condition of success. Lord Kitchener has the confidence of the nation as no other soldier of fighting age has.

Whether as War Minister or as professional head of the War Office, Lord Kitchener must remain here, at the centre of the Empire's strength, in the midst of the storm of war.

Let the nation see to it! Let it strengthen the hands of those who, seeing clearly, wish to keep Kitchener in this country.

The hour demands the man, strong, cool unflinching, experienced in war. Lord Kitchener is such a man. We must not let him go!"

And the same view, written in more measured language, was expressed in a very strong leader in the *Times*.

It will probably never be known exactly how far this short, sharp agitation availed to produce the statement which did much to allay the national anxiety on the morning of Thursday, August 6th :—

"In consequence of the pressure of other duties the Prime Minister has been compelled to give up the office of Secretary of State for War.

The King has approved the appointment of Lord Kitchener as his successor.

Lord Kitchener undertakes the duties of the office for the time being, in view of the emergency created by the war, and his post in Egypt will be kept open."

That same evening Mr. Asquith, in the course of a great speech—a speech which, like that of Sir Edward Grey, will also live in history—paid a magnificent tribute to the British Army. He further said that it would not be right that he should continue in the office of Secretary of State for War, and he concluded with the words :—

"I am very glad to say that a very distinguished

soldier and administrator in the person of Lord Kitchener, with the great public spirit and patriotism that every one would expect from him, at my request stepped into the breach. Lord Kitchener, as every one knows, is not a politician. His association with the Government as a member of the Cabinet for this purpose must not be taken as in any way identifying him with any set of political opinions. He has at a great public emergency responded to a great public call, and I am certain he will have with him in the discharge of one of the most arduous tasks that has ever fallen upon a Minister the complete confidence of all parties and all opinions. I am asking on his behalf for the Army power to increase the number of men in all ranks, in addition to the men already voted, by no less than half a million."

On what precise terms Lord Kitchener went to the War Office the nation was not told, and the nation did not care. It was instinctively felt, not only that he would see what ought to be done, but that he would be able by his personal prestige and his strong will to get it done.

There was an extraordinary scene of enthusiasm and sheer downright delight when Lord Kitchener, accompanied by Lord Haldane, paid his first visit to the War Office as Secretary of State. The crowd were so eager that the police had to force a way for him to pass.

The confidence of the nation was justified. From his early days in Egypt Kitchener

has shown himself possessed of a quality not always characteristic of great commanders. He has always preferred to over-estimate, rather than under-estimate his enemy. Many a battle has been lost owing to over-confidence on the part of the general and of his staff, and if this is true of armies in battle array, it is not less true of those battles which are fought and won in the business rooms and factories which provide the "sinews of war."

It has been well said that the Kitchener of the War Office was still the Kitchener of Wady Halfa, Cyprus, South Africa, and Calcutta. He worked his new staff as mercilessly as he has always worked himself. He was in his office on the stroke of nine, but though he was always punctual in arriving, he was not one of those men who "down tools" at the hour when the day's work is supposed to be over. If he had not finished the work on which he was engaged he went straight on, either till it was finished, or till his sense told him that his working powers had fallen slightly below par.

There has never once been brought against him even the slightest charge of favouritism or snobbism. With him merit alone led to promotion, and he seemed equally impervious to more subtle forms of influence—those to which even the very

greatest commanders have time and again proved willing victims.

Lord Kitchener's installation at the War Office was naturally accompanied by a whole stream of stories, which, if not authentic in the positive sense, were certainly characteristic of the man. The best of them may be told in the form of a little dialogue:—

**LORD KITCHENER** (walking for the first time as master into the study of the Minister for War):  
This is quite first-rate. But—well, send me the Clerk of the Works.

**THE CLERK OF THE WORKS** (a mighty potentate who has always had his way as regards everything connected with the internal and external arrangements of the building): You have sent for me, Lord Kitchener. What can I do for you?

**LORD KITCHENER**: Everything is as it should be. But of course I shall have to sleep here.

**CLERK OF THE WORKS** (dismayed): I fear that is quite impossible. We have no suitable sleeping accommodation; and at such a moment as this we can do with double the number of rooms we now have.

**LORD KITCHENER** (very quietly): I shall have to sleep here, and I shall require a bedroom to-night.

**CLERK OF THE WORKS** (staggered, but yielding):  
Very well. I will go and see about it.

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As he turns and is leaving the room, Lord Kitchener observes meditatively: I shall also require a bath-room by to-morrow morning, with of course hot and cold water turned on.

The end of the tale is that bedroom and bath-room were both ready that evening.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE WAR OFFICE AND ITS NEW CHIEF

SOME account must now be given of the War Office as it was when Lord Kitchener took it over, that we may gain a general idea of the machinery, not of his own devising, on which he had to rely for the accomplishment of his designs.

There are some among us, lovers of old London, who regret the days when the War Office had its headquarters in the charming old house, or rather collection of houses, in Pall Mall, one of which once belonged to Nell Gwynne, another to the Duke of Buckingham, and yet another to the Duke of Schomberg. There were grim memories connected with the old War Office. In one of the finest rooms, exquisitely decorated in the best eighteenth century style, and used for many long years as a Committee Room, the Duke of Cumberland is believed to have murdered his valet.

If, however, the New War Office, as it is still called, is less notable in its associations, it is admirably adapted for the work which has to be done within

its walls. It contains over a thousand rooms, and is an island, bounded by Whitehall, Whitehall Place, Whitehall Avenue, and Horse Guards Avenue. A cynic once observed that, as all the sides and angles of the building are unequal, it is very typical of the institution which it houses.

The room of which Lord Kitchener took possession on that eventful day in August, 1914, is large and spacious, with secretarial rooms communicating on either side. It is adorned and dignified by two of the beautiful carved mantel-pieces removed from the old War Office; but, even so, this fine room cannot compare in beauty or in stateliness with the splendid double cubicle room, overlooking Carlton Gardens, in which Lord Kitchener's predecessors lived and worked.

Ours is an imperfect world, and the War Office has had its own imperfections to combat and contend with, but whereas in many another public department it has always been the case that slackness and favouritism could only affect to a minor degree the work which was being done there, in the War Office and in the Admiralty slackness and favouritism were bound to bring almost instant disaster whenever any real test came.

Nor must we ignore the fact that a long peace, such a peace for instance as elapsed

between the Crimean War and the Boer War, is a serious misfortune for so complicated and highly organised a machine as an army. Fortunately for the War Office, Great Britain has always been engaged in a series of what are often quite wrongly called "little wars," but, unfortunately for the War Office, these little wars have been, generally speaking, admirably conducted by the man on the spot. Kitchener's work in Egypt is a case in point.

The armchair critics of the War Office were fond of talking of the British Army as a very small one, forgetful that the home frontiers of our country are not land but sea frontiers, and that we are compelled to raise huge forces for oversea service, forces which at all times have been very much larger than the corresponding forces of Germany and France put together.

It was a good day for this country when Mr. Balfour initiated what has come to be known as the Committee of Imperial Defence. Thanks to it the chiefs of the staff at the Admiralty and at the War Office have now for a long time past brought their operations into harmony in working out in detail the objects and principles common to both Services. The Defence Committee thus organised contained the germ of a Great General Staff,

acting for the defence of the whole Empire.

It is now generally admitted by those who understand the extraordinary difficulties, political and economic, with which he had to contend, that the country has cause for deep gratitude to Lord—then Mr.—Haldane for the originating and creative power with which for eight years he administered, and indeed radically transformed, the War Office. It is significant that his firmest admirers are themselves professional soldiers. He showed that he possessed the rare gift of choosing the right men to carry out the reforms which his constructive intellect, with its double grasp of general principles and particular detail, saw to be essential.

Before Lord Haldane's advent at the War Office, what may be called our Second Line Army consisted of the Militia, the Yeomanry—a sort of Mounted National Guard serving about one month in each year—and the Volunteers. These Auxiliary Forces, which could not be called upon to serve abroad without their consent, lacked inter-connection, and were, to speak frankly, an incoherent assemblage of different groups in which the terms of service, liabilities, pay and even regulations, differed from unit to unit.

Lord Haldane's first work at the War

Office was to turn the Militia into a Special Reserve, in which the men engaged to serve abroad in war. It is this Reserve which assures the rapid mobilisation of the Regular Army, and its maintenance at full strength during the first six months of a campaign, and it proved of incalculable value in the present war.

As for the Volunteers, whose organisation, from a military point of view, was grotesque, they were developed into the Territorials, to the great increase of their efficiency.

It is heartening nowadays to recall the story of the much abused Territorial Army. From the first this force consisted of fourteen divisions fully organised with all services, like the divisions of the Regular Army, and therefore capable of immediate mobilisation. The Territorial may re-engage up to the age of forty, and even, when holding certain ranks and appointments, up to fifty. The recruit is allowed to select his corps and even the company or battery in which he desires to serve. It was wisely arranged that the non-commissioned officers should be largely drawn from old Volunteer N.C.s, of whom many had seen active service.

As to the officers, many came from the Regular Army, but as time went on the greater part were found among professional

men of all classes who had passed a preliminary examination, and gone through a course of training with a Regular unit. Not the least of Lord Haldane's achievements, in view of the future which was then hidden from us, was his creation of the Officers Training Corps, which has proved an invaluable nursery of future officers.

In order that every class should take part in the great work—for such it really was, though it had not appeared to be so in the days of profound peace which saw it initiated—there were created the County Associations. This brought into the scheme the country gentry, whom so many people regard as the salt of our British earth. It became the duty of country gentlemen to organise and administer the Territorial troops raised within their area. King Edward took a very practical and close interest in these County Associations and put the whole of his influence and personal prestige into making them a success.

All of us who are old enough to have been reading newspapers during the last ten years can remember the ridicule, and indeed in some cases the obloquy, which soon came to be directed upon the unfortunate Territorials. It was pointed out that the young manhood of the country did not take kindly to the new scheme. Employers of labour, though anxious to be

patriotic, did not really believe in the Territorial system, and were therefore half-hearted in granting their men the necessary time.

Meanwhile the War Office was going on steadily organising and carrying through many other reforms which were directly due to the experience gained in the South African War.

Some five years before the great war, every detail of the transport of an Expeditionary Force was worked out under the direct supervision of Lord Haldane and the brilliant group of commanding officers who themselves led the Force in many glorious actions.

It is interesting at the present time to read the speech delivered by Lord Haldane on March 8th, 1906. He quoted a speech of Pitt's delivered on February 29th, 1809, in which that saviour of his country, speaking of the hour of danger, said that the great mass of our population should be made fit to serve, that measures should be taken beforehand, leaders appointed, companies formed, and that no man should be allowed to run about in confusion crying, "Oh, that I could be in any way useful to my country!" He quoted another striking speech made by a very different type of statesman, which he had himself heard delivered. In that speech Lord Beaconsfield

said, "The key of India lies not in Kabul nor in Kandahar, but in London." He might have added, "In the War Office."

Time went on, and though in a sense the Territorial Force remained in being, it assumed, especially in the jaundiced eyes of its enemies, and even of its critics, the form of a human entity being gradually denuded of flesh. In theory it was all right, but it looked as if a few more years of profound peace would reduce it to the miserable condition of a bag of bones. We have already seen in a measure—and we shall see yet further—how those bones were to become with miraculous quickness and surprising ease covered with good firm flesh, sinews and muscles.

On Saturday, August 15th, a considerable sensation was caused by an article in the *Times* by its famous Military Correspondent, in which was set out at considerable length Lord Kitchener's as yet unpublished plan for raising troops. For the gist of this article, we cannot do better than quote the *Spectator's* admirable summary, for it put in clear, terse language what it was important the ordinary intelligent Englishman and Englishwoman should know of this magnificent and far-reaching scheme:—

"The Regular Army with its Expeditionary Force, and the Special Reserve, will remain as they are.

The Territorial Force will be used as far as is reasonable for oversea service, but there is no thought of asking it to volunteer *en masse*. The Territorials were not enlisted for that purpose, and it would be most unfair to put moral pressure on them to accept an obligation for which they never contracted. It would also be very bad policy. We trust, therefore, that officers commanding Territorial units will be most careful not to try to stampede their officers and men into offering to go to the front. Naturally enough, the commanding officer wants to show the maximum of zeal, but that zeal must be tempered by reason and discretion.

“The Territorials will be divided into two classes—those willing to serve abroad, and those who are unable to do so. There will be no invidious distinctions between the classes. The one is as necessary as the other. Indeed, Lord Kitchener would not want all the Territorials to go abroad even if they desired to do so. The Territorial organisation as such will, of course, remain :—

“‘The coast defence troops, the divisions and brigades, the units, the local defence forces on the coasts, and the central force will all retain their positions in the home defence scheme. But Lord Kitchener asks men of good will, with no binding ties at home, to step forward, and with these he proposes to organise, and hold ever ready, at least two waiting divisions which can, if necessary, be used to supplement the oversea force. Each division of Territorials can supply units of various arms prepared to fulfil this mission, and when the time comes they will form separate divisions—the 15th, 16th, and so on—and be specially trained until they are fit to take part in the war.’

"As for the Dominion troops, Canada and Australia will send complete divisions and the other Colonies large contingents. All these will become part of the Oversea Army after a further training in the United Kingdom."

It is now an open secret that the first recruiting was not quite as rapid or as satisfactory as had been hoped. This was by no means the fault of the recruits ; it was the fault of the Department which had the recruiting stations in hand. Perhaps fault is too hard a word to use, for many of the recruiting staff had been swept off into the Expeditionary Force, and the sudden pressure of work was undoubtedly very severe.

This really lamentable state of things was quickly brought to Lord Kitchener's notice. At once he set the right people to work ; he decided to open the recruiting stations on Sundays ; and thenceforward the complicated machinery worked with much greater smoothness and efficiency.

The reassembling of Parliament on August 25th was made memorable by Lord Kitchener's first appearance in the House of Lords as a Minister of the Crown, when he delivered his maiden speech.

Many people were surprised that he had never spoken before in the House, although he had been a peer for sixteen years. And yet it was really natural enough. He has always been a man of action rather than of

words, and during his brief holidays in England he had been occupied with other matters. Besides, he probably desired to make it quite clear that he would have nothing to do with politics.

In this first speech of his, only stopping to make the customary request of the recruit for the indulgence of the House, "as this is the first time I have had the honour of addressing your Lordships," he declared emphatically his complete political independence.

"While associating myself in the fullest degree for the prosecution of the war with my colleagues in His Majesty's Government, my position on this bench does not in any way imply that I belong to any political party, for, as a soldier, I have no politics."

His next point was a surprise for his hearers. He said that his occupation of the post of Secretary of State for War was a temporary one.

"The terms of my service are the same as those under which some of the finest portions of our manhood, now so willingly stepping forward to join the Colours, are engaging—that is to say, for the war, or if it lasts longer than three years, then for three years. It has been asked why the latter limit has been fixed. It is because, should this disastrous war be prolonged—and no one can foretell with any certainty its duration—then after three years' war

there will be others fresh and fully prepared to take our places and see this matter through."

After referring in warm terms to the contingents and other aid which the Dominions were sending to the Mother Country, he announced that the Expeditionary Force had been fighting with the utmost gallantry round Mons, in Belgium. The moral and material support of our troops must prove to be a factor of high military significance. Had the conditions of strategy permitted, everyone would have rejoiced to see us ranged alongside the gallant Belgian Army in its superb struggle against desperate odds.

The mobilisation, he declared, had been effected without any hitch, and he paid well-deserved tributes to the discreet silence of the Press, and the patriotic confidence and calm of the public. All grades of the railway services had worked with untiring energy and patience.

Throughout the speech, there was no attempt at eloquence. He had written it all out beforehand, and he read it in a rather low but perfectly clear voice. The whole statement—for it was really a statement rather than a speech—was instinct with high courage and calm confidence in the spirit and resources of the British Empire. What could be a greater contrast to the spirit of

Prussian militarism than the fine passage with which Lord Kitchener concluded :—

“ While other countries engaged in this war have, under a system of compulsory service, brought their full resources of men into the field, we, under our national system, have not done so, and can therefore still point to a vast reserve drawn from the resources both of the Mother Country and of the British Dominions across the seas. In this country the Territorials are replying with loyalty to the stern call of duty, which has come to them with such exceptional force. Over seventy battalions have, with fine patriotism, already volunteered for service abroad, and when trained and organised in the larger formations will be able to take their places in the line. The 100,000 recruits for which, in the first place, it has been thought necessary to call have been already practically secured. This force will be trained and organised in divisions similar to those which are now serving on the Continent. Behind these we have our Reserves. The Special Reserve and the National Reserve have each their own part to play in the organisation of our national defence.

“ The Empires with whom we are at war have called to the Colours almost their entire male population. The principle which we on our part shall observe is this—that while their maximum force undergoes a constant diminution, the reinforcements we prepare shall steadily and increasingly flow out until we have an Army in the field which, in numbers not less than in quality, will not be unworthy of the power and responsibilities of the British Empire. I cannot at this stage say what will be the limits of the

forces required, or what measures may eventually become necessary to supply and maintain them. The scale of the Field Army which we are now calling into being is large and may rise in the course of the next six or seven months to a total of thirty divisions continually maintained in the field. But if the war should be protracted, and if its fortunes should be varied or adverse, exertions and sacrifices beyond any which have been demanded will be required from the whole nation and Empire, and where they are required we are sure they will not be denied to the extreme needs of the State by Parliament or the people."

Naturally, Lord Kitchener's statement made a profound impression, not only on those who heard it, but on that world-wide audience to which it was also addressed.

In France it was hailed with deep satisfaction as a model of soldierly plainness. What struck French readers most was his reference to the new character of the War. In the *Petit Journal*, which speaks more truly for the mass of the French people than any British daily paper can claim to do for the British, M. Pichon observed:—"The categorical assurance given by Lord Kitchener is of exceeding importance, and constitutes an essential guarantee against any reverse which we may suffer." M. Hanotaux said: "Lord Kitchener has given proofs of what he can do, and what he is doing now answers for his work in the future."

In these crowded, eventful days the country realized with increasing thankfulness that the right man was in control of what promised to be by far the greatest war ever waged by Britain. For example, everyone was greatly cheered by the publication of the following refreshingly blunt instructions which Lord Kitchener issued to every soldier in the Expeditionary Army, to be kept in his Active Service Pay Book :—

“ You are ordered abroad as a soldier of the King to help our French comrades against the invasion of a common enemy. You have to perform a task which will need your courage, your energy, your patience. Remember that the honour of the British Army depends on your individual conduct.

“ It will be your duty not only to set an example of discipline and perfect steadiness under fire, but also to maintain the most friendly relations with those whom you are helping in the struggle. The operations in which you are engaged will, for the most part, take place in a friendly country, and you can do your own country no better service than in showing yourself in France and Belgium in the true character of a British soldier.

“ Be invariably courteous, considerate, and kind. Never do anything likely to injure or destroy property, and always look upon looting as a disgraceful act. You are sure to meet with a welcome and to be trusted; your conduct must justify that welcome and that trust.

“ Your duty cannot be done unless your health is sound. So keep constantly on your guard against

any excesses. In this new experience you may find temptations both in wine and women. You must entirely resist both temptations, and, while treating all women with perfect courtesy, you should avoid any intimacy.

Do your duty bravely,  
Fear God,  
Honour the King.

KITCHENER,  
Field-Marshal."

This admirable message brought home to our troops the fact that they were, so to speak, the guests of France and Belgium. How nobly our men fulfilled both the letter and the spirit of Lord Kitchener's instructions is a familiar story. Certainly it caused the country no surprise—nothing, indeed, but legitimate pride in Thomas Atkins, and in the striking contrast between his behaviour and that of the German soldier.

## CHAPTER XIII

### PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

LORD KITCHENER's indifference to the company of ladies is almost the first thing which is said about him when he is mentioned in general society—indeed, it was whispered that the first order he issued at the War Office was that no woman should be allowed through the door.

As a matter of fact he had not been there many hours when he warmly welcomed the ladies who had had much to do with the organization of the Red Cross Society. It is, however, true that Lord Kitchener always prefers to have about him when on active service unmarried officers—indeed, in Egypt it was practically a case of "No married man need apply."

On one occasion he met at luncheon at the British Embassy in Paris a lady whose husband had shown extraordinary gallantry during the South African war. Lord Kitchener explained to her that in his opinion the terrible anguish suffered by the wives of officers proved that, like priests, soldiers ought to be celibates. "That means," she exclaimed, "that my

husband ought not to have married me!" To which Lord Kitchener replied with a smile, "Thanks to you, I change my opinion in one case."

Lord Kitchener's smile is perhaps the more attractive on account of its rarity. His ferociously bushy moustache, his square, set face, with strong, plain features, his skin reddened and browned by African suns—the whole terrific aspect of the man bespeaks the plain, practical soldier. This you would say, is just an appallingly efficient, inhuman war-machine—that is, if you had not observed his eyes.

It is Lord Kitchener's eyes which betray him—eyes of deep yet bright blue. After noting them, you are not at all surprised to hear that this supposed man of blood and iron has quite other sides to his nature. For instance, he has an intense love of natural beauty and more than an amateur's appreciation of art. This takes the particular form of a genuine passion for old china, of which he possesses a collection remarkable both for its beauty and its value.

As we have already seen, he by no means despises the pleasures of society. Both in India and in Cairo, in spite of his bachelorhood, he entertained magnificently, and with characteristic cleverness he took care that his hospitality should be so conducted as always to leave pleasant memories. This

is not an easy thing to manage where the susceptibilities of innumerable official personages have to be considered.

Lord Kitchener rarely, if ever, spent a leave in the United Kingdom without going to Ireland, where he was generally the guest of Mrs. Adair, a noted Anglo-American hostess, at Glenveagh Castle. He was able to return his friend's kindness with truly oriental splendour on the occasion of the Durbar, when Mrs. Adair was not only his guest, but assisted him in his hospitalities.

"Thorough" is the motto on Lord Kitchener's coat-of-arms. How he is regarded in the Army was shown once in amusing fashion at a "geographical tea-party." It was noticed that a young subaltern came into the room with a tiny portrait of Lord Kitchener in his button-hole. No one could guess what geographical significance could be attached to it. At last the young man explained that what he had intended to convey was, "The Bos-phor-us!"

No man with so creative an imagination as Lord Kitchener could be really lacking in heart. A good deal of nonsense has been talked about him from this point of view because he has never cared to wear his heart upon his sleeve.

He is very fond of animals, and during

part of the South African campaign he owned a tame starling. The story goes that one day in Pretoria it struck him that his pet was in low spirits. At once Kitchener sent out right and left to see if a mate could be found for the starling. It is said that his staff officers, on whom devolved this delicate duty, pointed out to each other that he never allowed any of his married officers to be joined by *their* mates!

One of the softer sides of Kitchener's character is his intense love and understanding of gardening. This peeps out wherever he may happen to be, unless of course he is in the full tide of war organisation. When he was Commander-in-Chief in India, he undoubtedly chose Wildflower Hall, which stands some 8,000 feet high and is about six miles from Simla, because of its extremely beautiful grounds. He soon found out that the ordinary flowers cultivated in Anglo-Indian gardens would not do well there; accordingly, he threw himself with immense energy into landscape gardening. He himself transformed the gardens surrounding the house, and hired a small army of coolies to carry out his scheme.

But of Kitchener's citizenship in all that kingdom of beauty from which many men of action seem self-banished, there could [be no more conclusive proof than

the fine thing he said once to his old friend Sir Rennell Rodd, then British Ambassador in Rome: "Every Englishman has two countries—old England and young Italy."

When the war with Germany broke out, Kitchener was the only British soldier, except, perhaps, Lord Roberts, whose name was at all familiar to the mass of the French nation. His boyish exploit in joining the Army of the Loire had never been forgotten, and even when, in the discharge of his duty, he checkmated Marchand's brilliant march and audacious little scheme of French aggrandisement, he came in for very little criticism or denunciation. It was after the Fashoda business that a distinguished French officer wrote to an English friend: "I am very glad you are going to meet the Sirdar. He is a man of whom England has reason to be proud." The French Army had long before realised his brilliant gifts as organiser and commander.

It would be a great mistake to regard Lord Kitchener as a sort of Juggernaut, who has no care for the comfort and health of his men.

On one occasion during the South African war a private in the Royal Engineers reported himself ill and unfit for duty. The medical officer, after making a cursory examination, decided that the

man was malingering. But after he had been at work again for a short time—the work being the preparing of planks for a temporary bridge—he had to fall out. The sergeant, seeing he was ill, said: “Why not lay the case before Lord Kitchener? He is in his office close by.” The man shook his head. “If you are afraid, I will go myself,” said the kindly sergeant.

“Order the man to come here at once,” said the Commander-in-Chief without looking up, “and send along Drs. A. and B.” Soon the three men were before him. In his presence the private was examined, and both doctors regretfully reported that it was a clear case of typhoid. “Send for Dr. C.,” said Lord Kitchener. When the medical officer appeared, he said quickly, “I think you examined this man and believed he was malingering. Please examine him again here and now.” Dr. C. looked up soon and said, “I am afraid I have made a mistake. The man is in the early stages of typhoid.” “Have the man removed to the hospital. And you, sir, apply to the adjutant for your papers, and at your earliest convenience return to England.”

In some ways the best of the South African war stories is this. Kitchener, finding himself short of guns, asked the War Office for some of the newest type. When

he received pieces of a hopelessly obsolete pattern, his reply is said to have been, "I can throw stones at the enemy myself."

Another good tale comes from Egypt. Helouan is sixteen miles from Cairo across the desert, and it was formerly connected with Cairo by railway only. In 1911 Kitchener was lunching with some friends at Helouan, and he remarked that he intended to get a motor and drive back to Cairo. They laughed, and told him there was no road—nothing but a camel track—across the desert. K.: "No road! One must be made!" "Oh, but it would cost any amount." K.: "How many convicts are there in Turah prison?" "But prisoners won't work." K.: "Won't they?" There were at that time about 3,000 prisoners in Turah prison. Kitchener had most of them out, and an excellent road was completed in three months. It is now known as "Kitchener's Road."

We cannot close this book more appropriately than by quoting the striking telegram from General Joffre which the French Minister of War transmitted to Lord Kitchener in the early days of September:—

"The Commander-in-Chief of the French armies expresses to Lord Kitchener his warm thanks for the steady support given to our armies by the British forces throughout the operations. At the present

moment the support is especially valuable, and manifests itself in a very energetic manner in the action now being taken against the German right wing. I hereby express my gratitude to Field-Marshal French, who has invariably given his most effective assistance to our armies."

Lord Kitchener's reply, expressed in admirable French, was characterised by the same soldierly simplicity and directness:—

"I beg you to be assured, and to inform General Joffre, how very glad the British Army is to find itself working hand in hand with the French Army, and how proud we are of the lofty task of rendering it the assistance of which you speak in such generous terms, and on which you can always rely with perfect confidence."

Such has been the career and such are the character and disposition of the great soldier whose powers of organization are now being tested in the greatest war ever waged by this country since the struggle with Napoleon. For the first time for a hundred years Britons have fought with Frenchmen on the soil of France, now happily not as enemies but as comrades in arms.

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