OSMAN DIGNA

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BY

H. C. JACKSON, B.A.

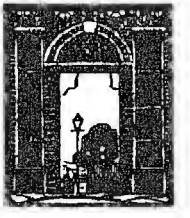
SUDAN POLITICAL SERVICE

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

GENERAL SIR REGINALD WINGATE, Bt.

G.C.B., D.S.O., ETC.

WITH A FRONTISPIECE PORTRAIT AND A MAP



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TO

THE OFFICERS, NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS AND MEN

WHO

FOUGHT TO SAVE GORDON

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PREFACE

THIS volume is the result of nearly fourteen years' spasmodic labours. Begotten in a moment of enthusiasm, it has only been brought to the light of day after prolonged and difficult birth-pangs. A member of the Sudan Political Service has so many and multifarious duties to perform that, though the writer's official position has given him access to various sources of information not easily reached by others less fortunately placed, the very nature of his daily task handicaps him when he comes to put on record the result of his inquiries. At the end of a long morning in the office it is by no means easy entirely to forget the subjects with which he has been called upon to deal, and more particularly the style that he has been compelled to employ when handling them: "In reply to your memo of the first of April"; "Reference to your communication of the twentieth ult. numbered so-and-so." For this reason I am afraid that much of what follows is couched in verbiage that is to be found, and fortunately only to be found, in official correspondence

At the same time, as some forty years have passed away since the subject of this monograph first appeared upon the historical stage, it is as well to remark that Osman Digna was for a decade and a half a prominent figure in the political world, almost as much a bogey man—although in very different degree—as the Napoleon of a century ago, whose name was one to conjure with when dealing with a recalcitrant child. Out of all proportion to his intellectual and martial qualifications he was a thorn in the side of the British people for fifteen years or more, and as his life has never been put on record I have endeavoured—however inadequately—to fill this gap in our knowledge.

In an appendix is given a list of the authorities consulted in the account that I have given of Osman Digna's life. To

these I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness, and especially to

WINGATE : " Mahdiism and the Egyptian Sudan " ;
ROYLE : " The Egyptian Campaigns " ; and
COLVILE : " History of the Sudan Campaigns."

In the present volume I have tried to limit the account of the fighting to the share that Osman Digna took in it. The battles are the background to Osman Digna's appearance on the stage—almost his cue for doing so. Those who are interested in the history of the fighting that occurred between the years 1883 and 1899 I cannot do better than refer to the short bibliography at the end of the book.

In addition to the authorities quoted above, I have also to thank various native officials and chieftains for much of the information concerning Osman Digna. In particular I would mention Colonel Mohammed Bey Ahmed, who fought against him for many years and was finally instrumental in his capture; Sheikh Ahmed Hamad Mahmud (Nazir of the Amarar tribe), whose sister was a wife of Osman Digna; Sheikh Mustafa Mohammed Fagirai, who knew Osman Digna well; and lastly, Sheikh Mohammed wad Beleil (the Port Sudan camel contractor), who was a private secretary to Osman Digna and an intimate associate of his for nearly thirteen years.

The statements of these various natives have been checked as far as possible by more reliable sources of information. At the same time their *ipsissima verba* will occasionally be found incorporated in the text, not so much because they have any permanent historical value as on account of the different light they throw on an episode which has hitherto been recorded from only one point of view, that of the Government.

This monograph has been as carefully compiled as the exigencies of circumstances permitted and the casual and haphazard composition of the work allowed. It was begun more than thirteen years ago and set aside owing to the impracticability of continuing it. There must, in consequence, be many abrupt transitions, many a *lapsus calami*, possibly

solecisms of grammar or diction. No one can be more aware of numberless imperfections than the author himself. For months, and even years, on end he may not have been able to put pen to paper, and then, without any studious preparation, some unexpected opportunity may have occurred and a page or two was added to the very gradually increasing pile of manuscript. The work therefore must perforce be somewhat of the nature of a patchwork quilt that some worthy crony has pieced together in the odd moments of a winter's evening, or when gossiping over a dish of tea

In conclusion, I should also like to express my thanks to certain officials and others who have helped me in various ways and, particularly, to Messrs. J. W. E. Miller, E. Flavell, A. W. Ellis, C. H. L. Skeet, and A J. Matthew.

Authorities to whom I have referred frequently differ as to the actual dates of the events recorded. I have adopted Wingate's chronology unless there seemed very good evidence to the contrary. In order to avoid overloading the text with notes and commentaries I have not made any remark when any particular officer has been promoted. Thus if e.g. Sartorius appears as a Colonel on one page and a General on another the explanation is that in the meantime he has either been promoted or received a higher local or temporary rank. Nor have I, when quoting any particular writer, altered his spelling of Arabic names so as to bring it into line with the orthography I have adopted.

H. C. J.

SINHAT
August 8, 1926

INTRODUCTION

MEMORIES are short and much water has passed under the bridges spanning old Father Nile since the stirring events happened which brought the redoubtable Dervish leader Osman Digna into such prominence as to make his name known throughout the length and breadth of the British Empire.

This outstanding figure took one of the leading parts in the terrible seventeen years of bloodshed and horror into which the Sudan was plunged, and which, beginning with the Communistic doctrines preached by the Mahdi in 1882, only ended with the death in battle of his successor, the Khalifa Abdullahi, in November, 1899, a period which accounted for the death by war, famine, and disease of close on six million men, women, and children and the transformation of the comparatively well-cultivated areas of that huge country—three-quarters the size of India—into a wilderness of waste and desolation from which only now it is emerging under the strenuous efforts of a devoted body of British workers, of whom the author is one of the not least distinguished.

In comparison with the series of tragedies culminating in the death of the heroic Gordon and the fall of Khartoum, the part played by Osman Digna in the drama of the Sudan may be said to have been a minor one ; but as the inspiring leader of many tribes of the Eastern Sudan—the Fuzzy-Wuzzies of Rudyard Kipling—he and his followers opposed the British forces at the battles of El Teb, Tamai, McNeill's Zariba, and elsewhere with a violence and fury which gained for them a well-deserved reputation for reckless and fanatical bravery and which fixed the name of Osman Digna in the memories of the British public of the 'eighties more firmly than those

of the supreme leaders of the movement—the magnitude of whose operations in the distant interior was hardly realized at the time, so far were their activities removed from the ken of the outside world.

The writer of the following interesting pages has therefore done well to review in a succinct form the occurrences of those stormy years, and I have little doubt that the verdict of those who, like myself, have been more or less closely connected with the events narrated or have studied the history of the Sudan during the last four or five decades, will agree that he has carried out his self-imposed task admirably. Well equipped for the purpose by long residence in the country, where he has held various appointments in the Sudan Administrative Service—from Deputy-Commissioner to Provincial Governor—always in close touch with those over whom he has been called upon to exercise authority and for whom he has clearly a ready sympathy, he has studied with meticulous care the details of the occurrences he has so accurately reviewed, and, by bringing to bear upon them the point of view of the civilian rather than the military historian, they are free from bias and as fair-minded to the conquered as to the conquerors.

Gifted with a facile pen, his deductions are specially valuable and worthy of careful study by those who desire to understand the facts of the situation such as it was at the time of Osman Digna's early successes, and their effect upon present-day conditions in the Sudan; bearing in mind, as the author does, that many problems—political, military, and administrative—yet remain to be solved in regard to the relations of the Sudan with Great Britain and Egypt, and that it is only by close and critical examination of past events that the true significance of the present situation can be gauged with any degree of accuracy.

The author's method has been to endeavour to guide his readers, and incidentally those in whose hands the future destiny of this great country lies, by a system of induction rather than by direct implication, thus assisting them to form an unprejudiced judgment on the solution of the many vitally important

matters which confront them. In short, by depicting the situation in the great revolt of the Sudanese against the tyrannical oppression, venality, and hopeless misgovernment of the old Egyptian regime, he enables his readers to realize how easily history may repeat itself, should—by any misfortune or mishandlement—the comparatively satisfactory conditions at present obtaining between the governing and the governed be changed in such a way as to give rise to the slightest fear on the part of the latter that a reversion to anything approaching the system of government of the past is even remotely contemplated.

The conclusions the author reaches are admirably summed up in the final paragraph of his book, and to those who know and understand the natives of the Sudan and their aspirations they appeal with all the force of the plain and unvarnished truth.

REGINALD WINGATE

DUNBAR
August 23, 1926

CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER OF EVENTS

1881.

May : The Mahdi announces his Divine mission.
August 12th · The Mahdi defeats Abu el Saud.
December 9th · 350 men under Rashid Bey defeated by the Dervishes.

1882.

April 1st. Commander Moncrieff appointed consul at Suakin
May 3rd. Giegler Pasha with the Shukria defeats Sherif Ahmed Taha at Abu Haraza.
May 13th. Bimbashi Nassim defeats the Dervishes at Kashgil.
June 7th : Yusef Pasha Shellali defeated. Abu Haraza sacked.
June 24th Dervishes defeated at Bara.
July 11th : Bombardment of Alexandria.
July 20th : Egyptian force of 1,000 men almost annihilated near Shakka.
August 18th · Outbreak of Mahdiism at Liffi in the Bahr el Ghazal.
August 23rd : Dervishes lose 4,500 men in an attack on El Dueim.
August 24th : Ali Bey Lutfi defeated by the Dervishes.
August 28th : Battle of Kassassin.
September 4th to 8th : Rebels driven off from El Obeid with a loss of 10,000 men.
September 13th Battle of Tel el Kebir
October : Dervish attacks on Bara driven off.

1883.

January 17th : Fall of El Obeid.
February 7th : Hicks Pasha leaves Cairo for Khartoum.
March 4th. Hicks Pasha and staff arrive at Khartoum.
July : Osman Digna goes to Erkowit.
August 5th. Osman Digna defeated and wounded at Sinkat.
August. Birket captured. Beginning of the rebellion at Kassala.
August 8th : Shat sacked.
August 10th : Telegraph line between Sinkat and Suakin cut.
August : Defeat of Said Bey Gumaa, Governor of El Fasher.
August : Taiara sacked
September 9th (?), *13th*. Osman Digna defeated at Gabab
October 16th : Defeat of the Egyptians under Bimbashi Mohammed Khalil by the Gara-ib tribe.
November 4th Defeat of the Egyptians at El Teb under Mahmud Pasha Tahir.
November 5th : Annihilation of Hicks' force.
November 17th : Suliman Pasha goes to Massaua for reinforcements.

November 26th: H.H. the Khedive reviews the gendarmerie.
November, end of: Tokar and Sinkat closely invested
December 2nd · Egyptians under Major Kazim defeated at Tamai.
December 4th: Major Harrington and staff arrive at Suakin.
December 11th: Colonel Sartorius arrives at Suakin
December 12th: Mutiny of Bashi-bazouks at Suakin suppressed.
December 15th: Mahmud Pasha Tahir replaced by Suliman Pasha at Suakin.
December 16th: First battalion of Zubeir's blacks leaves Suez.
December 23rd: Valentine Baker Pasha arrives at Suakin.
December 27th: Telegraph line between Berber and Kassala cut.

1884.

January 2nd. Garrison at Rawaya withdrawn.
January 20th: Second battalion of Zubeir's blacks leaves Suez.
February 4th: Baker Pasha defeated near Trinkitat.
February 5th: Marines and bluejackets landed at Suakin.
February 8th: Fall of Sinkat.
February 10th · *Admiral Hewett takes over supreme command at* Suakin.
February 11th: Gordon arrives at Berber.
February 16th. British troops leave Egypt for Suakin.
February 17th: 4,000 Dervishes make a demonstration against the outer line of entrenchments at Suakin.
February 18th: Gordon arrives at Khartoum.
February 20th: Tokar capitulates.
February 29th: General Graham's victory at El Teb.
March 13th: General Graham's victory at Tamai.
March 18th: Reconnaissance of Handub.
March 26th: Reconnaissance of Tamineb.
April 19th · Telegraphic communication with Khartoum cut off.
April 30th: Lupton Bey surrenders in the Bahr el Ghazal.
May 10th Major Chermside appointed Governor of Suakin.
May 26th: Fall of Berber.
September 1st: Action at Korti.
September 12th: Bogos handed over to the Abyssinians.
September 18th: Murder of Colonel Stewart.

1885.

January 5th: Fall of Omdurman.
January 17th: Battle of Abu Tleh.
January 19th. Action at Metemma.
January 26th: Death of Gordon and sack of Khartoum.
January 28th. Steamers reach Khartoum.
February 10th: Battle of Kirbekan and death of Major-General Earle.
February 13th: British under Sir Redvers Buller retire from Gubat to Abu Tleh.

February 17th : Death of Major-General Sir H. Stewart.
March 20th : Fight at Hashin.
March 22nd · Fight at Tofrik : McNeill's Zariba
May 17th : Red Sea expedition abandoned.
May 23rd : Dervishes attack Khatmia.
June 15th · Attack on Kassala.
June 16th Dervishes repulsed at Sennar by Nur Bey.
June 22nd : Death of the Mahdi.
July 18th : Nur Bey defeats the rebels at Sennar.
July 30th : Fall of Kassala.
August 19th Fall of Sennar.
September 23rd · Osman Digna defeated at Kufeit by the Abyssinians under Ras Alula
September 24th · Colonel Holled-Smith appointed Governor of the Red Sea Littoral.
September 26th : Attacks on Suakin repulsed.
December 2nd : Ambigol post attacked.
December 30th : Battle of Ginnis.

1886

January, end of Osman Digna returns to Tamai
January 26th : General Hudson, with the remainder of the Indian troops, leaves Suakin.
February 8th Sir Charles Warren arrives at Suakin
March 15th : Sir Charles Warren leaves Suakin.
May 3rd · Major Watson arrives at Suakin
June 17th : The Amarar successful at Hashin.
June 24th · The Amarar repulse the rebels with heavy loss
July : The Khalifa dispatches Feki Ali with orders to Osman Digna to conciliate the tribesmen. Osman Digna executes Hamad Mahmud and Wad Hasab. Ali Mohammed Saadun surrenders to the Government.
July 10th : Post established at Mohammed Gull.
August 13th · Osman Digna recalled to Omdurman. Lieutenant-Colonel Kitchener succeeds Major Watson as Governor of Suakin
October 7th : The Amarar capture Tamai and seventeen guns.
November 9th : Musa Fagi Digna advances against Tokar.

1887.

January. Osman Digna visits Kassala.
May : Quarrel between the Amarar and Hadendoa. Mohammed Musa Digna arrives at Tokar.
June : Post established at Halaib.
July : Amarar and Hadendoa make peace. Osman Digna leaves for Omdurman. Abyssinians heavily defeated by the Dervishes at Debra Sin.
December 9th. The Baggara defeat the Amarar at Tarroii Wells.

Osman Digna returns to Handub. The friendlies gain some minor successes.

1888.

January 4th: British troops withdrawn from Assuan.
January 17th Fight at Handub, Colonel Kitchener wounded.
March 4th: Attack on Fort Hudson.
April: Abu Girga arrives at Handub and quarrels with Osman Digna.
June Osman Digna ordered by the Khalifa to suspend operations.
July 7th. Abu Girga returns to Omdurman.
September 13th. Lieutenant-Colonel Holled-Smith succeeds Major Rundle as Governor-General at Suakin.
September 17th. Osman Naib entrenches himself before the Water Forts.
November 2nd: General Grenfell leaves Cairo with reinforcements for Suakin.
November 15th: Fall of Rejaf.
December 9th: Colonel Kitchener makes a reconnaissance near Suakin.
December 20th. Battle of the Water Forts (or Gemmeiza). Dervishes defeated by General Grenfell.

1889.

February 11th: Osman Digna leaves Handub for Tokar.
February 22nd. Defeat of Abu Gemmeiza by the Dervishes near El Fasher
March 9th: Battle of Metemma and death of King John of Abyssinia.
March: Abu Girga returns to Tokar and again quarrels with Osman Digna.
April 21st: Dervishes capture Halaib.
April 27th: Colonel Holled-Smith re-establishes the Halaib post.
July 2nd: Battle of Argin.
August 3rd. Battle of Toski; Wad El Nejumi killed.
October 7th: Osman Digna leaves Tokar for Omdurman Abu Girga left in command.
December 20th. Osman Digna leaves Omdurman.

1891.

February 19th: Colonel Holled-Smith captures Tokar.
August: The Dervishes with the aid of the Nuers defeat the Shilluks.
December: The Shilluks defeat the Dervishes. Father Ohrwalder escapes from Omdurman.

1892

December: Dervishes raid the Egyptian frontier. The Dervishes attack Ambigol.

1893.

July : Dervishes raid the village of Beris in Khargeh oasis.
November : Dervishes attack Murat Wells.
December 22nd : Fight at Agordat.

1894.

July 17th : Italians capture Kassala

1895.

January 15th · Fight at Koatit.
February : Slatin escapes from Omdurman.

1896.

March 12th : Dongola expedition determined on.
April 15th : Action near Khor Wintri and Tarroi Wells.
May 1st : Cavalry action at Akasha
May 30th. Arrival of Indian troops at Suakin.
June 7th : Battle of Firket.
June 22nd : Railway reaches Akasha.
September 19th : Action at Hafir
September 23rd · Occupation of Dongola.
December 9th : Indian troops leave Suakin.

1897.

May 4th : Railway reaches Kerma.
August 7th. Capture of Abu Hamed.
August 31st. Occupation of Berber by friendlies.
September 6th : Occupation of Berber by the Expeditionary Force.
October 16th : Gunboat action against Metemma. Berber road opened.
October 31st : Railway reaches Abu Hamed.
December 24th : Reoccupation of Kassala.

1898.

March 27th : Capture of Shendi.
April 8th : Battle of the Atbara.
September 2nd. Battle of Omdurman and downfall of the Dervishes.
September 22nd. Capture of Gedaref. Surrender of Musa Digna
September 23rd : Occupation of Wad Medani.
September 27th : The Sobat reached.
September 28th : Second fight at Gedaref.
September 29th : Roseires reached.
October 2nd : Occupation of Karkoj.
December 7th · Occupation of Gallabat.
December 11th : Marchand evacuates Kodok.
December 17th : Occupation of Nasser.
December 19th : Marchand leaves Nasser.
December 26th : Defeat of Ahmed Fadil at Roseires.

1899.

January: Reconnaissance towards Sherkeila.

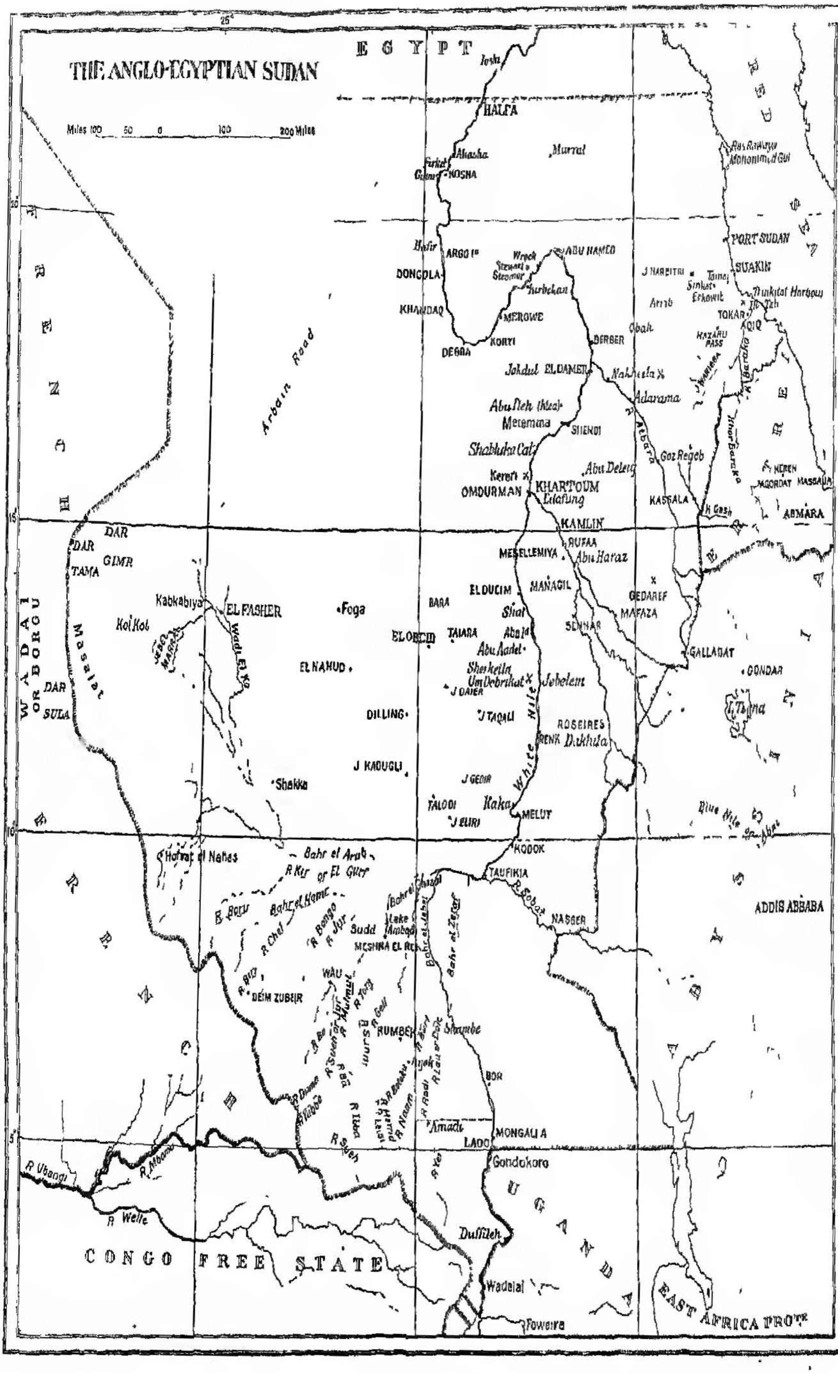
November 24th: Defeat and death of the Khailfa at the hands of General Wingate.

1900.

January 13th: Capture of Osman Digna.

1908.

December 23rd: Osman Digna sent to Wadi Halfa.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Adarama
Metemma
SHENDI
KHARTOUM
OMDURMAN
KAMLIN
RUFAA
Abu Haraz
MESELLEMIYA
MANAGIL
EL DUEIM
GEDAREF
MAFAZA
SENNAR
GALLABAT
GONDAR
PORT SUDAN
SUAKIN
TOKAR
KASSALA
KEREN
AGORDAT
MASSAUA
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TAUFIKIA
NASSER
ADDIS ABBABA
Blue Nile or Abai
White Nile
Masalat
WADAI OR BORGU
DAR SULA
Hofrat el Nahas
Bahr el Arab
R Kir or EL Ghrr
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R Chel
R Bongo
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MESHRA EL REK
Bahr el Ghazal
Bahr el Jebel
Bahr el Zeraf
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FRENCH
ABYSSINIA
ERITREA
I. Tsana

OSMAN DIGNA

CHAPTER I

Unenterprising character of the Arab. His primitive education. Conquest of the Sudan by Egypt Venal administration Inequalities of taxation Zubeir Pasha. Short account of his life. Birth of the Mahdi, Mohammed Ahmed The Mahdi retires to Aba Island. Defeat of the Government troops at Aba Island Capture of El Obeid. Successes of the Mahdi.

§ 1

IF progress is the gradual change from the homogeneous to the heterogeneous, from the simple to the complex, the Arab of to-day has scarcely progressed one single step in art, morals, science, or literature since the days of Mohammed, except where he has intermarried with some Syrian Levantine and modified his point of view owing to the influence of a different social organization Save in the multiplication of the tribes the Arab is as he was when Moses brought down the law from the Mount. He has barely advanced beyond what Spencer calls the percussive type of musical instrument employed simply to mark the time in dancing. In spite of the great upheaval that is now taking place in the East and the relationship with European nations into which the Arab is being forced, it is doubtful if, in this generation or the next, an Arab Phidias will see the light of day, even if one were born of sufficiently determined character to defy the prophetic injunction that no one should reproduce in painting or sculpture that into which God alone had the power to inspire the breath of life. Arab music is still subordinated to the words of the song, and dancing (especially at the celebration in honour of the birthday of the Prophet) still accompanies a religious festival. No harmonized chords or part music have as yet been devised: the songs, with rare exceptions, consist of little but a rhythmic monotone, not unlike a Gregorian chant, whether droned by Berber, Moor, Yemeni, or Sudanese Arab.

Nor has the Arab yet reached the period of development when the utilitarian can also be regarded in the light of the

beautiful. He has no concern with beauty for its own sake; the delicate tints of the cotton-flower are disregarded until the flower breaks into the visible and tangible article of commerce. A forest-fringed lake, haunted with birds of the most gorgeous plumage or the sweetest song, or starred with water-lilies and feathery pampas, is only appreciated so far as it supplies water for his cattle and fish for himself.

Such generalities, though possibly not strictly applicable to every single Arab of to-day, for a few have succeeded in throwing off the trammels of their innate conservatism, were nevertheless true of the nomad Arab of the Northern Sudan forty years ago. Uncouth as the desert in which he lives, apathetic as the sand of which it is composed, he has lived year in year out the same unreasoning, unprogressive existence that his ancestors led three thousand years ago. In the timeless East the traditions of its immemorial past, the storied annals of an almost prehistoric age live and persist, flaunting the hard and unpoetic facts of an unimaginative science, scorning the dogmas of a more material generation.

Even the forms of his salutation have hardly changed and the "Peace be unto you" with which our Lord welcomed the disciples after His resurrection from the dead will greet the passing stranger in the Sudan to-day. Some there are who have abandoned the nomad life of the prairie or rolling veld for the green banks of the river which they cultivate with saqia and shaduf. But here their enterprise ends and the traveller who suddenly found himself transported to an Arab's cultivation might well think that a portion of the old Biblical life had been retained in miniature throughout the ages for his own special delectation.

Nor are the continuity of life and methods of livelihood confined to scenes by the river-side. In the far wilds of Kordofan the wayfarer will gradually become aware that the casual tracks of sheep, goats, and cattle that he may from time to time have come across in his journeyings tend to follow one direction until they form a path that is later joined by other paths. Soon the country-side is beaten bare beneath the hoof-marks of the careless flocks or browsed naked by the passing herds. Then, often without any warning, he will find himself the centre of a busy, laughing crowd of natives and the medley of sounds that go with a herd of animals and men congregated round some unsuspected wells. Here shall you see a man and a maid drop a rope, to which is fastened a girba or goatskin, to the bottom of a well and with melodious, if

somewhat monotonous, strophe and antistrophe musically raise the water to the surface. Here shall the daughters of the priest of Midian come " and draw water and fill the troughs to water their father's flock " while the greybeards remain at home in their tents of camel hair, or watch the labours from afar. Here, too, does Jacob meet his Rachel in beauty as unadorned as if three thousand years did not separate those days from these. The sameness of their existence, their utter inconsequence, and total improvidence for the future induce a fatalism that itself reacts upon their lives. Unable to think for themselves, unwilling to reason, they are at the mercy of any pseudo-prophet who is either genuinely inspired with the belief that he is competent to right existing wrongs or, as is unhappily often the case, hopes to trade upon the superstitious ignorance of the native and from it suck a profit of his own.

Carlyle has remarked that a characteristic of the Arab is his religiosity. Whether it is the solitary sandstrewn wastes and the vast unfactioned vistas of an unpeopled desert that infuses this sentiment is not so certain. The lonely nomadic life of the Arab herdsman, his rare and casual intercourse with cities, strengthens a tendency to communion with the God that orders the void, of whose unbounded powers he sees such tangible and awe-inspiring evidence in the gales that sweep across the bare open plains and in the bright-eyed stars above him. At the time of which we write he was seldom, if ever, brought into contact with the bustling civilization of a progressive metropolis ; he had little to occupy his introspective thoughts, which were peopled in his imagination with the ghouls that haunt the graveyard or the wind-devil that rides the storm. So, too, he had clear and indubitable proof of the Powers that rule the sky, in the rains that make or mar his grazing and are to bring him a year of peace and plenty or one of penury and even death from starvation. No hedges or trees of giant bulk divide the flat expanse of desert or blot from his vision the dim far-seen horizon. The spirit that inspired the monastic life of old has not been quenched in the Arab of to-day. The grim, relentless solitudes have made his rude and untutored nature a fruitful soil in which the seeds of fanaticism may be sown. Nor could more favourable circumstances for the development of this seed be found than in the conditions under which the Arab boy received his early education.

Few institutions can have had so cramping an effect on the

individual as the native system of education. No better example could be found to illustrate the impractical and unprogressive character of the Mohammedan religion. The teacher is, almost without exception, ignorant to the last degree. He has learnt by rote a few high-sounding phrases from the Koran which he is prepared to dispense—for a monetary consideration—to any who are simple enough to consult him. These phrases he drives, by sheer force of unending repetition, into the skulls of the small boys who attend his school. In these "feki" seminaries Islam makes her last desperate stand against enlightenment, and offers a last feeble opposition to progress and reform: Only to visit one of these so-called schools is to realize how hopeless must be the position of a people who rely upon them for the satisfaction of either their moral or their intellectual aspirations Around a blazing pile of logs squat a score or so of children whose ages range from six or thereabouts to twelve. A slat of wood, some two feet long by one in breadth, is clasped firmly in both hands; on it is scrawled, in crude, imperfect lettering, an extract from the Koran. For pen the pupil has a pointed piece of stick, for ink a weak solution of wood-ash and of water Rocking from side to side as they sit crouched upon the ground, the boys drone aloud, in a singsong, wearying chorus, the lesson for the day. Sometimes the pupil has just left his father's cultivation, where, throughout the day, he has driven the oxen by the water-wheel, and now, worn out with labour, he croons, rune upon rune, the meaningless task. A Babel of sounds rises upon the air, while the circle of students, uncomprehending and indifferent, swell the mind-destroying chorus in shrill-voiced emulation. No training of the imagination is theirs, no exercise of the brain or understanding; the whole system of education, so far as it has any coherence or method, would seem to have been specially devised for contracting the mind and destroying the intelligence. And in this its success is stupendous. A brainless, bigoted progeny is the result, with all the narrow-minded prejudices and obstinacies of a priest-ridden village school. Rigid obedience to all the formulæ of their religion is inculcated, the due folding of the hands and the fitting genuflexions in their proper order, and all the time-worn shibboleths of an unprogressive creed. From the days when the Arabs, a thousand years ago and more, introduced the creed of Islam into the Sudan that part of Africa has retrogressed. The infiltration of the followers of Mohammed from across the waters brought about the downfall of the

Christian kingdom established in those regions, and, to commemorate their agelong tenure of the country, not one single monument has been erected in stone, art, literature, or law. Christianity may pride herself on the fact that in two short decades of to-day she has left a more indelible mark upon the country than have ten centuries of Islam [1]

Among so wild and ignorant a people, imbued from their youth with the hope of winning Paradise through the sword or spear, it is not surprising to find frequent outbursts of fanaticism.

§ 2

In the year 1819 Mohammed Ali Pasha, the Albanian Wali of Egypt, being uncertain of the attitude of his troops, determined to employ them in conquering the Sudan. An army composed of Turks and Albanians, with a few Egyptians, set out for the south under the command of various Turkish and Circassian officers. At that time the kingdom of the Fung had passed away and the shadowy control over the dissonant tribes exercised by the Hameg was so slight as to be practically non-existent. The internecine warfare amongst the peoples of the Sudan, their total inability to combine in self-defence, their primitive armament of spears, knives, and missile clubs, all helped to render them an easy prey for the organized and well-equipped invaders.

The rule of the conquerors was, unfortunately, even worse than the dominion of the Fung. The sixty years during which the Turco-Egyptian government succeeded in holding down the Sudan by force produced as venal an administration as ever sullied the pages of history.

Officials were appointed from Cairo to rule the country, but service in those far-away parts was regarded as synonymous with exile and was often substituted for a term of imprisonment in Egypt. The one inspiring motive of an employee was to make as much money as he could in as short a space of time as possible and return to his own home at the earliest opportunity. The highest in the land vied with the junior

[1] The Government has recently inaugurated an interesting series of experiments by which these local fekis receive a brief training at the nearest recognized school and are then sent back with a small subsidy to continue their teachings So far these experiments are proving a gratifying success. Religion is still the main subject that is taught in these schools, but more intelligent methods are employed, aiming at developing the intelligence without starving the memory

clerk in lining his pockets with any sum that he could. No amount was too large for him to accept as a bribe, no sum too small to filch from a poverty-stricken litigant. Neither modesty nor self-respect was allowed to take precedence of cupidity. Taxes were arbitrarily imposed and as arbitrarily collected. From the Governor-General down to the most insignificant of the Bashi-bazouks, who wrested the miserable piastres from an impoverished population, every single person who was directly, or even remotely, connected with the assessment or collection of the taxes made his own particular pile. A tax that may have been insignificant when first approved for the Budget became an insupportable burden by the time its collection was finished. Justice was to be bought at a price, and no man or woman had any guarantee of safety for his person or security for his property. A hundred, or even five hundred, lashes of the bastinado was by no means an uncommon sentence, nor was there any chance of having a wrong righted unless the injured party were prepared to pay, and pay heavily, for the privilege. This oppressive system of financial administration shocked Slatin to such a degree that he sent in to General Gordon his resignation as Financial Inspector rather than be in any way connected with it.

Some idea of the peculation and dishonesty that characterized the Turkish official may be seen from an example quoted by Lord Cromer.

Shortly after the Commission of the Debt was established in 1876 the Custom-house receipts at Suez, which were applied to the service of the debt, fell off in a most unaccountable manner. It was also noticed that a new local director had been appointed Under the Decree signed by the Khedive on November 18, 1876, the whole of the Custom-house revenue was to be paid direct to the Commissioners of the Debt. No other receipt than that signed by one of the commissioners was legally valid. The suspicions of the commissioners were aroused. They asked why the director had been changed. They received evasive and very unsatisfactory answers. They insisted, therefore, on the dismissed official being produced dead or alive. A somewhat acrimonious correspondence took place, with the result that, after a delay of several months, the official in question made his appearance before the Commissioners of the Debt. It was then discovered that he had been ordered by the Khedive to pay the Custom-house receipts direct to His Highness. He demurred, on the very legitimate ground that he would thus be committing an illegal act. He

was at once arrested and sent to a remote part of the Sudan, from which he would certainly never have returned had not the commissioners taken up his case.

As the wealth of the people of the Sudan diminished and the loot available from the taxes became insufficient to satisfy the greed of the various officials, recourse was had to slave-dealing in order to make good the deficit. The slave trade was rampant throughout the length and breadth of the country. There was no Government official so poor, no Arab so miserable, that he did not hope to obtain by hook or crook some unfortunate slave from the black country. If he could not afford to buy one, or to keep one that he had purchased, there was always a ready market in Egypt either for slaves or for eunuchs obtained from amongst the slaves. Most of the leading Egyptian families were dependent on slave labour for the performance of certain menial duties. It was the ambition of all to be able to put a eunuch in charge of the harem. Egypt was therefore by no means anxious to abolish the slave traffic, nor did the Egyptian Government exercise more than a nominal supervision over the authorities in the Sudan. When a letter from Cairo took a month to reach Khartoum and an answer—probably evasive—another month to get back, it is not surprising that the respective administrations were not in very close touch with one another, nor conversant with the difficulties that had to be faced. So long as the anticipated revenue was received from the Sudan the Egyptian Ministry of Finance did not probe too deeply into the methods by which the result was achieved nor investigate the distribution of the burden of taxation.

Khartoum itself, now a winter health-resort for those who desire sunshine and sanitation, was in those days a pestilential death-trap, with no method of drainage or appreciation of hygiene. It was a model of all that a tropical town should not be. After a high Nile fish were caught in the streets as the pools in the main roads slowly dried. A hot, dank atmosphere afforded ideal surroundings in which myriads of mosquitoes, hatched in the stagnant meres that abounded, might increase and multiply. To-day the householder is fined for harbouring even the larvæ or the unfledged mosquito. In the early 'seventies the cloud of them was so dense and the plague was so persistent that Father Ohrwalder found it necessary to rush into the flowing Nile and leave his head alone exposed to their attacks. And if such was the condition of the capital it can be imagined with what feelings was regarded

the prospect of a life spent amid the far distant morasses of the Bahr el Ghazal or the fetid marshes of Fashoda. The reality was bad enough, but the natural timidity of the Egyptian magnified the horrors of the situation until the Sudan loomed before him as an insatiate monster ready to devour all who came within its maw.

To-day, when Khartoum is separated from Cairo by four days of luxurious travel, it is difficult to realize the relationship of Egypt and the Sudan fifty years ago. In those times sandy, dust-strewn wastes vied with a waterless, wearisome climb through rocky, burning passes to sever the two countries. Service in the south was almost synonymous with exile. The official employed in these regions had no high imperial aims to aspire to, nor any hope of preferment that he might expect to earn by a meritorious devotion to duty. The lazy employee of the Government hoped to amass sufficient money to enable him to retire in as short a time as possible; the ambitious knew that he was more likely to obtain promotion by oiling the palms of the higher authorities than by wearing himself to skin and bones over his daily unappreciated task.

§3

In the year 1856 a young man, named Zubeir, set out for the south to trade, and as years went on he so extended his activities as to conquer Darfur.

Zubeir Rahmat el Abbasi, to give him his full title, was born in the year 1831 on the island of Wawissi, some forty miles north of Khartoum. Being of a bold disposition, he determined to seek his fortunes in the Southern Sudan, where rumours of wild tribes and animals, and wonderful riches to be gained by the adventurous, were attracting many Arab merchants. For thirteen years Zubeir traded in the Bahr el Ghazal and took part in many slave-raiding expeditions, into which all the commercial enterprises of those days developed. But, whereas the ordinary merchant merely attacked an unsuspecting village and put all those to death who were useless as slaves, Zubeir from the very first seems to have had an ambition to become the sultan of those far-distant parts. Most of his time was spent in the Nyam-Nyam or Cannibal Country, "the land," as Zubeir himself picturesquely put it, "where there are no graves." Zubeir realized the enormous wastage that the existing methods of trading involved; his

shrewd commercial intelligence revolted against its short-sighted extravagance.

He, accordingly, set himself to try and organize a kingdom out of the disunited negro tribes These all had to pay him tribute of ivory or other goods, and when a village was raided the able-bodied men were given the opportunity of enlisting in the army that Zubeir formed to aid him. After fighting many battles and surmounting many difficulties Zubeir, by the year 1865, had subdued the natives in the south-west Bahr el Ghazal. The following year he made a treaty with the Rizighat Arabs in order to open up trade relations with Darfur. His efforts were so successful that merchants came to Darfur from places as far apart as Hodeida, Massaua, Jedda, and Tripoli.

The influence that Zubeir was attaining in the Southern Sudan could hardly escape notice. The Government itself became suspicious, while the rival merchants, who found Zubeir gradually acquiring a monopoly of all the trade in those parts, became jealous of his authority. A force was dispatched from Khartoum under a man named el Haj Mohammed el Billali, who tried to induce all the merchants to surrender their arms to him, as the representative of the Khedivial Government. Zubeir, pretending that Billali was an interloper, persuaded the merchants not to take orders from him, so that it was not long before Zubeir and Billali came to blows. Billali's forces, numbering about twelve hundred, were routed, and Zubeir informed Jaafer Pasha, the Governor of Khartoum, of his success over the rebel Billali. By the year 1873 Zubeir had conquered the Nyam-Nyams, defeated the Rizighat (who had been causing him trouble), and commenced the conquest of Darfur.

He then wrote to the Governor-General, Ismail Pasha Ayyub, informing him of all that he had done and asking for a Government representative to be sent to administer the tribesmen whom his sword had brought beneath the sway of the Khedive. Zubeir was himself appointed, with the rank of Bey, to rule the country, on condition that an annual revenue of £15,000 was paid to the Khedivial Government. Zubeir then proceeded to complete the subjugation of Darfur, but the Government, not wishing for the whole credit to be his, dispatched a force under Ismail Pasha to co-operate. The troops, however, took no part in the fighting, so that the whole brunt fell upon Zubeir and his men. Following up his successes, Zubeir subdued the people of Tama, Masalit, Gimr, and Sula,

and even penetrated to Wadai. But he soon quarrelled with Ismail Pasha, whom he suspected of trying to rob him of the fruits of victory. Zubeir therefore determined to go to Cairo and lay his case before the Khedive.

He arrived in Cairo, as an honoured guest, on June 10, 1875. By various pretexts he was kept there until 1877, when he fought in the Balkans for six months. On his return to Cairo he was still prevented from leaving for the Sudan, and he was in Cairo at the time of which we write. But although he was not permitted to leave Egypt, the memory of his doughty deeds still lived in the Sudan, and his influence was to make itself felt during the coming years.

§4

Somewhere about the year 1848 Mohammed Ahmed, the Mahdi, or the rightly guided, was born on the island of Lebab, near Dongola. His father was a carpenter, but died while Mohammed Ahmed was still a boy. The latter was thus, at an early period of his career, thrown upon his own resources. He attached himself to the Sammania Tariqa (or sect) of which the head was Sheikh Mohammed Sherif He received the usual religious training to be obtained in this type of school, and, as soon as he grew up, went with a few disciples to Aba Island, where he scooped out for himself a hole in the mud bank of the White Nile. The enthusiasm that inspired Simeon Stylites is with difficulty quenched, and Mohammed Ahmed speedily gained a reputation for piety and asceticism among a people that was only too ready to appreciate a morbid eccentricity of any character; who held phylacteries of more account than philosophies and regarded a paralysed epileptic as one inspired of God.

An opportunity soon presented itself (and was eagerly seized upon by the young enthusiast) for showing his devotion to the cause of religion.

Mohammed Sherif held a feast to celebrate the circumcision of his son; dancing, laughter, and merrymaking marked the occasion, and this greatly offended the religious susceptibilities of the youthful ascetic, by whom the present life was regarded as one to be spent in sackcloth and ashes in order to avoid the pains of hell-fire in the world to come. Moved to a righteous indignation, Mohammed Ahmed boldly reproved his master and teacher and not unnaturally drew upon himself

the anger of the reverend Sheikh. Mohammed Ahmed was called upon to apologize, and after heated words he transferred his allegiance to Sheikh El Gurashi, a jealous rival of Mohammed Sherif, who then tried to wean him from his new attachment, only to be rebuffed with contumely. Mohammed Ahmed thereupon made a tour in Kordofan which confirmed him in his belief that the time was ripe for a revolt against the iniquities of the Government. Like the Joshua who was both prophet and priest the Mahdi in 1881 heard the cries of those who were being ground beneath the heel of the Turks, and, when the seeds of disaffection had been scattered sufficiently far, he prepared to reap the harvest. There flocked to him hordes of political malcontents, who welcomed whole-heartedly the opportunity of remedying in a sacred cause the actual wrongs that they endured.

After his journey to Kordofan, Mohammed Ahmed retired to Aba Island, where he passed a life of seclusion, denying himself the good things of this world and devoting himself to the study of the religious truths. His reputation for piety increased, and with it the power of working miracles that is usually attributed to the holy man in the Sudan. With a credulity that is only paralleled by their ignorance, women besought his prayers that they might have children, men trusted to his incantations to ward off from them the bullets of their foes. Nor did the stricken field of Kereri nearly twenty years later shake this inherited belief, though ten thousand paid for their trustfulness with their lives. In the tourist-ridden streets of Omdurman you shall buy for a farthing a charm against the sting of any given scorpion. The insistence of a fanatical priest will persuade a hundred spear-armed Arabs that they have but to attack the forces of the Government and the angelic hosts of Heaven will fly to their aid Nor are such fancies the sole prerogative of a rude unlettered people. Did not the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary hover over the forces of the Spaniards at Vera Cruz in their fight with the Aztec chief Quauhpopoca? Did not a vision of a holy banner and cherub assistance appear to Constantine at the Milvian bridge?

The Mohammedan himself was no stranger to such beliefs. At the battle of the Elephant against the Abyssinian invaders of the Hedjaz, God had miraculously intervened on behalf of the people of the country All true believers would be well acquainted with the hundred and fifth chapter of the Koran:

Seest thou not how thy Lord served the masters of the elephant? Did He not cause their cunning to be their own loss, and sent He

not at them magical birds to pelt them with stones of baked clay and made them even as chewed grass ?

Throughout the ages such beliefs have been current. The world will be the poorer when such childish fancies have ceased to influence mankind.

In fact only eight years later the Dervishes attributed their success over the rebel Abu Gemmeiza to divine interposition. Osman Adam, in reporting to the Khalifa his victory of February 22, 1889, at El Fasher, wrote : [1]

God was with us and we saw several miracles during the battle. God sent down fire which burnt up the dead bodies of the enemy, and also their wounded, showing how violent was His wrath upon them.

The brethren also saw sixteen white flags with green borders waving in the air.

They also heard the sounds of drums beating in the air, and saw objects like mountains falling upon the enemy. The Prophet also revealed himself to many of the followers before the battle.

It is not difficult to imagine with what ease the pious recluse of Aba Island collected a large and appreciative body of supporters. The harassed native of the Sudan was prepared to follow any leader who held before his eyes the vision of brighter days to come and a release from the enormities of the venal Government that oppressed him. Many there were who loathed the corruption of the Turkish official, or hated the injustice of his rule. Not a few were indignant at the efforts of Baker and Gordon to check the ravages of the slave trade and destroy the power of its leaders. They had themselves profited from it, and were, moreover, dependent on their slaves for the performance of all menial labour. Your high-born Arab, and for that matter the herdsman of lowly estate, has no belief in the dignity of manual labour. He will watch the Nile rise or his flocks and herds increase and be content, but to him the abolition of slavery meant the subversion of his whole social state.

Thus from two extremes were the hosts of the Mahdi recruited—those who suffered from the excesses of Turkish misrule and those who profited from its atrocities. For sixty years the Arab had groaned beneath the exactions of the Turk, and the black had lamented his unhappy fate. But Gordon had shown the native that he still might call his body

[1] See Wingate . " Mahdism and the Egyptian Sudan "

and his soul his own, and that there was in the world such a thing as impartial justice. Zubeir's triumphant soldiery had begun to realize that it was possible to fight against the oppressor with some hope of success. The Egyptian Government had conquered the Sudan because the people were disunited and ill-armed. Zubeir taught them the importance of co-operation: he showed them the power that union could exercise over disunion

By his victory over Billali and the Government forces Zubeir had opened the way for the downfall of the Government of the Sudan, though he himself, a far greater man, was not to be present to take part in its overthrow

§ 5

It was the commonly held belief of certain sects of Islam that the Prophet Christ was to come again to earth. It is perhaps needless to remark that this belief is not peculiar to the followers of Mohammed. To Christians the idea is familiar, and the successes of Cortes in Mexico were due in some measure to the fact that he was supposed to be the Great Being Worshipped by the Aztecs who had retired to the regions where the sun rises and from where he was one day to reappear in the fullness of time.

Thus the Mahdi not only gathered to his standard a horde of political malcontents but also a real and enthusiastic following of religious devotees, and was regarded much in the same light as were the judges of old who came before the people and were redeemers as well as patriots At first, however, his band of adherents was but a small one. The Arab was too shrewd to take the chance of backing a forlorn hope, and the Mahdi's forces were recruited from the lowest of the low. But when Mohammed Ahmed realized that the moment was ripe he boldly declared himself to be the Mahdi, the expected prophet of God, and openly preached to the people a revivalist movement. The false religion of the Turks was to be abhorred, his luxurious effeminacy was to be tabooed. The true believer was to be clad in rags and was to deny himself the luxuries of this world.

It can be imagined with what sympathy this teaching was hailed, not only by those who really disliked the irreligion of the Turk, but also by those who had nothing to lose in this world, and at any rate nothing less to hope for in the next.

But when news reached Khartoum that a false prophet had arisen in the dim distance of the White Nile region, the authorities at first turned a deaf ear to the gathering storm. They ignored the rumours, which they preferred, in their indolence, to attribute to the jealousy of Mohammed Sherif. Is not to-morrow also a day? And, in any case, there is no need to do to-day what one can do, although perhaps not so well, to-morrow. Time was therefore given the Mahdi to increase the number of his followers, until it was impossible any longer to disregard the movement.

The first act of Rauf Pasha, the Governor-General of the Sudan, was to dispatch Mohammed Bey Abu el Saud, a friend of Mohammed Ahmed, to Aba Island, with instructions to bring the Mahdi to Khartoum. The Mahdi, however, did not fall in with the wishes of the embassy and exclaimed, "What! By the grace of God and His Prophet, I am the master of this country and never shall I go to Khartoum to justify myself."

Mohammed Ahmed then began to take more active measures, and scraped together a few adherents from amongst the Kenana and Degheim tribes. Rauf Pasha thereupon sent a company to capture Mohammed Ahmed.

Various accounts are given of what happened. According to one, Rauf Pasha sent two young officers with the expedition and promised promotion to the one who took the Mahdi prisoner. Abu el Saud was in command, and anchored in midstream while the two half-company commanders, with visions of glory and promotion floating before them, landed at either end of the island. They were ambuscaded, fired impartially on friend and foe, and, as the steamer refused to draw near the island in order to pick up the stragglers, they were destroyed almost to a man. Another version says that one of the soldiers mistaking a native for the Mahdi shot him; and the villagers then attacked the unready force.

At any rate, on August 12, 1881, the first armed expedition sent against the Mahdi failed ignominiously, the losses of Mohammed Ahmed being insignificant. The success brought numbers of Arabs over to the cause of the Mahdi.

There was a belief amongst many of the people that the second Messiah was to be looked for from Jebel Masa in North Africa. Mohammed Ahmed, who was quite aware of this, bent his steps towards Jebel Gedir in Southern Kordofan, which he announced to be the mountain foretold by the seers of old. Thus he put a considerable distance between himself

and the forces of the Government, while, at the same time, he avoided any appearance of having run away.

The Mahdi fully appreciated the Napoleonic axiom that in order to electrify men it is necessary to appeal to their imagination. This it was which whetted the sword that had been forged by the political misdemeanours of the Turks. But the Mahdi did not trust merely to his spiritual mission; before he left Aba Island he chose, in imitation of the Prophet Mohammed, four khalifas: Abdallahi, whose life Zubeir had once spared; Ali wad Helu of the Degheim tribe, who later became one of the khalifa's most famous generals; Mohammed el Sherif, who had been his earliest instructor; while the fourth appointment was offered to the famous Sheikh el-Senussi of Northern Africa, who refused it.

Abdallahi was designated as his successor should an untimely fate overtake the Mahdi. He was his closest adviser and consulted on all questions of policy or statesmanship.

Towards the end of August there happened to be some 1,400 troops concentrated at Kawa. Mohammed Said Pasha was dispatched with four companies to try and effect the capture of the Mahdi, but for some reason or other the expedition miscarried and returned without being able to come up with him. The prestige of the Mahdi increased in consequence, the Government troops gaining the reputation of being afraid to attack him.

On December 9th Rashid Bey, the Governor of Fashoda, set out with 400 regulars and 100 Shilluks to bring the holy man to book. He took few precautions, and when near Jebel Gedir his men broke ranks in order to drink The force was surprised and almost annihilated, many arms and much ammunition passing into the hands of the Mahdi.

The Government at last began to realize the danger of this revivalist movement and organized a large force under Yusef Pasha Shellali, who had earned considerable credit in the campaigns of Gessi. The Mahdi summoned all true believers to join in a Jehad, or holy war, promising a fifth of all booty to those who survived and Paradise to those who fell. Fanatics and freebooters flocked to his standard until he had accumulated a force of some 6,000 men. Yusef Pasha Shellali, on the other hand, experienced much difficulty with his troops, as no loot was to be expected from the poverty-stricken priest—a weird commentary on the state of Turkish administration and those who served under it.

On June 7, 1882, Yusef Pasha encamped at Masa, near Jebel Gedir. He took little or no trouble over making a thorn fence to keep out the enemy, and at early dawn his force was wiped out. Tents, guns, rifles, and other booty fell into the hands of an enemy who had hitherto been compelled to rely upon spears and clubs.

Abu Haraza was sacked and the people mutilated in order that their bracelets might be obtained. Various towns were invested. At Birket a garrison of 2,000 men was wiped out, and 200 troops were lost at Shat; and although the Dervishes were beaten back from Dueim with a loss of 2,000 men, and the Government here and there gained some temporary minor successes, the flood of Mahdiism rose steadily.

Flushed with victory, the Mahdi turned his eyes in the direction of El Obeid, a wealthy town of considerable size and the capital of Kordofan Province. At first he attempted to win by intrigue that which he did not feel himself strong enough, in spite of his recent success, to gain by assault. And here again is an instructive instance of the many defects in the existing system of administration.

The success of the Mahdi was due not to his own strength and that of his followers, but to the lamentable weakness and indiscretions of the Egyptians, and, as events were to prove, Mohammed Ahmed was justified in his prudence. He accordingly sent messengers to try and induce the people to hand over the town without fighting; his emissaries found many disloyalists ready to throw off their allegiance to the Government, the chief among them being one Elias Pasha, who fanned the embers of discontent into a blaze and attempted to win over to the cause of the Mahdi the wealthy merchants of the town and others of outstanding influence. The religious sheikhs, too, as usual, prepared to suck out for themselves what profit they could squeeze from the dissensions and embarrassments in the State, and were quite prepared to join the Mahdi. In his success they, as representing the religious side of the spiritual community and as promoters of a religious revival, saw every prospect of prosperity and promotion.

Elias Pasha then sent his son Omar to interview the Mahdi, while Mohammed Pasha Said prepared to put El Obeid in a state of defence.

With his power assured in Southern Kordofan, the Mahdi sent emissaries to the Gezira—the land lying between the White and the Blue Niles—but, for the present, he made little headway there and determined to accept Elias Pasha's invitation to go

to El Obeid. To pave the way for his advance Mohammed Ahmed sent an official intimation to the garrison calling on it to surrender. In accordance with the best traditions of the Turks these messengers were promptly shot, although it is only fair to admit that the commander-in-chief was himself averse to this somewhat high-handed and certainly impolitic line of action. The Mahdi then determined to attack, and arrived before the walls of El Obeid with a large force of Dervishes.

By daily prayers and exhortations he laid before his fanatical adherents the beatific visions of the world to come and all the blessings that were to be the portion of those that fell "in the way of God." On the morning of September 4th, the first attack was delivered and beaten off with appalling losses to the Mahdiists, among the killed being the Mahdi's brother Mohammed, as well as Yusef, the brother of the Khalifa Abdullahi. But the Turkish commander, with characteristic lack of initiative, failed to follow up his success or the history of the next few years might have been different. Time was given to the followers of Mohammed Ahmed to reform, and they then settled down to besiege the town in earnest.

An expedition for the relief of Bara and El Obeid under the command of Ali Bey Lutfi[1] was made but was completely routed by the rebels; out of a force that numbered 2,000 only 200 escaped death by thirst or sword.

On January 5, 1883, Bara submitted to Abd el Rahman Wad El Nejumi, who was later to organize the massacre of Hicks' force and himself to fall, not ingloriously, at Toski.

Twelve days later the town of El Obeid capitulated. For six months the garrison had held out with varying success against overwhelming odds. Famine and dissension from within joined hands with the besieging force outside the walls When at last a chicken cost three or four pounds instead of as many pence and an egg was only to be had for half a crown the troops were forced to submit, and thus almost the whole of Kordofan passed beneath the sway of the Mahdi.

In the meantime Khartoum was being put into a state of defence and entrenchments were dug round it Reinforcements were urgently demanded from Egypt. By the autumn a large force of over 10,000 men was concentrated at Khartoum and put under the command of General Hicks Pasha. Few more worthless armies can ever have taken the field. Convicts and others had been hastily impressed in Cairo and left

[1] Following Wingate Gleichen and Colvile call him Satfi.

Khartoum in tears to do battle with the rebels. Near Kashgil the whole force was annihilated and the power of the Mahdi in Kordofan was supreme.

In July, 1881, when the Mahdi first commenced to preach a holy war, his following consisted of a few unarmed, untrained, and ignorant scalliwags, as poverty-stricken as himself. In a little over two years this rabble had developed into a formidable army that with spears and sticks had succeeded in capturing nearly 21,000 rifles and 19 guns [1]

But though by the end of 1883 the successes of the Mahdiists in the south, centre, and west of the Sudan had been complete, they had not been won without appalling losses. Many were the isolated set-backs, and though the Turco-Egyptian forces had shown little initiative and even less ability at withstanding an attack in the open, the garrisons for the most part fought with great determination behind their fortifications. Time after time the Dervishes were driven back, and so unsuccessful were the assaults that the Mahdi had to issue instructions that the capitulation of the fortified posts was always to be brought about by famine and intrigue rather than direct attack.

In the Gezira various minor successes were gained by the Government troops.

By the end of 1883 the rising tide of Mahdiism had swept over the whole of the Southern, Western, and Central Sudan. Kordofan and Darfur had been overwhelmed; the Bahr el Ghazal was almost submerged. Only a few isolated posts, such as Sennar and Kassala, held out, like rocks, amid the seas that every minute threatened to engulf them.

To the North, the flood had not yet reached, but towards the east it had made serious encroachment, as will be seen in the following chapter.

[1] Date		Action	Rifles captured
1881	August 12th	Aba Island	120
	December 9th	Jebel Gedir	400
1882	April 15th	Meselleмiya	150
	June 7th	Jebel Gedir	4,000
	August	Shat	150
	September	Bara	1,100
1883	January 5th	Bara	2,000
	January 17th	El Obeid	6,000 and 5 guns.
	November 5th	Kashgil	7,000 and 14 guns

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JACKSON : " Black Ivory and White."
CROMER : " Modern Egypt."
STEWART : " Report on the Sudan."
COLVILE : " History of the Sudan Campaign."

CHAPTER II

Description of the Eastern Sudan and its inhabitants Family of Osman Digna. The slave trade. Osman Digna expelled from Suakin. Appointed emir by the Mahdi. Returns to the Red Sea Littoral. Goes to Gabab and Erkowit Defeated at Sinkat. Defeated at Gabab. Defeat of the Egyptians at Khor Abent. Defeat of the Egyptians at El Teb; death of Commander Moncrieff. Defeat of the Egyptians at Tamai.

§ 1

THE Eastern Sudan may be taken to include the whole of the Red Sea Littoral between parallels 22° and 18° North, and to extend along the Eritrean frontier as far as Kassala and Gallabat. To the west a rough geographical, though not necessarily tribal, boundary might be put on the Atbara River from its source to Adarama and then northwards along the 35° meridian east longitude.

The Red Sea Littoral consists of a low, sun-scorched, coral-reefed coast-line only a few feet above the level of the sea itself. In fact, at the height of the semi-annual rise of the waters the land is but a few inches above the highest watermark. There are numerous creeks along the coast which afford a temporary shelter for the sailing vessels that hug the shore, but forty years ago there was only one harbour worthy of the name, and to this fact Suakin owes its importance. From here a caravan route led westwards to Berber and thence to Khartoum and the Central Sudan, while another track crossed the mountains to Kassala and the highlands of Abyssinia.

The maritime plain extends inland for a distance of some ten or twenty miles and is covered in most places with scrub and the bushy adlib plant, which, in years of normal rainfall, are sufficient to satisfy the undiscriminating wants of goats and camels. At certain periods of the year when the yellow, fluffy pompons of the mimosa perfume the air with their gentle fragrance, or the pink blossoms of the flowering tundub bush add a splash of colour to the scene, the desert assumes a peculiar attractiveness. Its inhospitality is hidden beneath a variegated covering that is pleasing to the eye, even if of no very great utility. The desert hare, ariel, and Isabella gazelle are frequently to be seen. Bustard and the demoiselle crane

wander about. Flocks of doves and sand-grouse flutter round a water-hole. The piping cry of a crested lark, as it rises just before the wayfarer, is borne plaintively upon the breeze. But though birds and animals abound water is very scanty until the foothills on the western edge of the plains are reached. Immediately behind these foothills the ground rises steeply by a gradation of mountains to heights of four or five thousand feet. The whole forms a massif that can only be penetrated by an occasional camel-herd or isolated caravan at infrequent intervals. Nature has indeed seen to it that the Sudan is well fortified against the invasion of the stranger: to the north a sand-strewn waterless waste, to the east a mountain barrier, to the south the vast morasses of the Sudd.

The inhabitants of the Red Sea Littoral keep for the most part to the mountains, and, in their character and methods of life, are as fearless and independent as other mountain people. They fall into three main divisions, the Hadendoa, the Beni Amir, and the Amarar. There are other tribes, such as the Bisharin, Arteiga, Ashraf, but they are of less importance than the first three and did not play so prominent a part in the fighting that took place They appear to be a Hamitic people, or at any rate to have been largely influenced by Hamitic culture. Intercourse with the Arabs has led to the incorporation in their language of many Arabic words, and they have been to a certain extent influenced by their customs There is, however, a marked difference between them, and many of their habits find no corresponding parallel amongst the Arabs. For instance, no Hadendoa may milk an animal and drink of the result unless someone else has first tasted the milk.

The Hadendoa have been immortalized by Kipling under the name of Fuzzy-Wuzzies owing to the golliwog methods of hairdressing that they affect. This picturesque, if somewhat unhygienic, *coiffure* is typical of all the peoples of the Red Sea Littoral, from Assuan to Massaua, and makes a charging Fuzzy-Wuzzy a fearsome spectacle.

As a race they are truculent, fearless, independent, proud, vindictive. A wrong, real or imaginary, is never forgotten or forgiven unless it has been wiped out with money or washed away with blood. If an offence is committed the relatives of the parties concerned forgather and arrange for compensation, which, in the case of a human life being forfeit, may amount to as much as £220. If the blood-money is not paid vengeance is exacted in blood. As a result, vendettas are common and may even be inherited, almost atavistically, by a later

generation. These blood-feuds are conducted in a brutal, unchivalrous manner. Members of the aggrieved family will single out some unfortunate individual of the opposite faction and lurk for him until they can come upon him at a disadvantage. Quite frequently the victim is attacked while asleep by several of his enemies and hacked almost to pieces with the viciously curved knives of the tribe.

Such were the people with whom Osman Digna was to cast his lot. He belonged to a well-known Suakin family called the Dignai. For many years past the family had been one of considerable local importance and had played an active part in the civic affairs of Suakin. Osman Digna's first cousin. Ali Digna Fagi—a huge man who died at Berber in the year 1872—was head of the local Chamber of Commerce and chief merchant of Suakin.

The ancestors of Osman Digna appear originally to have been Kurds from Diarbekr who came to Suakin about the time of Selim the Conqueror, A.D. 1512–1520. They settled here and intermarried with the Hadendoa and Arteiga and gave rise to what is regarded as a subsection of the former tribe, the Dignai.

Various explanations have been given to account for the name Digna. According to some writers, he was so called because he had a beard, " Abu Dign " in Arabic signifying " the father of a beard." This, however, is no particular distinction in the Eastern Sudan. Others state that Dikna in the Hadendoa language denotes " ugly," and Osman Digna was regarded as ugly because of the light colour of his father, who was the offspring of a Turk or Levantine and Hadendoa woman. This account cannot be accepted for the reason that almost every inhabitant of Suakin is of very light hue in comparison with the swarthy natives of the Hadendoa and Beni Amir tribes. The real explanation is much simpler. Digna was merely the family name, which, if the family were ever to become sufficiently numerous, would ultimately be the designation of a section of a tribe or even of a whole tribe Thus the great Kawahla tribe of the Central Sudan claim to be descended many hundred years ago from one Kahil. Similarly, the Hadendoa tribe is divided into sections called " bedana " and subsections called " hissa." The Digna, or Dignai, family if they had been of sufficient importance, might have formed a subsection of a tribe, whether of Beja or a purer Arab strain.

Osman Digna himself was born about the year 1840 in

Suakin, and was thus a few years older than the Mahdi. His brothers Ali and Omar, and his cousin Ahmed Digna, were merchants plying their trade between Suakin and the Arabian coast. But though their activities were ostensibly directed to legitimate forms of commerce the family used their trading as a cloak for the more lucrative pursuit of slave dealing. In this they were joined by Osman Digna, who was at first employed merely as a broker for his relatives and had been from his youth regarded as of very doubtful honesty.

The importation of slaves from the Sudan into Arabia was finally conducted so openly and on such a colossal scale that the British Consul at Jedda was compelled to bring the matter to the notice of the venal Turkish authorities.

In the year 1877 or thereabouts Ali Digna was captured with a convoy of ninety-six slaves by His Majesty's ship "Wild Swan" off the harbour of Sheikh Barghut (Chief Bug), the modern Port Sudan. This capture resulted in a loss of over £1,000 to the Digna family. To make matters worse the shop and compound of the Digna firm at Jedda were shortly afterwards searched and the family arrested. All the merchandise and slaves were seized, and Osman Digna, who was nominally pursuing the calling of an auctioneer, was also imprisoned, together with his brothers Ali and Omar. Everything that the Dignai family possessed was confiscated and the firm was deported from Jedda. Osman Digna, with his brothers and cousin, returned to Suakin ruined and embittered men. To obtain a precarious livelihood Osman Digna entered into an agreement with some merchants for the supply of senna, and obtained employment as a contractor for water at the cotton ginning factory of Mr. Elias Debbas.

In 1881 occurred the abortive rising of Arabi Pasha in Egypt, and Osman Digna, who was imbued with the deepest hatred for either a Turkish or British administration, tried to foment a disturbance in Suakin.

At this time there were two chief religious sects in the town, one the Khatmia Mirghania, of which Sir Sayyid Ali el Mirghani, K.C.M.G., is at present the head, and the other the Magadhib owning allegiance in the early 'eighties to Sheikh el Tahir el Magdhub in Suakin, though the head of the sect was domiciled in the neighbourhood of Berber.

Osman Digna belonged to the latter denomination—a fact that was to prove of the greatest importance during the history of the next few years.

§ 2

In the Sudan to-day there are three main religious sects, followers of Sir Sayyid Ali el Mirghani, K.C.M.G., Sayyid Abderrahman el Mahdi and Sherif Yusef el Hindi respectively. Each of these has his own sphere of influence, though there is no cut-and-dried delimitation of the religious boundaries. At the time of the Mahdi's rebellion the chief strongholds of the Mirghania sect were to be found in Dongola and the neighbourhood of Kassala, with outposts in Suakin, the Gezira, and elsewhere. This fact has to be borne in mind, as it coloured the history of the rebellion against the Egyptian Government. Throughout the decade and a half during which the Sudan was cut adrift from Egypt the Mirghania family never failed in its hostility to the Mahdi's rule. For this reason Dongola and Kassala were the first parts of the Sudan—quite apart from their geographical situation—to be saved from the Khalifa's misrule. Had the Hadendoa and other Beja people of the Red Sea Province been at this time adherents of the Mirghania sect, Osman Digna, as a follower of the Magadhib, could never have obtained the following that he ultimately came to command—if not to lead.

Osman Digna's efforts to foment sedition in Suakin found but little favour, a meeting of the chief notables and merchants was held, and the inhabitants of Suakin very sensibly pointed out that living in a seaport with no sort of defences they were at the mercy of any men-of-war that might choose to put in an appearance—an interesting little sidelight on sea power which was not lost upon some who must have been acquainted with full details of the bombardment of Alexandria.

The more respectable of the Suakin inhabitants, including Shunnawi Bey (the chief merchant), Khalifa Abdallah, Khalifa el Safi (head of the Ashraf), and Osman Bey Sheikh, then decided to expel the Digna family from Suakin. A collection was made in order to assist the impoverished refugees.

Osman Digna, in furious disgust, made his way to the large and prosperous town of Berber, where he became a broker. Although Berber was 280 miles distant from Suakin, Osman Digna occasionally visited his home to sell merchandise there. He was thus able to keep in touch with his former associates and to hear any news that there was. In the year 1882, for instance, he brought some ostrich feathers, which he shipped

to Jedda. On this occasion he stayed for about six months and recommenced his old intrigues. Collecting some of the most disreputable of the people of Suakin he went by night to the village of Fula, where he made them swear upon the Koran to oppose the Government in any way they could. The head of the Suakin community at this time was Geilani Emin Osman, brother of Mahmud Bey Arteiga. Geilani warned the authorities that Osman Digna was trying to stir up trouble against the Government. No action, however, was taken, partly owing to fear of the influence of Sheikh Tahir and partly on account of the spirit of casual inconsequence that permeated the administration of the time. Osman Digna then returned to Berber, and, after a short stay in this place, made his way to Khartoum and thence to El Obeid

At this time the Mahdi was celebrating his victory at El Obeid, which had fallen on January 17, 1883.

He summoned a meeting of the chieftains and others in order to discuss the future course of action and, in particular, *the means by which reinforcements might be prevented from* reaching the Egyptian Government through Suakin. From this place came cavalry and artillery, and it was essential to the success of the Mahdi's forces for this avenue of communication to be closed.

As it happened, Osman Digna's brother, Omar Abu Bakr Fagi Digna, had just died of disease contracted during the siege of El Obeid. He had been held in high esteem by the Mahdi, so that when Osman Digna undertook to prevent any troops passing along the Red Sea to the Nile route it was only natural for this offer to be accepted. Osman Digna was appointed an emir and returned to the Red Sea hills with various instructions from the Mahdi to the local chieftains. He was also given letters addressed to Mohammed el Amin, Sayyid Ahmed el Shingeiti—head of the religious council at Suakin—and to Tewfik Bey.

Osman Digna first visited Bir Ariab, where there was a "feki" (or parish priest) named Ali Gulhawwi, who was of some importance and had a considerable amount of influence among the Mussayab and other tribes. Osman Digna told the feki that he had just seen the Mahdi in El Obeid and had been instructed to launch a holy war against the Government. He announced that those who fought under his banner and died would go to Paradise. Anyone who did not actually join him would be regarded as a friend of the Government: his womenfolk, his children, his animals, his blood, all

that was his would be lawful booty for the Mahdi and his followers.

From Bir Ariab, Osman Digna, who at this time only had five men with five camels and a stallion, went to Kokreib, where he issued the same orders Thence to Hereitri, Khor Abig Wallada (Khor Arab), and Ameit. His appeal, however, met with but little response although he was successful in destroying the telegraph line between Berber and Sinkat. The Mahdi was a long way off, almost a month in point of view of time; the wild tribesmen of the Red Sea hills did not quite realize what all the trouble was about as they had been but little affected by the maladministration and peculations of the Government. Those amongst them who had any knowledge of the past history of the Sudan would have realized that kingdoms had come and gone, and that whatever the nominal suzerain—whether Fung, Hameg, or Egyptian—they themselves had not been affected by the rise and fall of dynasties. Their interests were entirely local, their outlook on affairs of State purely parochial.

Nor was Osman Digna himself welcomed as an emissary of the Mahdi. He was a merchant who had no particular standing in the country, either through birth or piety. He was known to have been somewhat wild in his youth, he had the reputation of being rather a firebrand, and he was not a man who had made many friends.

El Obeid was far distant and few were prepared to believe the various rumours that filtered through to them. Moreover, although some religious sects, such as the Magadhib, believed that the Mahdi, the expected of God, was to come from the west, many, and amongst these the Mirghania and the Gadria, held that he would appear in the east.

The Mahdi was therefore from the outset regarded as an impostor by many leading religious sections, including the important one of the Mirghania.

At the same time the strain of religiosity that is so characteristic of the Arab is never far below the surface, and it requires but little for it to burst into prominence. The people were very much under the influence of their chieftains, temporal in some cases and spiritual in most. They were at all times ready to pay them respect and allegiance as personalities of a superior mould. These religious chiefs were near at hand and were known personally and in many instances intimately by the tribesmen, whose own individual actions were therefore determined for them very largely by the attitude of these

spiritual and temporal leaders. An opportunity—dramatic in its setting—soon occurred which convinced them that the dimly realized and distant Mahdi must be a power far beyond any that had ever before come within their ken.

Among the letters entrusted by Mohammed Ahmed to Osman Digna was one addressed to Sheikh Tahir el Magdhub. This religious leader was held in such respect that anyone approaching him must humble himself in his presence. Sheikh Tahir was wont to sit upon a chair while those who visited him remained squatting upon the ground. On his arrival before Sheikh Tahir—who was surrounded by the usual crowd of devotees—Osman Digna, instead of doing as he had done so many times before, and making obeisance to his spiritual chieftain, went boldly up to him and presented the Mahdi's letter. Sheikh Tahir read the letter, kissed it, and, after raising it to his head and eyes, retired into an inner chamber. Here he discarded the clothes of silk and satin with which he had previously been clad, and, to the amazement of his little circle of worshippers, returned garbed in a simple white garment of the common herdsman. He then motioned Osman Digna to his chair and crouched before him.

Such an act of humility could not fail to have the most revolutionary effect. Osman Digna, who had previously been compelled—in common with all his other adherents—to wait half an hour or more before being graciously permitted to enter the august presence of the man who at that time was by far the greatest personality in the Red Sea hills, had, without asking for permission of any sort, made his way before him Their holy man had immediately humbled himself before the quondam broker, simply and solely because he was the representative of the Mahdi. Sheikh Tahir then told his followers to put themselves under the orders of Osman Digna.

At this time Ali el Din Bey, the Turkish Governor, had lent twenty convicts to Sheikh Tahir in order to dig a well at a place called Gabab. This was a shallow valley some three or four miles to the north-east of Jebel Hadarbab. There was plenty of grazing to be found here—even in the dry season : there were shady trees—none too common in many parts of the Red Sea hills—and good water could be obtained from wells only twenty or thirty feet deep. Gabab was, in fact, the summer resort of many of the residents of Suakin and Tokar before it was superseded by Sinkat.

When Osman Digna arrived at Gabab Sheikh Tahir gave him these twenty prisoners to carry out any work that he

required. In spite of their heavy chains three of them succeeded in escaping to Suakin. Osman Digna, in a paroxysm of anger, had those who remained behind butchered—an act of cruelty which was not forgotten by those whom in after years he was to try and induce to surrender.[1]

§ 3

On July 28th Osman Digna left Gabab and made his way to Arkwaidj (a name which has become corrupted in Government records to Erkowit), where he arrived on August 1st. Arkwaidj is a system of hills some twenty miles to the east of Sinkat, which, for some reason that perhaps the geologist can explain, is clothed in a mantle of trees and verdure that is not to be found again in such luxuriance until close to the Eritrean frontier. The candle-branched euphorbia, the dracæna (or dragon-tree), the dwarf mimosa, and many other interesting and attractive trees are common. At certain times of the year the country is covered with diminutive flowers and maidenhair ferns, and some plants of the lily order. As soon as the rains begin to fall these myriads of little flowers blossom into a brief but beautiful existence until in October the mists begin to roll up once more from the sea and wrap the mountains in their winter sleep. In the middle of this system of hills is the Government summer resort of Erkowit, situated round some wells known to the Hadendoa as Waharasab.

Osman Digna immediately began to sow the seeds of disaffection among a people whose opinions were divided as to the necessity or advisability of taking up arms against their rulers. Certainly some of the more zealous of the religious enthusiasts viewed the prospects of fighting in a holy war with considerable pleasure. But the Hadendoa and the Beni Amir, as a whole, had been little affected by the maladministration of the Egyptians, while the merchant class had no wish for the outbreak of hostilities and the stagnation and loss of trade that it would bring in its train. The Bisharin tribe, the Ashraf, and many of the Arteiga would have nothing to do with him. The important tribe of the Amarar had been transport carriers for ten years, and they too did not want war. The Beni Amir, who were hereditary enemies of the Hadendoa

[1] More than one account says that Osman Digna killed them and their escort for no reason at all

and were to prove of much assistance under their chief Bakhit Bey in the defence of Kassala, also refused to join him. But recruits from among some of the other natives rallied to the cause. The Sharaab, for instance, Garaib, Bisharıab (to which section Osman Digna's mother belonged), the Tankwirab, Maraghei and others all joined him, as did the Shagalei section of the Arteiga and Sheikh Tahir of the Magadhib religious fraternity from Suakin The Sheikh firmly believed that the Mahdi was in truth the expected God and followed him in all sincerity of spirit. His followers, as well as Shagalei Musa and the Dignai family itself, threw themselves whole-heartedly into the Mahdi's cause and did all they could to induce the natives to break with the Government, explaining to them that the Mahdi had rendered the rifles of the Turks innocuous. Little by little the seeds of disaffection began to sprout: meetings of sheikhs and their followers were convened, and soon news of the rising reached the ears of the local Governor, a man who, as events were to show, was one of the few to emerge with any credit from the fighting of the next few months.

Tewfik Bey, the Governor, was a Cretan Jew who was in charge of a district that contained the towns of Suakin and Sinkat. He at once hurried with a few police to Sinkat, where he endeavoured to win back the disaffected elements to Government.

Amid the general confusion at least one sheikh of importance remained loyal—Mahmud Ali of the Fadlab section of the Amarar tribe. This man was in receipt of twenty-five dollars a month from the authorities, in return for which he had to supply carriers and safeguard the first part of the road from Suakin to Berber. On August 8th he came forward with 400 men and strongly urged Tewfik to retire, saying that if he were to do so he would make himself responsible for still keeping the road to Berber open. Tewfik, however, came to the conclusion that, in spite of the difficulties and dangers of any attempt to hold Sinkat, the loss of prestige to Government, consequent on the abandonment of the position, would be too great for him seriously to consider withdrawal.

Sinkat, though small, was of the utmost importance as being the key to the Berber–Suakin trade route. It was the Eastern gateway of the Sudan.

Tewfik argued that, at any rate, the place could only be captured by the rebels at the cost of very considerable losses, so he determined to do his best to hold it. Being under no

delusions as to the strength of the Mahdiist movement, he therefore applied for reinforcements of 200 cavalry, 2,000 infantry, three quickfirers, and six mountain guns.

In the meantime he made preparations for defence and tried to dislodge some of the rebel chiefs from their allegiance to Mohammed Tahir. Thanks to Mahmud Ali, who acted as intermediary, one of the most influential natives—by name Amin Fafair—sheikh of the Sharaab tribe, came over to Government and induced others to do the same. Thus by August 28th, although there were several thousand Arabs in the neighbourhood, who were all more or less disloyal and all more or less prepared to throw in their lot against the Egyptian Government, the actual adherents of Osman Digna only numbered a few hundreds. These were ill-armed with clubs and spears and were composed largely—as had been the case in the early days of the Mahdi himself—of robbers and other undesirable characters.

In the meantime Osman Digna left Erkowit and came to Sinkat with the avowed intention of attacking it. So hopeless seemed the position of the Government's little force that even some of the Mirghani leaders were compelled—though much against their will—to submit to Osman Digna; the only chance of preserving their own lives appeared to lie in submission. They also wished to utilize their influence and rescue Tewfik and his gallant band from their inevitable fate. They therefore tried to induce Tewfik to surrender on condition that the lives of himself and his troops were saved; but Tewfik, remembering the murder of the convicts at Gabab, said that, if he surrendered, his troops would be put to death and that it was better to die fighting than after being disarmed to be dispatched by the cudgels of the enemy.

Negotiations commenced at nine o'clock in the morning Tewfik, wishing to gain time, prolonged the pourparlers as long as possible, saying that as he was under the orders of the Egyptian Government he would have to refer the matter to his superior officers before he could undertake the responsibility of surrendering. The question was debated with the fluency so dear to the Arab heart; messengers passed to and fro between Osman Digna and the Cretan Precious moments were being gained, each one of which might be worth the life of one of the garrison.

When Osman Digna first threatened to attack Sinkat the troops were housed in an eight-roomed barrack. There were no defences of any sort, no ramparts or fosses. Little by

little the walls were loopholed; holes were made in the walls that separated one room from the other in order to allow of one section helping the next. The doors were strengthened, and while some of the troops were told off to shoot through the loopholes others were detailed to fire through the doors as they each gave way in turn.

Towards the middle of the afternoon, however, Osman Digna began to grow impatient and sent an ultimatum demanding the surrender of the garrison before the shadows were six feet longer. By this time Tewfik's simple preparations were complete, and he replied that the sooner the attack began the better he would be pleased. "His life," he replied, "was the Khedive's, his honour his own, his daughter the Effendina had promised to look after, he therefore intended to defend the place to the last." The enemy, confident in the belief that the bullets of the trousered Turk would be innocuous against the true followers of the Mahdi, commenced their attack about four o'clock.

On the western side of the barracks was a khor, or dried watercourse, and beyond it a graveyard a few hundred yards distance from Tewfik's barracks. Here Osman Digna stopped for a short time as the enthusiasm of his followers began to recede. In fact, it was at so low an ebb that when Osman Digna again commenced to advance many actually retired as soon as he reached the site where afterwards the King's tree was planted.[1] Osman Digna was therefore left with no more than about 300 men, who had joined him at Erkowit, to press home the attack. Owing to the few rounds of ammunition that each of the Government troops possessed Tewfik had issued strict orders that no one was to shoot until the enemy emerged from the khor.

Those of the tribesmen who were still loyal to Government came to the conclusion that discretion was the better part of valour and held aloof in the fight, which thus resolved itself into an encounter between Osman Digna with his 300 followers and Tewfik with his seventy men who had accompanied him from Suakin.

Osman Digna led the attack and was only ten yards distant from the barracks when the garrison poured a devastating fire into the closely packed horde.

A furious fight took place, the enemy succeeding on more than one occasion, in breaking through the doors. Osman

[1] A Gemmeiza, or sycamore, planted by H.M. George V to commemorate the scene of Tewfik's gallant defence.

Digna himself actually burst into the room where Tewfik Bey was. El Tayib Ahmed, an orderly of the Shaigi or Jaali tribe, who was standing close to Tewfik, struck at him with his sword and hit him over the head and wrist. Osman Digna fell down. His followers seized him and commenced to drag him out while Tayib jabbed at him with a bayonet and struck him once more in the middle of the back.

After about half an hour's fight the Arabs withdrew, leaving forty-five dead just outside the barracks and twenty actually inside, besides losing numbers in killed and wounded, estimated at about 200, at some distance from the fort.

Many of his followers, as soon as they saw the bullets of the defenders beginning to take effect, ran away, saying that they had been deceived by Osman Digna, who went to the wells of Taowi for twenty days in order to recover from his wounds.

The garrison lost only seven men killed, of whom four met their fate owing to having rushed outside the fort in the enthusiasm of the battle. One officer and ten men were wounded in addition to the commander, who received five severe blows from the formidable clubs with which many of the insurgents were armed The black troops under Tewfik's command fought with their customary bravery and cheerfulness, although at the end of the fight there were left but twelve rounds of ammunition a man. Throughout the fighting the womenfolk sang and cheered their warriors on, a dance, in which both sexes indulged, bringing a delightful day to a cheerful close. The insurgents then retired just before 800 of the Bishariab tribe appeared upon the scene.

Thus ended the first fight in which Osman Digna pitted himself against the forces of the Government, a fight small perhaps and insignificant in itself, yet not without its influence on the history of the time. Had Tewfik surrendered, as some of his officers had indeed advised, Tokar must have fallen. Numbers of the Arabs who, in accordance with their custom, were sitting on the fence awaiting the issue of the battle, would have thrown in their lot with the Mahdi, and this would in all probability have brought about the downfall of Suakin before there was time to land British troops in its defence.

The Dervishes had received a severe set-back and were much disheartened in consequence. Among the dead were Ahmed Digna, the cousin of Osman Digna, who appears to have been the real leader of the movement; his son; and Fagi Mohammed Digna, another cousin of Osman's. Six sheikhs were also killed, and Osman Digna, in addition to the

wounds described above, had his arm broken just above the wrist by a bullet, the mark of which he carried with him all his life. In spite of this reverse Osman Digna had no scruples about forwarding to the Mahdi a flattering account of the fighting.

"It was then noon," he wrote, "and I saw the Turks preparing for battle. Seeing this we attacked suddenly and entered the fort, killing every Turk we found there; and as our men were inside, the Turks, who were outside, could not get in; but some of the others had taken refuge in the small houses inside the fort, and these, as well as those on the roofs, fired on our men and inflicted some loss on them. I was wounded in the hand, head, and side, but my men carried me outside the fort, and then all withdrew We had great difficulty in entering the fort, for there were many Turks at the gates and many of our men were killed.

"My brother, Feki Mohammed Digna, led the attack with a heart of flint, forcing the entrance and killing many of the Turks with his own sword. One Turk tried to strike him down with his rifle, but he cut the rifle in two with his sword and killed the Turk, but was afterwards killed himself. He led the attack so as to encourage the ansar, according to my orders.

"I myself was placed on an angarib and brought on a camel to Erkowit. Our losses were 60 men, while the Turks lost 57."

Tewfik Bey thereupon offered an amnesty to all the rebels, and some of them took advantage of it and swore allegiance to the Khedive. Many of the more important of them refused to submit, and amongst them were Sheikh Mohammed Tahir and the Cadi of Suakin, who left before the fight commenced and went to Tamineb to await Osman Digna. The Cadi later returned to Suakin, but, on hearing of the proposed evacuation of the Sudan, he assembled some of the leading natives of Suakin and advised them to follow his example and make peace with Osman Digna He then went by night to the rebel camp.

On the day following the encounter 500 of the Hamdab tribe arrived in order to assist Osman Digna. Even with these reinforcements, however, the rebels were too disheartened to attack and prepared instead to block the roads from Suakin to Sinkat and Kassala. As a first step in this direction the telegraph line to the latter place was cut. Rumours were also assiduously circulated in the neighbourhood that the whole of the tribes were about to rise against the Government.

Tewfik Bey forwarded a report to Suakin, where the Consul, Commander Moncrieff, was quick to appreciate the state of

affairs and to realize the necessity for immediate action. In reviewing the situation to Sir Evelyn Baring he asked for a battery of artillery, two or three quickfirers, 500 infantry, and a man-of-war in order to secure Tokar and Suakin and arrest the two chief instigators of the rebellion. But to be of any use these forces must be dispatched at once. Thanks to Tewfik, the rebels had received a severe set-back, but there were tens of thousands of natives who did not accept this reverse to the Mahdi's arms as final, who were waiting to see what the Government would do, and who would be quite ready to join any movement that seemed to them to offer a reasonable chance of loot without incurring too much trouble or risk. A show of force was therefore essential in order to overawe these waverers and suppress the rebellion before it made any real headway amongst the people, and they had compromised themselves by some hostile act against the Government.

§ 4

During the next month nothing of any importance took place in the Eastern Sudan. Tewfik was busily engaged in repairing and strengthening the tumbledown mud-brick barracks that he had so ably defended. He was also collecting all the information he could about the Mahdiist movement and trying to gauge the condition of affairs until he could obtain sufficiently reliable information about the whereabouts of Osman Digna to enable him to make an effort at his capture.

In the beginning of September, Tewfik set out to follow Osman Digna, whom he first traced to Taowi near Sinkat (or Okwak, as it is known in the native dialect), and thence to Erkowit. From here he went to Khor Shafat and finally to Gabab, where he arrived with about 200 men on September 10th. He made a zariba, or thorn fence, round one of the wells and next morning was attacked by Osman Digna and his followers. The Dervishes were driven back after losing some seventy men in killed or wounded Tewfik then burnt the rebel tents and their grain, besides capturing five hundredweight of ivory.

Thus the " ansar," or " followers of the Prophet," as they were called, had twice been defeated with heavy loss by a small force within a space of six weeks. The fortunes of the enemy were at their lowest and the loyal adherents of Osman Digna hardly numbered more than about seventy-five. The Hadendoa

and their neighbouring tribes the Amarar, Ashraf, Arteiga, and others afforded a field in which it was by no means easy to work if one desired to stir up a movement against the Government. They were secure in their mountain fastnesses, they could remove their cattle and herds many miles away if an inquisitive tax-collector appeared on the scene. They were haughtily independent, they had never been subdued. In fact, so difficult of access was their country, that only a few years later the Abyssinians, just across the frontier, were to defeat a well-armed European power. As no one had been able to tax them or impose their will upon them they had no such grievance against the Government as had sharpened the spears of their co-religionists in the Central and Southern Sudan. If they saw an opportunity of loot which they could gain with the minimum of trouble and the minimum of risk to themselves they were prepared to run such slight hazards as might be involved in its collection; but they were not ready to sacrifice their lives and property for an ideal, however lofty it might appear. The situation from the point of view of the Government was by no means hopeless, and indeed had much in its favour, thanks to the enterprise and gallantry of Tewfik.

As a result of Tewfik's successful holding of the Sinkat fort the Dervish plans and hopes of as easy a conquest of the Eastern Sudan as, to judge from their initial successes elsewhere, they had had reasonable expectations of achieving, were entirely knocked on the head. They were reduced to a policy of harassing the Government troops either by guerilla warfare or by upsetting the administration by such a policy of pinpricks as the cutting of the telegraph wires.

Immediate action was, however, necessary, and Tewfik at once made preparations to arrest Osman Digna and Mohammed Tahir. The capture of these two rebel leaders was highly desirable, if only to avoid brigandage on the Suakin–Berber road and the consequent falling off of the customs receipts, which would be the inevitable result of the insecurity of that trade route. And it must be remembered that Osman Digna was at this time regarded as of no more importance or significance than countless others of his kidney who had risen against the Government before, who had clothed themselves in a spurious religious authority, and will no doubt in the future again arrogate to themselves supernatural and mystical powers. He was merely a rebel with a bad record of slave dealing behind him.

Unfortunately at this point Egyptian troops came upon

the scene of action. The next few years were to prove a sorry tale of disgrace and disaster to what was then known as the Egyptian Army. At the same time it is only fair to add that of the troops who fought in the Sudan between the years 1883 and 1885 many were convicts who had been brought in chains to fight against their will, while others were not fair representatives of the better-class Egyptian.

After Tewfik's second success the Consul, Moncrieff, who had come from Jedda visited him at Sinkat to offer him his congratulations before returning to Suakin. Here he found one Suliman Pasha Nyazi, who had been appointed Governor of the Eastern Sudan. This officer had been sent to Suakin, where Mahmud Pasha Tahir was in command of the garrison, and from the very first misjudged the situation with which he proposed to deal by diplomacy rather than arms. He made speeches, received various addresses of welcome and loyalty at Suakin and Tokar, gave presents of clothing to some of the chief men. He proceeded to Sinkat, where he urged the reputedly loyal chieftains to co-operate in the capture of Osman Digna. He entirely failed to appreciate the difficulties into which the Eastern Sudan was drifting and from which it had been temporarily rescued by the gallantry of Tewfik and his little band. Indeed, he actually reprimanded Tewfik for having opened fire on the Dervishes at the first attack on the Sinkat fort, saying that they were poor ignorant creatures who knew no better. Tewfik replied that he had acted as he thought best and that it was no part of the Pasha's duty to criticize what he had done before the arrival of Suliman Pasha, who could now assume the conduct of affairs. No further offensive action was taken against Osman Digna, but as Suliman Pasha was not quite sure of his own personal safety in Sinkat he sent a message to Suakin summoning the rest of the garrison to come to Sinkat. He told the officer commanding that the road was quite safe and that the troops could bring their wives and families with them. Under the command of Bimbashi Mohammed Effendi Khalil the garrison, which consisted of some 150 Egyptian gendarmes, set out on October 16th for Sinkat by way of Khor Abent. No scouts of any sort were posted, no military formation was adopted ; each man walked along chatting to his wife or children.

Half-way up the defile the Gāraib tribe, numbering about a 150 or 200 men, attacked the straggling party and almost annihilated them, only some seven or eight being able to make their way back to Suakin. The troops lost 150 rifles as well as

30,000 rounds of ammunition. The major (a Circassian) and the second in command (Hasan Effendi) both fought bravely, but the troops were panic-stricken and offered no resistance to the enemy.

When the news reached Sinkat, Tewfik was furious at this unexpected set-back and told Suliman Pasha that he was entirely to blame for the disaster Suliman admitted that he had not issued proper instructions and pleaded with Tewfik for the latter to help to get him safely to Suakin again. Tewfik called a meeting of his officers who agreed that Suliman Pasha should return to Suakin with his original escort. Volunteers were also asked for to accompany him, but every one refused to leave Sinkat. It was then decided to draw lots for the twenty-five mounted camelmen who were to go. One of those on whom the lot fell was Mohammed Bey Ahmed, who was thus saved to effect the capture of Osman Digna in years to come. The party left Sinkat at three o'clock in the morning, made their way successfully through the Dervish outposts to Gebeit and, travelling by way of Hadasani and Handub, arrived safely at Suakin on the third morning at dawn.

The success of the Dervishes in the defile of Abent had encouraged the rebels, who even now only mustered some five or six hundred men. Tewfik could rely on pretty well the same number, including the men who had defended Sinkat. The rebellion might quite well have been crushed had Tewfik been given any support or even allowed to take what action he thought fit. Instead of attempting to subdue Osman Digna, Suliman Pasha persevered in his futile policy of trying to win over Osman Digna by diplomacy and of effecting his capture through the aid of the friendlies. Osman Digna was even offered compensation for the loss of his slaves six years before. Osman Digna, rightly interpreting this offer as a sign of weakness on the part of the Government, refused all overtures with the reply " Ana gaim fi din allah " (" I am setting out in the religion of God ").

As no action was taken against them, the rebels became more and more convinced that the cause of the Mahdi must be a divinely inspired one and that the Government was afraid to attack them. Fekis Mahmud, Khidr, and Musa of the Arteiga and Sheikh Hasan of the Gemilab near Tokar went over to Osman Digna, and a new and threatening situation developed in that neighbourhood. The Arabs began to join Osman Digna in ever-increasing numbers. Leaving a few tribesmen to invest Sinkat, Osman Digna set off from Tamineb, which

he had made his head-quarters, to lay siege to Tokar. Mustafa Hadal was dispatched to invest Kassala. The hope of looting Tokar proved an attractive bait, and Osman Digna found himself in command of a considerable army.

The events of the two preceding years, however great the tumult they had occasioned in the rest of the Sudan, echoed but faintly in the ears of the Suakin inhabitants. The Mahdi was a long way off, reports of his successes would be largely discounted as due to the elaboration of bazaar rumours; between the Mahdi's followers and Suakin lay a mountainous barrier; even if Suakin was invested by land there would always be open a way of escape by sea. It was true an unfortunate officer, named Tewfik Bey, was rather uncomfortably situated at Sinkat—luckily a good distance away. Certain individuals even had the audacity to say that Tewfik was actually besieged and that his little garrison was running short of food. But this could hardly be true, and, even if it were, the capitulation of the force at Sinkat could not affect Suakin. Besides, was not that scalliwag Osman Digna reported to be in command of the rebels? It was incredible that an individual with his antecedents, a poverty-stricken ne'er-do-well, could ever attain to a position of importance, or could ever lead a respectable cause, which would be damned in the eyes of all decent individuals by the very rise to power of so disreputable a character.

The defeat of the troops, however, that had gone to the rescue of Tewfik Bey brought the rebellion almost to the gates of Suakin, while the events of the next few days were such as rudely to awaken the inhabitants from the fancied security into which their easygoing natures had lulled them.

A meeting was held to discuss the new situation which had arisen, and it was decided to try and capture Osman Digna. A force of 500 men with one gun was dispatched under the command of Mahmud Pasha Tahir to attack the rebels. Consul Lynedoch Moncrieff and four Greeks accompanied the expedition.

The troops left Suakin on November 3rd in the Khedivial steamships "Tor" and "Gafarieh." They arrived the following morning at Trinkitat, the port for Tokar, which was some forty-five miles to the south of Suakin. About eight o'clock on the morning of November 4th the men set out in the usual fashion. There were no scouts sent on ahead, no one to guard the flanks, nor, in fact, was any sort or description of military order adopted. Near a place called El Teb (or

more correctly Andetteib, "the place of the hobbling of the camels"), one and a half hours' distance from Trinkitat, the troops halted for a short rest. When they were about to resume their march, if this mode of progress can be dignified with the name, the Egyptian force was attacked by about 150 or 200 Arabs armed only with sticks and spears. Five of the Dervishes succeeded in penetrating the hastily formed square and began to belabour the troops with clubs. A panic ensued. After firing a few shots in the air by way of intimidating the Arabs, the whole force—with the exception of Moncrieff and the Greeks—bolted for the sea. The few Europeans put up a stout defence, but, after killing many of the enemy, they were in turn overwhelmed. Mahmud Pasha was the first to arrive at the seashore, thanks to his having been able to obtain a horse belonging to one of the Greeks; his own mount had been commandeered by his groom. He was soon followed by the rest of his cowardly rabble, who reached the sea almost naked, after discarding sidearms, rifles, tools, and even clothing in the hope that the Arabs would stop to collect these instead of pursuing them.

The Egyptian force lost eleven officers (including Hasan Bey Hilmi), 142 men, six Bashi-bazouks, one gun, 300 rifles, and about 50,000 rounds of ammunition. Of those who were killed the majority were cut down as they ran away. The rebels lost no one except those whom Moncrieff and his little band of Greeks disposed of.

Nor was this all, for no sooner had Mahmud Pasha reached the sea with the fleetest of foot than he steamed off without making any attempt to rally his troops and once more try the issue. As a concession to appearances he left behind 100 men and a dhow in case any more stragglers came in.

Osman Digna was not slow in reporting to the Mahdi his victory at what he calls the first battle by the sea.[1]

On the 4th of Moharram [November 5, 1883], the same day on which the God-forsaken Ala ed Din was destroyed,[2] a detachment of soldiers, accompanied by a pasha and a Christian consul, landed from Suakin, intending to come to Tokar. The ansar, seeing them, made a sudden attack on them and killed all of them, amounting to 400 men; the ansar lost only 27 men killed

On the same day a mamur, on his way from Kassala to Tokar

[1] This letter and others that follow were found in the house of Wad Tahir Magdhub after the capture of Tokar. I am indebted to General Sir Reginald Wingate for permission to reproduce them.

[2] This refers to the annihilation of the army of Hicks Pasha at Shekan.

with a number of soldiers, was met by the emir of the Gemilab, El Haj Ibn Hassan, who called on him to surrender and embrace Mahdiism ; and as he refused, he and his party were killed ; the ansar lost only one man in this fight

In the meantime the Turks made a sortie from Tokar, but the ansar drove them back to their fort, killing a number of them, including a bulukbashi.

The return of the remnants of the defeated force created the utmost alarm and consternation at Suakin, where the garrison consisted of a few Bashi-bazouks, blacks, and some 300 elderly Egyptians of the same calibre as those who had run away with Mahmud Pasha.

Nor was the morale of either the troops or the inhabitants likely to be improved by the action of their leader. Mahmud Pasha, who was in general command of the military forces in the Eastern Sudan, took refuge in the steamer " Tor," which was moored in the harbour, and refused absolutely to budge from it. The Governor-General, Suliman Pasha, issued arms to the inhabitants (who might or might not have been loyal), and, as a special bodyguard for himself, had half a company of troops posted outside his door. A few friends, with their possessions, were allowed to join the timorous commanders on board, but the women and children were left to their doom.

Suakin itself was the chief port of the Sudan until the present Government created the town and harbour of Port Sudan, and, as such, was the centre of a very busy trade with India, Europe, and along the Arabian Littoral of the Red Sea. The goods transported from Berber to Suakin in the early 'eighties were valued at half a million pounds, apart from the numerous slave convoys *en route* for Jedda, Suez, or Constantinople. Ivory, sesame, senna, gum, and other valuable products of tropical Africa passed through Suakin, which shared with the decaying village of Kosseir the honour of being the only village of any importance along a thousand miles of barren, coral-studded coast-line. It was, moreover, the port from which the Fellata and Haussa pilgrims from the west coast of Africa set sail for Jedda in order to visit the birthplace of the Prophet Mohammed. But its defences were hopelessly inadequate ; two miserable Krupp guns, three mountain guns, and some smooth bores dating from the time of George I were all that its defenders had with which to repel any attack that might be made upon the town.

Towards November 22nd rumours began to trickle through that Hicks' army had been annihilated, and three days later

the Foreign Office telegraphed to Sir Evelyn Baring that Her Majesty's Government could not hold itself responsible for military operations in the Sudan. As a consequence of this it was decided to defend Khartoum as long as possible in order to allow the scattered garrisons of the Government to leave the country. Suakin was to be held but no offensive action was to be taken. At this time Tokar and Sinkat were being invested by the rebels. Suakin was in imminent danger of being assaulted, and the only means of defence were the British gunboat "Coquette" and a French corvette. Nor was an attack long delayed as the Arabs made various attempts on the town every day between November 26th and 30th inclusive. These were followed two days later by a raid on the friendly Hadendoa, who were camped rather over a mile away from the town. Little bloodshed resulted and the enemy withdrew. On November 26th Suliman Pasha returned with some black troops whom he had fetched from Massaua in order to relieve the garrisons of Tokar and Sinkat. Suliman Pasha, seeing in their arrival a chance of gaining glory at no personal risk to himself, decided to send them out to fight. On December 1st a force of 700 men (of which about 400 were Sudanese and 225 Egyptians), with twenty-five irregular cavalry and one mountain gun, were dispatched under the command of Sanjak Kazim Effendi in order to try and reach Sinkat via Tamai and Tamineb. Mahmud Pasha, their commander, thinking that there might be some fighting on the way, skulked behind on the gunboat. Nor did he even go to the trouble of arranging transport or of obtaining the help of some 700 friendlies who were anxious to come to blows with Osman Digna's forces. With insufficient water, no transport, and only two biscuits a man the doomed troops set out. No scouts were posted and no precautions taken against surprise. On the way many Arabs were seen near Khor Gwob but were dispersed by the blacks. On December 2nd the troops reached Tamai, twenty-four miles away, and as they were suffering considerably from thirst they made a rush for the wells, just as their comrades in arms had previously done at Gedir and Kau [1] While they were drinking, the Arabs, nearly 3,000 in number, attacked them. The Commander having taken no trouble to post scouts, a square was hastily formed, the blacks holding three sides of it. As these kept their formation the Arabs launched their attack on the Egyptians, while the Bashi-bazouk cavalry broke the lines of the blacks and fled

[1] December 9, 1881, and October 6, 1882.

headlong for Suakin. The Egyptians made no attempt to resist, but the blacks fought back to back with bayonets and the butts of their rifles until they were annihilated. Of the Government troops two staff officers (one of whom ran away at the beginning of the fight), fifteen cavalry, and eighteen infantry (of whom eight were blacks who had fought their way back and were severely wounded) alone returned. One of the latter, a black sergeant, worn out with weariness, made his way to Mahmud Pasha in order to report. Overcome by hunger and thirst he sat down from sheer exhaustion only to be cursed by Mahmud Pasha and called the son of a dog, while the staff officer who had run away the previous day spat at him.

The position was now critical, and had the Arabs immediately made an attack there is little doubt that Suakin must have fallen. The recent successes of Osman Digna had naturally increased the confidence of his own men, while the natives who had hitherto been wavering became confirmed in loyalty to the Mahdi's cause.

In an account of the battle that Osman Digna dispatched to the Mahdi he says :

When my men first began to besiege Suakin, the garrison made a sortie on the 1st Safar [December 1, 1883], under a certain Kassim, who is one of Ala ed Din's trusted men, and as clever in the art of war as Tewfik. He had 1,100 men with him, and he promised the Governor that he would bring me and Sheikh Taher Magzub alive to Suakin, or that he would kill us. He was ignorant of the power of God's cause, and trusted in his men, whom he selected from the trained Jehadieh. He started from Suakin at midnight without any of the natives knowing, so that he might surprise us. They came up with us on 1st Safar, and began to fire at us, while their chief was mocking at us, but the ansar soon surrounded him from all sides and fell upon him suddenly. In this attack all the Turks were killed, including their chief and a sanjak called Muzeiin, the brother of Muzeiin, who was killed with Tewfik. The ansar lost 80 men.

The rebel force besieging Tokar now numbered 3,000 men, Sinkat was surrounded by 11,000 under Sheikh el Tahir, while Osman Digna had concentrated nearly 7,000 on the Tamineb road.

Under these circumstances help had to be forthcoming from outside unless the whole of the Eastern Sudan was to go over to Mahdiism.

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CHAPTER III

State of the Sudan causes anxiety to England. England refuses to accept responsibility for the safety of the Sudan. General Gordon dispatched to the Sudan.

§ 1

ON November 19, 1883, Sir Evelyn Baring telegraphed to Earl Granville to the effect that the state of affairs in the Sudan was a subject of great anxiety to the Egyptian Government, that there was no news of the fate of General Hicks and his army, and that if this force had been destroyed it was nearly certain that the whole of the Sudan would be lost unless help from outside was forthcoming. He concluded by saying that it was not improbable that Egypt would request Her Majesty's Government to send English or Indian troops to the rescue.

To this communication a brief reply was dispatched at once to Sir Evelyn Baring: "We cannot lend English or Indian troops. If consulted, recommend abandonment of the Sudan within certain limits."

Two days later, however, Earl Granville wrote to Sir E. Baring saying that the naval commander-in-chief on the East India station had been instructed to maintain the authority of the Egyptian Government at Suakin, Massaua, and other ports on the Red Sea. On November 25th a further communication was received from the Foreign Office stating that Her Majesty's Government could do nothing which would throw upon them the responsibility of operations in the Sudan, which must rest with the Egyptian Government relying on its own resources.

The following day Sir E. Baring arranged for an unofficial meeting of General Stephenson, Sir Evelyn Wood, and General Baker in order to discuss the situation in the Sudan. They unanimously came to the conclusion that the Egyptian Government could not maintain its authority in the Sudan and recommend that Khartoum should, if possible, be held sufficiently long to allow the more advanced posts and detached garrisons in the Sudan to be evacuated. To facilitate this withdrawal the Suakin–Berber route was to be opened. On November 16th

H.M.S. "Ranger" arrived from Aden, where she was joined a fortnight later by the French corvette "Infernet."

On December 3rd Sir Evelyn Baring submitted to the Foreign Office a preliminary report on the general situation. At this time there was little prospect of General Hicks and his men having escaped annihilation, and measures had to be taken to meet the difficulties that had now arisen.

There were still some 24,000 troops of the Egyptian Army in the Sudan, but they were scattered over so vast an area that the disaster to Hicks' force meant the destruction of the only available striking force that could be put into the field against the Mahdi. Of these 24,000 troops 1,500 were stationed on the Nile, north of Khartoum, 2,500 were in Khartoum itself, and nearly 4,000 along the White Nile. In the Eastern and Central Sudan were some 8,500 men, of whom 4,000 were in Sennar and the neighbourhood.

In Darfur were 5,000 men, the Bahr el Ghazal 1,000, and the Equatorial Provinces 2,000. In addition there were 8,415 men stationed at Massaua, Senhit, and other smaller garrisons.

In his review of the situation Sir Evelyn Baring pointed out again that the programme of the Egyptian Government was to endeavour to hold Khartoum and to open out the line of communications from Suakin to Berber. To carry out the last item there were available:

(1) A portion of the garrison of Suakin, consisting of about 1,800 men (this had, as a matter of fact, been reduced by nearly 700 owing to the defeat and annihilation of another Egyptian force under Kazim Bey while Sir E. Baring was actually drafting his memo.).
(2) Two thousand gendarmerie.
(3) Four hundred blacks, who were to be brought from Massaua.
(4) Some Bedouins and Sudanese, who were to be recruited in Lower Egypt and put under the command of Zubeir Pasha.

Sir E Baring drew attention to the utter worthliness of the Egyptian Army, and said that, in the opinion of General Stephenson and Sir Evelyn Wood, it was impossible for Khartoum to be held if the Mahdi made an immediate advance against it. The Egyptian Government was, however, most unwilling to face the fact that Khartoum must fall. It meant the loss of the whole Sudan, except possibly an outpost on

the sea at Suakin. There was also the question of where the southern boundary of Egypt was to be fixed if it were necessary to abandon the Sudan. Was it to be placed at Wadi Halfa or at Assuan? Either of these two alternatives involved the abandonment by Egypt of her policy of defending her frontiers by outposts far away to the south. The withdrawal of all these isolated garrisons would mean that the Dervishes would be knocking at the very gates of Egypt. And, to judge from the manner in which the Egyptian Army had behaved during the preceding few months, there was nothing to prevent the Dervishes from overrunning Egypt, as the Mahdi had actually threatened to do; for the Mahdiists could count on many friendlies from amongst the thousands of fanatical Bedouins who lived in the deserts bordering on the Nile.

Sir Evelyn Baring's view was that the loss of the Sudan was inevitable, and that the Egyptian Government should concentrate all its efforts on defending the actual frontiers of the State.

In reply to this communication Earl Granville stated on December 13th that Her Majesty's Government had no intention of utilizing British or Indian troops, that there was no objection to the employment of Turkish troops provided that they were paid for by Turkey and that they were based on Suakin and only employed in the Sudan.

In conclusion, Her Majesty's Government recommended the ministers of the Khedive to come to an early decision to abandon all the territory south of Assuan, or, at any rate, of Wadi Halfa. In return, Her Majesty's Government would be prepared to assist in maintaining order in Egypt proper and in defending it, as well as the ports in the Red Sea.

Thus far the policy of Her Majesty's Government is plain and intelligible. England had only recently come to Egypt and unwillingly assumed the task of reformation that others had refused to undertake. The finances of Egypt were in the most complete chaos. Egypt was almost insolvent. She could not afford an expensive campaign in the Sudan. She had no troops with which to conduct such an expedition, and the British Government saw no reason for sacrificing men and money in restoring to Egypt a country that she had proved herself not only incapable but unworthy of ruling Colonel Stewart, in a report which he made upon the Sudan, said that he was firmly convinced that the Egyptians were quite unfit in every way to undertake such a task as the government of so vast a country with a view to its welfare, and that, both for

their own sake and that of the people they tried to rule, it would be advisable to abandon large portions of it. The fact of the Egyptian incompetence to rule was so generally acknowledged that it was unnecessary to discuss the question.

That the Sudan was an utterly worthless possession was the universally accepted view forty years ago, and even imaginative politicians, with little foresight into the future, could stigmatize the Dongola campaign a decade and a half later as a war for a desert.

To-day, when the desert is covered with cotton and when the produce of its gum-trees is carried to the far corners of the earth, these gloomy forecasts for the Sudan have vanished into thin air. But one can quite appreciate the unwillingness of Her Majesty's Government in 1883 to be embroiled in the Sudan, not only because of the immediate trouble and expense involved, but also because it was difficult to foresee how it would be possible to escape from these entanglements.

"There can," wrote Sir Evelyn Baring, "be little doubt of the ultimate results of active British interference in the Sudan. Not only would it make the policy of eventually withdrawing the British garrison from Egypt a matter of extreme difficulty—I might almost say, so far as the present generation is concerned, of impossibility—but it would involve a great risk, that, by the force of circumstance, we should be led to establish British authority on a permanent or quasi-permanent foundation over the greater portion of the long valley of the Nile."

§ 2

The history of events in the Eastern Sudan may be briefly summarized. Osman Digna had been appointed the emissary of the Mahdi and had arrived in the neighbourhood of Sinkat at the end of July, 1883. During the next two months he was defeated twice in battle by Tewfik Bey and was deserted by almost all his followers. Then followed a period of pusillanimous and short-sighted inactivity on the part of the officials who were in command. In fight after fight the numerically inferior and practically unarmed Dervishes defeated the Turkish and Egyptian troops, captured their arms and ammunition, and turned these arms against their owners. The rebels increased in numbers and confidence, and by the end of the year 1883 Tokar, Sinkat, and Suakin were all closely invested and no Government official could walk a single yard beyond

the safety that their encircling defences afforded them. The sympathies of the thousands of natives that wished to aid the Government had been alienated by the ineptitude of the Egyptians, and in sheer despair the friendlies, almost without exception, had been compelled—and most unwillingly—to throw in their lot with the enemy.

It is true that Khartoum had not yet been invested and the British Government had undertaken to defend Suakin. Otherwise the storm-clouds had gathered so thickly as to obscure the whole sky. The Sudan, from north to south, from east to west, had thrown off allegiance to the Khedive, and it only remained to try and save the personnel of the garrisons scattered throughout the country. These had to make their way as best they could to Khartoum and from there to Berber and Suakin.

To rescue the garrisons was to be the task of the Egyptian Government, and to open the route from Suakin to Berber apparently that of the British Government, though how it was to be accomplished without the employment of British or Indian troops it is hard to see. At any rate, the year 1883 closed with the English committed to the defence of the Red Sea ports, although the Government had definitely vetoed the employment of Imperial troops. It was only one of the many instances of inconsistency and lack of foresight that was to characterize the behaviour of the Gladstonian Government and indirectly lead to the sacrifice of Gordon.

§ 3

That the policy of non-interference in Sudan affairs was not so simple as it appeared to be was seen by the first day of the new year 1884. Sir Evelyn Baring, in a telegraphic dispatch to the Foreign Office, said that if the Egyptian Government were left to themselves they would lose the whole of the Sudan. If it were decided that neither English nor Turkish help were to be given, the Egyptian Government should make up their minds to adopt the policy of retiring to Egypt proper. "On the other hand," concluded Sir E. Baring, "proofs are daily being afforded that the execution of this policy, although I believe it to be the best which the circumstances of the case admit, will be a work of the greatest difficulty."

On the next day Sherif Pasha, the Minister of Foreign

Affairs, submitted a note in which he put forward the views of the Khedivial Government. Finding that no hope of assistance could be obtained from England, and realizing that, in the event of no extraneous help being available, the Sudan would be lost to them the Egyptian Government proposed:

(1) To apply to the Porte for the dispatch of 10,000 men to Suakin; and in the event of the Sultan not thinking fit to accede to such a request
(2) To notify to the Porte that Egypt gave back to the Turkish Government the administration of the shore of the Red Sea and the Eastern Sudan. With the frontiers thus reduced Sherif Pasha said that
(3) Egypt would be able to concentrate a force of about 15,000 men, which, in the opinion of the Khedive's Government, would be sufficient to hold the Nile up to Khartoum, and thus secure the safety of Egypt.

Her Majesty's Government agreed to the first two proposals, to which it had already given a conditional assent. As regards the third, they insisted that the policy of the Egyptian Government must be to act strictly on the defensive and to determine on the evacuation of the Sudan.

In consequence of this attitude of Her Majesty's Government the Egyptian Cabinet resigned, and another was formed under Nubar Pasha, pledged to carry out the policy that England felt was the only one that could prove effective.

On December 1st Earl Granville had telegraphed to Sir E. Baring asking whether General Charles Gordon could be of any use to the Egyptian Government. A reply was received to the effect that as the movement in the Sudan was religious the appointment of a Christian in high command would probably alienate the tribes who remained faithful.

The same suggestion was made on January 10th and again met with a refusal. In spite of this, rumours were current that Gordon was to go to the Sudan, and on January 18th he was given written orders from the Foreign Office to proceed on duty to the Sudan.

His instructions were as follows:

Her Majesty's Government are desirous that you should proceed at once to Egypt, to report to them on the military situation in the Sudan, and on the measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in

that country, and for the safety of the European population in Khartoum.

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

In connection with this subject, you should pay especial consideration to the question of the steps that may usefully be taken to counteract the stimulus which it is feared may possibly be given to the Slave Trade by the present insurrectionary movement and by the withdrawal of the Egyptian authority from the interior.

You will be under the instructions of Her Majesty's Agent and Consul-General at Cairo, through whom your Reports to Her Majesty's Government should be sent, under flying seal.

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

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

This is no place to touch more than lightly on the advisability or otherwise of sending General Gordon to effect the evacuation of the beleagured garrisons. When he arrived in Khartoum he found himself faced with a fanatical population drunk with victories gained over the Government troops, hating the Turks and Egyptians, who had robbed and ill-treated them for more than half a century; a leader who considered himself (and was regarded by his followers) as the divinely appointed agent of God; a State in which religious enthusiasm and a sense of political oppression went hand in hand; and to cope with this situation—desperate enough in all conscience—was sent a man, pre-eminently devoted to a religion that was regarded with immense hostility by Mohammedans, a man whose whole life had been spent in helping the weak against the strong, the oppressed against his oppressor. But as if to pile Pelion on Ossa, Gordon's hands were tied; his mission was to be an advisory one; [1] he was to report, not to act. And even if this was all that was intended the mission was foredoomed to failure, as things had gone too far. As

[1] January 18, 1884.

well send a man three days' journey to report on the state of a burning house; no one of initiative or enterprise would be content simply to make a report; he would try and save the house, especially if there were women and children imprisoned within. The season for reports had long since passed away, and, as the Arabs themselves say, "Fire must be opposed by fire."

General Gordon left Cairo for the Sudan on January 26th, exactly one year to the day on which he was to meet his death. Almost his last act was to remove his dress tie and hand it to a member of the mess at which he had been dining, saying that he would have no further use for it in Khartoum. Thus was severed one of the few remaining links which bound him to the civilization that was to leave him to his fate.

With the safe arrival of General Gordon in Khartoum the scene shifts once more to the Eastern Sudan, where efforts were being made to open the road to Berber from Suakin and put the latter place in a state of defence.

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CHAPTER IV

Description of Suakin. Origin of Suakin. Colonel Sartorius arrives at Suakin. Mutiny of the gendarmerie. Zubeir appointed to command irregular troops at Suakin. Zubeir sends a message to Osman Digna. General Baker in command of Suakin. Defeated at El Teb Fall of Sinkat and Tokar Panic at Suakin. General Graham appointed to command expeditionary force. Defeats Osman Digna at El Teb Troops enter Tokar General Graham defeats Osman Digna at Tamai Results of the fighting. Indecision of the home Government.

§ 1

SUAKIN consists of two main portions. An oval coral island of perhaps half a mile diameter contains the residencies of the more prosperous merchants, a few business premises and some Government buildings. It is connected by a causeway nearly 200 yards long, with the mainland, where are clustered the petty merchants with their shops, and also all the hangers-on who gain a living from the maritime commerce of the port, the pilgrim traffic, or by supplying the varied needs of a fairly numerous population. This part of Suakin is called the Geif, and is perhaps typically Eastern in its narrow, tortuous streets, overhung in many places with odd pieces of cloth or sacking that effectually prevent the sun's rays from performing their cleansing, purifying duties. Even under a Government that, to the dismay and mystification of an easygoing people, insists upon obedience to the elementary laws of sanitation, these narrow streets are only with difficulty kept clean. In the old days, especially when the damp, rainy weather of late autumn afforded ideal conditions for the breeding of the domestic fly, Suakin was as dirty a place as can well be imagined.

To-day, in spite of some permanent buildings that were erected in the early 'eighties, the Geif is little more than a rabbit warren of ramshackle huts and buildings composed of any old bits of sacking, iron, woodwork, or mud that the ingenuity of the native can piece together into some sort of shelter from the sun and wind. Here and there coral stone edifices with corrugated iron roofs break the asymmetry of the streets without adding to the beauty of the design. Yet

even so the Geif, or O'Keif as the Hadendoa call it, is not without its picturesqueness. On market days, in particular, a busy, chaffering crowd haggles to the last millieme over a sword, a tin of oil, or a handful of dates. The shops are open to the street; their fronts are festooned with all the requisites for supplying the simple needs of the nomad of the hills—knives, charms sewn up in leather, camel bags or whips. Almost every other shop is full, from dirty floor to its low-hung ceiling, with bales of vermilion, scarlet, or dark blue strips of Indian cloth that are used for draping the chocolate-coloured or ebony limbs of Fuzzy or Sudanee. Some enterprising Greeks stand within the doors of their general store, where almost everything—except what one really wants—can be obtained, from Manchester goods to Monkey Brand soap, from bootlaces to Benger's. The hotter the day the more heated the bargaining; a medley of sounds arises, in which can be heard the tongues of Beja, Greek, English, Hindustani, Arabic of Yemen, Aden, Egypt, or the Northern Sudan. A braying donkey crashes through the throng; an inquisitive dog is driven from a meat shop amid the curses of half a dozen different languages; a mule gives tongue to an emasculated moan; cats, chickens, goats, sheep are everywhere, in or out of the shops. Insistent through the general tumult, as the drone of a bagpipe, is the everlasting buzzing of the flies as they are whisked, at the whim of a somnolent merchant, from the mess of squashed dates or stinking fish on which they have settled.

Near the causeway is an imposing caravanserai of the type to be met with in Turkey and the East, while two limewashed mosques rear their minarets to the skies. Across the causeway the houses are of better type, in many cases four or five stories high. The streets, however, are narrow and meandering, so that one is for ever coming unexpectedly upon some quaint structure that at first looks as if someone had omitted to remove the scaffolding from a partially completed house. Later this resolves itself into a building with numerous small balconies protruding from almost every window. Sometimes these balconies consist merely of a little platform a few feet long and about half a yard broad, closely boarded up to prevent the jealous or inquisitive eye of the wayfarer from penetrating to the beauties of the mysterious stranger within. More often they are adorned with beautifully fretted lattice-work, fantastic in its quaintness

The houses, almost without exception, are solidly built of

shaped coral stone, staring white even without the occasional addition of a limewashed surface. They blind the eye in the brilliant sunshine, though from a distance they have a very great charm of their own. The island is only a foot above the highest level of the sea, and Suakin looks like a city of a dream rising resplendent and silver from the very bed of the ocean.

A narrow, winding channel some 300 yards in breadth gives access to the town; but only 2,000 yards away the sunken coral reefs extend treacherously for many a mile on either side. The entrance is rightly feared by mariners, and many wrecks have taken place upon these hidden reefs. Suakin has, very largely, for this reason, been abandoned as the port for the Sudan and a harbour found some forty miles to the north.

Suakin is a magic little town, a city of the "Arabian Nights," fantastic, aloof, self-sufficient. It was thought at one time that the creation of the new harbour at Port Sudan would sound the death-knell of Suakin. It is true that with the dwindling of the trade many of the houses are falling down, but the spirit of the place still hovers round. Coming from the almost aggressive solidarity of Port Sudan, with its thrumming wharves and air of business prosperity, commonplace and uninspiring, few can fail to be affected by the restful, mystic charm of Suakin. Here time is not; the fetish of Western civilization, with its hustle and bustle, no longer holds sway. The inconsequence of the East is over all.

In her old age Suakin is not to be worried into an unwelcome activity; the anxious days of battle, when for fifteen years the shadow of war was over the town, are now an evil nightmare—an unpleasant interlude in an otherwise prosaic existence—and war has left but few permanent scars upon her. The searchlights of the warships moored in the harbour have gone, and nothing has come to take their place; at night the town is dimly illuminated by a few flickering oil lamps that frequently themselves subside into gloom. Some partly demolished barracks and ruined forts, some derelict redoubts on Condenser Island, some dilapidated buildings—these are almost the only landmarks she has to recall the days when the skirl of the bagpipe was heard in her streets and the gunboats roared defiance from the sea.

For the visitor Suakin has peculiar fascinations. A chain of rugged hills stretches from north to south some twenty miles away, yet so clear is the atmosphere that they appear to loom just behind the town. The white Arab houses catch the rays of the morning sun as it rises magnificent from the

sea, and again as it sinks to rest behind the distant hills, the latter purpling in the twilight To the north of the town are several shallow lagoons stretching round the two islands known as Condenser Island and Quarantine Island. Here pink-hued flamingoes peer for food. From the balcony of one's house one can see below a shoal of silvery sardines, stirred into a confused flurrying mass as some preying monster of the deep gives chase to them below and the watching gulls swoop at them from above. A garfish, with its spike-shaped snout, leaps along the face of the waters, a flying fish skims swiftly by. But it is in the depths of her coral-jewelled gardens that perhaps her chief beauty is to be found. Here are wonderful visions of many-coloured anemones, coral, seaweed, and all the hosts of strange organisms that dwell in the bed of the ocean. In the clearness of the still sea water objects stand out in almost as great definition twenty feet below the surface as they do at an inch or two. The bright rays of the tropic sun not only paint them in vivid colours but bring them nearer to the view. Fishes of the most brilliant and variegated hues glide in and out amongst the glowing sea plants which wave their tendrils to the gentle rocking of the sea. The depths of the ocean are beautiful as a herbaceous border in June, where fish instead of butterflies flit lightly amongst the flowers of the sea.

> And around her the lamps of the sea nymphs,
> Myriad fiery globes, swam heaving and panting, and rainbows,
> Crimson and azure and emerald, were broken in star-showers, lighting,
> Far through the wine-dark depths of the crystal, the gardens of Nereus,
> Coral and sea-fan and tangle, the blooms and the palms of the ocean.

§ 2

The origin of Suakin lies hidden away in the mists of antiquity, even the meaning of the name is unknown, though the natives have an explanation for it which may be given here for what it is worth.

King Chosroes, so they say, of Persia hearing rumours of the beautiful maidens of Abyssinia, dispatched his vizier some time in the sixth century A.D. in order to obtain seven virgins. On their way they put in at Suakin, where they rested for the night on a narrow spit of sand near the mainland. On reaching

Persia the seven virgins were found to be pregnant, and the vizier could think of no reason to account for so strange a phenomenon. He said that the cause must undoubtedly be demoniacal and the work of a gin or spirit. The King then said the women must return to the place of the gin, and the party all made their way back once more to Suakin, the place of seven gins (*saba gin*), which has been corrupted into Suakin, or more probably the place where the "Gin did it" (*sawwa-gin*).

Here children were born to the seven virgins, and their offspring settled in Suakin, where they lived by catching fish.

In the year of the Hegira, A.D. 622, four of the followers of the Prophet Mohammed came to Suakin on an apostolic mission in order to convert the inhabitants to Islam. They found a small fishing village inhabited by people called Hameg, a name used by the Hadendoa to denote an ignorant people, in other words, those who are still in the dark pre-Islamic days.

The four apostles made Suakin their home and taught the natives the creed of Mohammed.

About the year A.D. 883 the Arteiga family came to Suakin from Arabia and settled down near Fula; they were followed 130 years later by the Shadhaliab of the Beni Ommayya stock.

In the year A.D. 1208 the Hasanab tribe came over from Yemen, and in A.D. 1451[1] some Ashraf from Mecca.

When the descendants of the seven virgins had multiplied they fought with, and were defeated by, the Bushab, who settled at El Shata and enslaved the vanquished. Later the Dessayab overthrew the Bushab and became lords of Suakin. Towards the close of the fifteenth century the Fung are said to have defeated the Arteiga family in a pitched battle, and then to have appointed them to rule the district as a tributary State.

Each of these tribes or families, as they arrived, intermarried with the Arteiga, who are the most important family in Suakin. They trace their origin to Mohammed, Hamad, and Gemal el Din, three sons of a man named Bas Saffar from Hadramout. The Arteiga family have always been loyal to Government, and their influence during the siege of Suakin was of the greatest value.

Towards the close of the eighteenth century a man named

[1] These are the dates given by native tradition. I have had no means of checking them.

Ali Digna came to Suakin from Diarbekr.[1] He was a Kurd and his brother was an official of some importance under the Turkish Government. Ali Digna, however, appears to have been constantly intriguing against his brother, with the result that he was finally deported by the Turks from Armenia and taken to Suakin. Here he made a living as best he could, until he happened to meet an old woman of the Tirik tribe, who came into Suakin to sell milk, firewood, or anything that would help to support her family. She talked to him about the attractions of Erkowit until Ali Digna determined to accompany her back to the hills. He made Erkowit his home, dug a garden, and asked for the woman's daughter in marriage. Before the father's consent had been obtained the girl was found to be pregnant Weil Ali, the head of the Hadendoa tribe, ordered both Ali Digna and the girl to be put to death. Had his injunctions been carried out the history of Suakin and of the Eastern Sudan might have run a very different course. The old woman, however, received news of the chieftain's orders, and she, with Ali Digna and the daughter, escaped to Suakin. They appealed for help to the Arteiga family, and shortly afterwards the girl gave birth to a son, Mohammed. Mohammed had several descendants, of whom only Fagi and Abu Bakr, the father of Osman Digna, left any children behind them.

§ 3

The defence of Suakin speedily involved England in difficulties. Sir Evelyn Wood was unwilling to employ the Egyptian Army, whose reorganization he had recently undertaken. Regular officers from the active list of the British Army were not allowed to serve, and so it was decided to employ the Egyptian gendarmerie, a police force largely

[1] Some of his ancestors had preceded him at the beginning of the sixteenth century—as has been seen above (see Chapter II), but Ali Digna appears to have been the first to have attained to a position of any importance Burckhardt, who visited Suakin in 1814, states that the Turks, at the beginning of the sixteenth century, sent soldiers to garrison Suakin, and adds that many Hadendoa claim to have come originally from Mosul and Diarbekr. Selim I, Yawuz Selim (or Selim the Grim), besides defeating the Egyptians and adding the Hedjaz to the Turkish empire, routed the Persians on the plains of Chaldiran The provinces of Kurdistan and Diarbekr were overrun. The Kurds may quite well have found the Turkish yoke too heavy for them to bear and emigrated to Suakin, as local tradition makes them to have done, or the Turkish garrison may have left descendants behind them, as did the French in Egypt during the Napoleonic occupation.

composed of Turks, recruited along more or less military lines, but with no very clearly defined status. General Sir Valentine Baker Pasha, who had been seconded from Constantinople, had been instructed to organize this gendarmerie for active service.

The original intention appears to have been to form two divisions, one of which was to be commanded by Colonel Sartorius Pasha and the other by Zubeir Pasha, who was to recruit any Sudanese in Egypt who cared to follow him.

Zubeir at once wrote a letter to Osman Digna demanding his surrender:

6 Safar, 1301 [6 December, 1883]

The grace of God be with you; the greetings of Zubeir Pasha el Abbassi of Cairo to my noble brother Sheikh Osman Ali Digna, chieftain of the Arabs of Suakin. The peace of God be upon him! After the salutations that I have the honour to offer you and to all the sheikhs of the tribes who are with you, I have the pleasure to inform you that by an order of the 28th of Moharrem, 1301, His Highness the Khedive has condescended to honour me with the chief command of the Egyptian Army. Furthermore, I have been ordered to go to the Sudan in order to re-establish order there and to put down the rebellion in those parts. I know well that you are one of the most learned of the chieftains of your country and that you are well acquaint with the teachings of the sacred book and of the religion of the Prophet, and that you will understand in consequence what must be the final end of your revolution.

You are of noble ancestry, being one of the descendants of the Prophet. Why then do you ride on warfare to-day against your holy religion and the sacred book?

The Khedive, having learnt that you had left the path of righteousness, has entrusted me with the task of leading you back to the right way and of restoring peace and quiet to the country for the well-being of Mohammedans whose commerce has been destroyed. So I come to advise you to submit to the orders of the Government and to come to our aid, so will you be numbered with those who only desire the peace and happiness of all. But if you hearken not to my words, be assured that you will have to fight with us, a fight of which the consequences will be trouble, for God will abandon you and you will be at the mercy of the Government, which will hold you responsible for all the Mohammedan blood that will be shed by either party. I am Zubeir Pasha, loyal servant of His Highness the Khedive; I am coming among you, but, before I do so I send you this letter in warning, to counsel you to walk in the way of God and of the religion of the Prophet. I trust that this letter will be sufficient to make you understand the situation and will allow you to choose twixt good and ill.

ZUBEIR PASHA EL ABBASSI

Zubeir's messenger was seized by Osman Digna, put in chains, and half strangled until he swore to join the Mahdiist cause.

It was a strange whim of fortune that compelled Zubeir to send an ultimatum to Osman Digna. The former was never again to lead victorious troops, while the latter was just entering upon a career that was to make his name a household word in England. Thus were two ignorant natives of Africa brought into communication. One had defied the power of Egypt while the other was to snap his fingers at the far greater English people. Both proved a thorn in the side of the nation by whom they were ruled; but while the former was ever in the forefront of the battle, the latter seldom saw, save from a distance, the glint of battle. And yet, though far the greater man, Zubeir never gained the notoriety in England that was won by the artful cunning of Osman Digna.

General Baker remained in Cairo to superintend the dispatch of the troops and supplies, while Colonel Sartorius was sent on ahead to Suakin.

Colonel Sartorius, in charge of the Egyptian gendarmerie at Suez, was told to take 2,500 of them at once to Suakin. A review of these gendarmerie, or constabulary, was held before His Highness the Khedive on November 26th. It was followed by a flat refusal of officers and men to embark on military operations in the Sudan. They pleaded that they had only been enlisted for civil service. Eventually some 300 infantry and 200 mounted police were persuaded to go to Suakin. They started on November 28th, but many of them managed to escape before the steamer left Suez. The constabulary were particularly angry at being called upon for military service when the regular Egyptian Army remained in Egypt. General Baker, who was to proceed in a few days to Suakin, succeeded in calming the mutinous feeling for a time, and 600 more gendarmes left on December 3rd, but their value was low, as they had no heart for any fighting.

On his arrival at Suakin on December 8th, Sartorius Pasha, who was accompanied by Major Harrington and Major Giles, at once attempted to throw provisions into Sinkat by means of the friendlies. All his efforts, however, proved unavailing, and the little garrison in the mountains found itself in dire straits.

He next set about organizing the defences, with the help of Major Harrington, and tried to instil some sort of discipline into the ragged and mutinous mob of which he was in command.

Difficulties not only of tacit obstruction but even of active opposition at once confronted him. The Bashi-bazouks refused to go on parade, so Sartorius Pasha ordered the ring-leaders to be flogged. Suliman Pasha Nyazi, who was in nominal command of the garrison, sent for Sartorius (recently promoted to the rank of general) and said that the Bashi-bazouks ought not to be flogged. They should be "asked" if they "wished" to drill, and if they were unwilling to do so they should be allowed to return to Egypt. General Sartorius said they could go back provided Suliman Pasha would give orders to this effect in writing. The Pasha, in accordance with the traditions of his race, refused to take such a responsibility. But though these troops could be, and were, forced to drill, they could not be compelled to fight. Their officers would not detail them for outpost duty on the plea that their lonely, detached position exposed them to danger; even the suspicion of a rumour that the enemy were approaching would send the whole force scuttling back to Suakin, where they took cover under any sofas or chairs that they could find in some outraged householder's home. When Captain Darwall requested the "Tor" either to defend the causeway or to make room for the "Ranger" to move up, he was met with a flat refusal. In defiance of this contankerous obstinacy he steamed into position, to the great relief of all the inhabitants.

It was quite clear by now that no help could be expected from the local authorities, and additional British men-of-war were ordered to proceed to Suakin. Had Osman Digna attacked at any time during these fateful weeks nothing could have prevented him from sacking the town. The only real means of defence lay in the three British warships—the "Ranger," "Woodlark," and "Coquette"—which were moored in the harbour.

The fortifications consisted of a ditch some four feet deep and three feet wide at the top. A parapet of earth, into which were driven six-foot-long stakes six inches apart, was thrown up behind to a height of five or six feet. There were also a few detached forts surrounded by deeper and wider ditches. These were protected by thorn zarıbas, which made them difficult of capture by direct assault. General Sartorius, finding the fortifications too long to hold with the forces at his disposal, dug a shorter line of trenches nearer to the town.

On December 16th, H.M.S. "Euryalus," commanded by Rear-Admiral Hewett, came to strengthen the defences, and seven days later General Baker arrived at Suakin.

On Christmas Day a review was held of Baker Pasha's motley force, which consisted of 1,300 gendarmerie, 400 Egyptian infantry, 400 Turks and Bashi-bazouks, 100 Turkish cavalry, 200 mounted gendarmes, 90 mounted Bashi-bazouks, 200 Egyptian gunners, and 47 European police.

With the arrival of H.M.S. "Sphinx" Suakin Harbour presented a busy scene of activity. Osman Digna, who was encamped at Tamineb, made a demonstration on the night of December 27th, but, apart from a few local reconnaissances on either side, no fighting took place. Her Britannic Majesty's Government was anxious to avoid a pitched battle with Osman Digna until some elementary ideas of discipline had been hammered into the troops. Every effort was made to wean the natives from their half-hearted allegiance to Osman Digna.

On the last day of the year the religious head of the Mirghani family, Mohammed Sir el Khatm, came to Suakin from Cairo to counteract the propaganda of Osman Digna. He was received with a salute of nineteen guns, and his procession, headed by a military band, made its way through streets lined with troops and a cheering populace.

His efforts to win over the tribes met with but little success, as those who were well disposed towards the Government did not place reliance in its ability to defend them from the Dervishes. Osman Digna, in reply to the sheikh's invitation to submit, wrote to him that if the latter did not believe in the Mahdi, Osman Digna was quite prepared to receive the holy sheikh in his camp and to hear what he had to say on the subject. Sheikh Mirghani needless to say, declined to accede to this naive invitation.

The inner lines of defence, which had been put up by Colonel Harrington, were now completed, and Suakin was safe from any but the most determined onslaught. Food supplies were, however, running short, and the attitude of the friendlies was becoming doubtful owing to the way in which they were treated by Mahmud Pasha and Suliman Pasha Nyazi, the Governor-General of the Eastern Sudan. This meant that the fresh meat, fodder, eggs, milk, and so on which might have been so easily obtained from the Arabs were no longer brought into the town. "The state of affairs here," wrote an Englishman to Sir E. Baring on December 4th, "can hardly be believed, and my nine years' experience of the country could never have led me to believe that it was possible that the Egyptian officials could bring about the present state of affairs. That they have done so is a perfect fact, and it is

simply their own ignorance, negligence, or wickedness, whichever it may be, that has brought the Sudan into the horrible state that it is now."

A meeting was shortly afterwards held to discuss whether it was better to send troops to relieve Tokar or Sinkat. Suliman Pasha, who had promised Tewfik that he would do his best to help him, voted at the meeting for the relief of Tokar. He was afraid, in the opinion of the people, of what would happen to him if Tewfik made a report in person to Baker Pasha. Sinkat was known to be in a far more desperate plight than Tokar, which stood in no real danger of falling. A letter from Tewfik, which was received on January 2nd, informed Baker Pasha that his food supplies would only last until January 20th or 23rd at the outside. Efforts were once more made to relieve the gallant little force, but the Governor of Suakin and his officers had so alienated the feelings of the friendlies that no camels were available for transport to Sinkat. Moreover, any hopes of winning over the local inhabitants were dashed to the ground by the publication of the news that the Government intended to abandon the whole of the Sudan. And although Admiral Hewett on December 18th had impressed upon Suliman Pasha the importance of rescuing the Sinkat garrison, the loss of which, he said, would be an indelible disgrace to Egypt, no effort was made to gain the goodwill of the natives. In fact, the officers were much more concerned with the appearance of a strange camel which they insisted, in an official report to their commanding officer, was a native that had come to spy upon them in this mysterious form.

General Baker, anxious to strike some blow at the Dervishes, decided to attack towards Tokar, in the hope that a success there might react at Sinkat. The mere threat of an advance on Tokar might also draw off some of the troops that were investing Sinkat, and thus allow Tewfik to fight his way out, as he had announced his intention of doing. General Baker had been given supreme civil and military command, with instructions to act merely on the defensive, for which he was given a force of 2,000 infantry (including 100 Turks), 520 cavalry (of whom 80 were Turks), and 100 volunteers from the European police. These numbers were augmented later by the arrival of troops from Massaua and Senhit and a body of nearly 700 of Zubeir's blacks. These last paraded before the Khedive on January 2, 1884, but, owing to the lack of steamers, they could not proceed to Suakin. They were kept in Cairo while Zubeir applied for £6,000 in order to pay the battalion,

a sum of money that was with difficulty raised. On the 10th the blacks left Suez, but without Zubeir, whose personal influence was expected to count for so much. His men were irregulars who had to fight in their own particular way and under the command of leaders whom they knew and whose methods they understood. They were of little use without Zubeir to inspire and encourage them. As to the exact reason that led to Zubeir remaining in Cairo no certain answer can be given Zubeir said himself that he did not intend to play second fiddle to Baker Pasha; possibly this was the real reason, or the uncertainty of the attitude Zubeir would adopt towards the Mahdi and his leaders might have decided the Cabinet at the last minute not to send him. At any rate, Zubeir had no cause to love the Egyptians, every reason to despise them, and his independence might quite well have proved a thorn in the side of the English commander, who was not likely to tolerate anything but implicit obedience.

On January 18th, Baker started from Suakin for Kirinkākāt —a name which has since been corrupted into Trinkitat—in order to relieve Tokar. In the meantime Zubeir's messenger had been released and sent back with a message that the Mahdi's representative would never submit. On February 4th, as negotiations had failed, Baker left Trinkitat with 3,656 men and 6 guns.

Zubeir's black troops .	678	Alexandria gendarmerie .	560
Turkish cavalry . .	150	Cairo gendarmerie . .	500
Egyptian artillery . .	128	Massaua battalion . .	450
Egyptian cavalry . .	300	Turkish infantry . .	429
European police . .	40	Senhit battalion . .	421

Only five or six miles had been covered when the enemy was sighted nearly two miles away; the scouts immediately opened a wild fire on the enemy and retired. The Turkish cavalry, after a brief skirmish, also made for the main body; the Arabs simultaneously attacked Chaos ruled supreme. While Baker Pasha was vainly attempting to form a square the scouts and cavalry were trying to force their way in, and confusion was worse confounded by the baggage camels and the transport also rushing to get within the square. Then came the Arab attack under cover of the rifle smoke, and the Egyptian infantry at once broke.

There followed a scene unparalleled in the annals of warfare. Packed in confusion inextricable were the black troops, who alone were prepared to put up a fight, while the transport,

camels, and flying Egyptians being borne back upon them, made it impossible for them to offer a really effective resistance. It would have been no easy matter even for exceptionally well-trained and disciplined troops to fight had they wished to do so once the partly formed square was penetrated, but the Egyptians made absolutely no attempt of any sort at defence, allowing themselves instead to be massacred like sheep. Howling to be spared they knelt on the ground and, with uplifted hands, prayed for mercy from the merciless Arabs. But these were not prepared to spare such worthless lives, and showed the most supreme contempt for them, seizing them by the neck and cutting their throats. One Arab indeed picked up a rifle that had been thrown away and brained its former owner with it. An Egyptian officer who was surrounded by his own men allowed a single Arab to ride in among them hacking with his sword until his turn too came as he lay huddled in fear upon his horse's neck. The blacks and the staff alone made an effort to stem the headlong rout; some of the Europeans, indeed, were compelled to shoot the other officers in a vain attempt to get them to rally their men. But these cowardly leaders of a cowardly herd so far from facing the foe shot their own men in order to obtain their horses and make further haste. For five miles the slaughter lasted, while the men, throwing aside everything they wore in order to hasten their flight, rushed towards the sea. When overtaken by the victorious Arabs they lay on the ground and thus meekly met their fate. The cavalry, deserted by their officers, threw away their saddles and turned their horses loose that they might not be called upon to fight again. The guns of the fleet at Trinkitat prevented the massacre from being even worse than it was.

Baker Pasha and those of the English who escaped death made their way eventually back to Trinkitat and embarked for Suakin, where they were faced with a situation of mutinous insurrection.

The Arab force numbered no more than 1,200 and in all probability did not exceed 1,000, yet they routed a force between three and four times its size, killed 96 officers and 2,250 men, besides capturing 4 Krupp guns, 2 Gatlings, 3,000 Remington rifles and carbines, and half a million cartridges, and all at an insignificant cost; 16 officers were also wounded.

That night the ill-fated expedition returned to Suakin. Rear-Admiral Hewett, who was present in his flagship, H.M.S. "Euryalus," landed the marines of H.M.S. "Ranger" and

"Decoy," as well as eighty bluejackets with Gatling guns, in order to allay the panic that ensued.

Rear-Admiral Hewett and Baker Pasha hastened to complete the defences of Suakin. Fortifications were thrown up and additional trenches were dug. All buildings that interfered with the field of fire were destroyed. Baker Pasha still had some 3,500 troops at his disposal, though nearly a third of this number was unarmed.[1] These he divided up according to their nationalities, and formed three battalions composed of Turks, blacks, and Egyptians respectively. The Egyptian officers were dismissed and blacks were promoted from the ranks to take their place. But of so little value did he regard his troops that he telegraphed to Cairo saying that even behind entrenchments they could not be depended upon to offer any but the feeblest resistance. The Egyptians were given the advanced line, only a mile in length, to hold in case of an attack. In order to try and induce them to fight, arrangements were made by which all communications between them and the rest of the works could be cut off. It was hoped that by this means the Egyptians, not being able to effect an escape by flight, might be compelled to stand their ground.

This is not the place to criticize General Baker's dispositions nor to discuss the question of whether he was caught unprepared or exceeded his instructions in forcing an engagement when the troops at his disposal were untrained, cowardly, and worthless impressed slaves or the sweepings of the Cairo bazaars.

Some of his troops were convicts, some had never attended a drill or shouldered a rifle before reaching Suakin, few of them had any desire or intention of fighting, and most were timorous and incompetent. To take the field with such a force was to court the same disaster as had previously overtaken General Hicks These were the troops that were pitted against a horde of fanatics to whom death in so holy a cause meant life everlasting, who were impressed with the deepest contempt for their opponents and the highest belief in the justice of their mission. Such poor consolation as is to be extracted from so deplorable an incident lies in the reflection that men who dared not make some poor effort to save their skins were not worthy of the life they so cowardly sacrificed.

[1] Various estimates are made of the numbers that composed the Suakin garrison at this date. Royle puts the figure at 3,800; Nevinson ("The Insurrection of the False Prophet") at 5,170.

The terrain was such as to render it difficult for a large body of troops to keep their formation on the march. A sandy plain, covered with thick thorn scrub and high bushes, intersected with stony watercourses, was all in favour of the nimble, lightly-clad Dervish, who could lie low and thus hide after using his long and vicious spear. And this was the country from Suakin to Tokar and along the Red Sea coast.

The destruction of Zubeir's blacks, which should have been the backbone of the army in the East, was particularly unfortunate.

On February 10th Rear-Admiral Sir W. Hewett assumed supreme command at Suakin and declared a state of siege. Two days later came confirmation of the report that Sinkat had fallen. Rumours had been current to this effect for five days, but there had so far been no definite news.

Few defences have been so ably conducted, few places so heroically held, although the besieged had been abandoned by those who had no reason for refusing the help so earnestly asked for and so urgently needed.

Sinkat had been invested more or less closely since August 5th of the preceding year, and after October 18th all direct communication with the outer world had been cut off. When the last of the cats and the camels had been consumed, Tewfik and his plucky garrison subsisted on rats, dogs, boots, and the leather thongs of the angaribs, or native bedsteads. Finally they were reduced to eating insects, the roots and the leaves of neighbouring trees, and even the carrion crows and vultures that scavenged round the place. The fort itself was only a tumbledown building which had been carefully loopholed and protected with sandbags. When the day came that no vestige of edible thing remained behind, Tewfik and his heroic little band spiked the guns and threw them down the well, and, after destroying anything that could have been of any possible use to the Dervishes, they sallied forth, encumbered by women and children, numbering in all some 700 persons. Shortly after leaving, his hungry and emaciated little troop was set upon by the Dervishes, and, though the men succeeded in repelling the assaults, reinforcements were brought against them and they were overwhelmed. Those of the women who survived became the concubines of their victors, while their children were sold into slavery. Tewfik fought bravely to the end, and thus was a worthy life crowned by an even worthier death. His merits were fully appreciated by Osman Digna, who, in a communication to the Mahdi described him as " one

of the ablest of the God-forsaken Ala el Din's men, well known for his bravery and good administration."

In the fighting of the past six months the heroic defence of Sinkat by Tewfik Bey forms the sole bright spot. At the commencement of the rising under Osman Digna, Tewfik, with only a few troops at his command, very nearly nipped the insurrection in the bud. Had his advice been taken or his request for only a few more men been granted by Suliman Pasha Nyazi it is difficult not to believe that the history of the next few years would have been completely changed. As it was, the cowardly incompetence and ineptitude of the Governor-General and the Military Governor of the district allowed the struggling flame of Mahdiism to burst into a fire that was to rage throughout the Eastern Sudan and was only to be partially extinguished by the dispatch of British troops at a cost first and last of thousands of lives and the expenditure of hundreds of thousands of pounds.

On February 18th 400 of Baker Pasha's troops left for Suez amid a confusion and lack of discipline that can seldom if ever have found a parallel in any so-called organized army. The troops crowded on to any ship they could see, and if the overloaded boat that was to convey them to the vessel could carry no more passengers then they would throw away rifle, bandolier, belt, or bayonet and swim from the accursed spot. One transport, indeed, left with soldiers climbing up the sides by means of ropes given them by their countrymen even though the ship was already under weigh. They fraternized with the convicts in the cells—cut-throats and brigands who passed their time in luxurious comfort playing cards and drinking brandy and whisky. Their rifles were never cleaned; some contained unexploded cartridges or others that had jammed; the gunpowder was kept only a few yards distant from where its light-hearted guardian lit a careless fire each day for cooking. The officer in charge of the hospital used to disappear if there was any work to be done, and an Egyptian officer, degraded and disgraced from the army, left for Cairo wreathed in smiles. Their cowardice was only paralleled by their ignorance, the officers refusing to believe that the telegraph line could convey any language but that of Arabic.

On the fall of Sinkat a Cabinet Council was held at Downing Street and it was decided to send British troops to the Red Sea in order to try and rescue the Tokar garrison.

Arrangements had now been made for garrisoning Suakin with 500 marines; 100 of these were to be taken from the

squadron which Rear-Admiral Hewett already had in the Red Sea, and 120 from H.M. troopship "Orontes," which was homeward bound with relieved crews from the China and East India Stations, and 280 from the Mediterranean squadron.

The news that Suakin was to be defended by the British went far towards reassuring the wavering and timid inhabitants of that place. It was known too that many of them were in sympathy with Osman Digna and communicated frequently with him. The landing of the marines therefore achieved the double purpose of protecting the town both from internal and external danger.

Tokar was a town of considerable importance and was situated some fifty-five miles to the south of Suakin. It owed its creation and consequent development to a curious cause. The Khor (or River) Baraka rises in the highlands of Eritrea and rushes, with a pace of some fifteen miles an hour in spate, along a narrow gorge as far as the rocks of Shiddin. Shortly after emerging from these rocks the torrent divides into a number of subsidiary channels and spreads out in a fan shape until all its waters are absorbed. A rich alluvial delta is formed which, at its broadest, may extend over a distance of twenty miles. To-day some of the finest cotton in the world is grown there, but forty years ago its importance was due chiefly to the fact that it was not only the best grain-producing area in the whole of the Red Sea littoral, but was the only one where an annual crop could be relied on. Elsewhere the rainfall was so slight and so uncertain that a crop could not usually be obtained more than once in every two or three years.

Water, too, could be obtained not far from the surface. Tokar was therefore the nearest point to Suakin where a large force could be collected and supplied for a considerable period; it was the most suitable rendezvous from which to launch an attack. The terrain between Suakin and Tokar was dead level and suitable for camels. A force defeated outside Suakin could make its way on camel back to Tokar without any great difficulty. At the same time there was no water anywhere to be found along the road. No force of any size from Suakin could accordingly march against Tokar unless it was adequately supplied with camels. Any attack on Tokar would have to be made from the sea at Trinkitat. Of such an attack ample notice could always be given to the Dervishes, so that Tokar was in no danger of ever being surprised by the advance of a large hostile force. Osman Digna, rightly, attached great importance to it.

Telegraphic instructions were dispatched to the general officer commanding in Egypt, directing a force to be collected at Suakin. General Graham, V.C., was to command the troops, with General Redvers Buller as second in command. The garrison at Tokar was to be relieved, if possible, but if the place had already fallen all necessary steps were to be taken for the defence of the ports. In the orders sent to the general officer commanding great emphasis was laid on the importance of telling the Dervishes that Tokar was to be relieved with British troops. The expedition, however, was to last only three weeks.

§ 4

It has been seen above in what a mesh of difficulties the Egyptian Government and its British advisers were entangled. England was most unwilling to be embroiled in Sudan affairs at all, but the Egyptian Government was equally loath to see the Sudan pass out of its control. Public opinion in England was exasperated by the routing of the two large forces led by Baker and Hicks respectively. By urging the appointment of Gordon to rescue the scattered garrisons it had clearly shown that the future of the Sudan could not be a matter of utter indifference to it Into a discussion of the various alternative routes and the different methods by which the evacuation was to be carried out I do not propose to enter. Suffice it to say that the general policy to be pursued was, firstly, the garrisoning of Suakin by British and Indian troops and, secondly, the holding of Khartoum sufficiently long for the several bodies of troops dispersed throughout the Sudan to find their way to the metropolis.

The policy with regard to Suakin was quite definite. Osman Digna was to be left severely alone and merely defensive action was to be taken.

Sir E. Baring, on February 23, 1884, telegraphed to Earl Granville a message he had received from Gordon reporting the rumoured capitulation of Tokar. "I think if Tokar has fallen Her Majesty's Government had better be quiet, as I see no advantage to be now gained by any action on their part; let events work themselves out." This policy was approved by Her Majesty's Government, the only departure from such course of action being the relief of the garrison of Tokar in the event of its still holding out. If the Arabs had dispersed no attempt was to be made to follow them, and Osman Digna

was only to be confronted provided he could be brought to a decisive engagement without indulging in a pursuit that might prove fruitless and would result in a loss of prestige to the British troops. Lieutenant-General Stephenson, in his instructions to Major-General Graham, had told him that if before leaving Suakin he were to ascertain beyond doubt that Tokar had fallen he was to remain stationary and telegraph for further orders He was also to adopt the same course of action at Trinkitat.

By February 28th the following troops had been concentrated at Trinkitat under General Sir G. Graham, who had been in command of the second brigade at El Tel el Kebir :

2,250 *infantry.*
750 mounted troops.
150 Naval Brigade.
80 Royal Engineers.
100 Royal Artillery, with six machine-guns and eight seven-pounders.

Every publicity was given to the fact that an attempt was being made to relieve the Tokar garrison with British troops in order to induce the followers of Osman Digna to abandon what could only be a hopeless effort against disciplined troops armed with weapons of precision. The issue could hardly be in doubt once the untrained hordes of Arabs (armed though many of them now were with captured rifles of which they did not understand the use) were brought to bay in any open space. Possibly the British Government wished to avoid the appalling slaughter of those whose main crime, after all, had been to protest in the only way open to them against an effete, bullying, and corrupt administration. Gordon, too, was most anxious to win over these Eastern Arabs in order to facilitate the withdrawal of the Kassala and other garrisons. Accordingly, before Graham set out to attack, the following message was taken out by Lieutenant-Colonel Burnaby and Major Harvey, who had to ride two miles ahead of the main column. Although continuously fired at they succeeded in pinning it to a staff in full view of the Dervishes :

From the General Officer commanding the English army to the sheikhs of the tribes between Trinkitat and Tokar.

I summon you in the name of the English Government to disperse your fighting men before daybreak to-morrow morning, or the consequences will be on your own heads. Instead of fighting with English troops you should send delegates to Khartoum to

consult with Gordon Pasha as to the future settlement of the Sudan Provinces.

The English Government is not at war with the Arabs, but it is determined to disperse the forces now in arms in this neighbourhood and around Suakin

An answer to this letter must be left at the same place before daybreak to-morrow morning or the consequences will be on the heads of the sheikhs.

This missive was removed on February 29th by the Arabs, but as no reply had been received, General Graham determined to advance, although news in the meantime had arrived that Tokar had surrendered. It is possible (in spite of the fact that the objects of the expeditionary force were, firstly, to relieve Tokar and, secondly, in the event of Tokar having fallen, to defend Suakin) that it was felt desirable to try and bring Osman Digna to book. There could be no real peace at Suakin as long as Osman Digna was at large The landing of a large British force at Trinkitat and withdrawing without a fight could only have led the Arabs to believe that the British were unable or afraid to do battle with him.

The rival forces met at El Teb and the issue was never in doubt. The enemy, out of a total force of 6,000 men, which included representatives from among the Hadendoa, Gemilab, Ashraf, Arteiga, and Hasanab tribes, left at least 2,000 dead on the field of battle, as well as four Krupp guns, two brass howitzers, and large quantities of arms and ammunition. It is highly probable that their losses amounted in killed alone to nearly 3,000 The Arabs fought with reckless bravery and fanatical enthusiasm, rushing to meet the death that could not be denied them. But the undisciplined, ill-armed hordes of the Dervishes stood no chance against the steady volleys of trained troops. How great their losses must have been can be realized from the fact that Osman Digna, in his report of the battle " of the English, or the third battle of the sea," admits a loss of 3,000 men, of whom half were killed ·

Three days after the fall of Tokar, the whole sea coast became full of steamers, and it was rumoured that the Egyptian Government, knowing its inability to defend the country, entrusted its affairs to the English Government. The steamers were filled with English soldiers, who were coming to reoccupy Tokar. On learning this I sent my brother's son Medani—a strong and brave man—to assist the ansar of Tokar against them.

The English soldiers, I was told, numbered 24,000 men. The ansar waited until they had all landed; they did not attack them

while they were landing, fearing that some should escape and return in the steamers; but at length, when all had landed, the ansar fell upon them and a hot fight ensued, which lasted till nightfall, when both forces retreated The soldiers advanced to the mamurieh The losses of the ansar were heavy in this battle. When I heard this I sent my entire force, except a very few men, to fight against the soldiers at the mamurieh, and I sent the two best men I have with me as leaders, these were Hamed, the son of my brother Ahmed Digna, and Idris. I gave orders to these two emirs to attack the English whenever they came, either by day or night, and no matter at what hour, but the English did not stay there long. God struck fear into their hearts, and they went back the next morning, staying only one night at the mamurieh, and they started back in their steamers.

The ansar, seeing the mamurieh evacuated, returned to me, but the Emir Khidr is still there with his men watching the coast.

In this battle the ansar lost about 1,500 men, including the Emir of the Coast, Abdallah, the Emir Medani, and the Emir Taher Ibn el Haj Omar Kamar el Din el Magzub, a cousin of Sheikh Taher Magdhub's. This last was a true and brave man and had no fear of death when fighting against the enemies of God. . . Amongst our dead was also the Emir Musa Kilai, who is equal to a thousand men, and is as the drawn sword of God in fighting against the infidels.

We have as many wounded as killed, while the enemies of God lost over three thousand

By the capture of Tokar, Osman Digna, who was near Suakin, had gained possession of the whole of the Eastern Sudan, and it was hardly surprising that all the neighbouring tribes, with a few isolated exceptions, regarded the cause of the Mahdi as a divinely inspired one. In the space of a few months Osman Digna had brought about the capitulation of two fortified outposts and defeated successively four Egyptian forces, one of which had been commanded by an Englishman and officered largely by Europeans His followers, who originally had possessed nothing but their clubs, spears, and knives with which to fight, were now, thanks to their opponents, plentifully supplied with rifles and ammunition. That the successes of Osman Digna were due even more to the cowardice of his opponents than to the bravery of his own men could hardly affect the result. At the first battle of El Teb the troops, even when no enemy was in sight, had rapidly loosed off their rifles without attempting to aim, or even waiting to put their rifles up to their shoulders. General Baker and his staff had in vain attempted to rally the troops by walking up

and down in front of the lines ; it was only due to the fact that the panic-stricken soldiers fired in the air that limited his loss to one member of the staff. The guns' crews, however, were not so fortunate, and a volley in their midst from their friends scattered the survivors in all directions. Although Osman Digna had not personally played a very prominent part in the actual fighting, his was the guiding spirit that inspired the plans and encouraged his followers to the fray. The Eastern Sudan had thrown off all allegiance to Egypt and was completely in the hands of the Mahdi.

After the battle of El Teb the troops bivouacked on the ground they had captured and buried the dead. Another proclamation was made out and given to a prisoner who volunteered to deliver it :

To Sheikh Khadr and sheikhs of tribes round Tokar.

I summon you for the last time to make submission to me to-morrow morning, or the consequences will be on your own heads.

I have already told you that the English Government is not at war with the Arab tribes, but it is determined not to allow warriors to collect near Tokar and Suakin. You should send delegates to Khartoum to treat with Gordon Pasha as to the settlement of your affairs.

You have seen to-day the beginning of what results from your opposing the English, who did not fire upon you till you commenced. To-morrow is your last opportunity for submitting

On March 1st parties were sent out to bury the dead of the preceding day and also to give proper interment to those who had died in the previous engagements An entrenched camp was made, in which the captured brass howitzers and Krupp guns were mounted.

Four hundred men of the Royal Highlanders, under Colonel W. Green, were left in charge of the post while the rest of the force advanced towards Tokar.

A hot and thirsty march followed. Shortly after two o'clock a report was received from cavalry scouts that shots had been fired at them, that the walls were loopholed and the place appeared to be strongly held.

Arrangements had just been completed for an assault upon the town when a detachment was seen bringing with them 700 civilians and survivors of the Egyptian garrison, which had surrendered ten days previously Headed by their commanding officer, who rode a white horse and carried a sunshade,

they caused a good deal of anxiety to their rescuers by firing an indiscriminate salute with their Remington rifles

The troops entered the town, where they found plenty of ammunition and grain, though hardly any meat.

Even though one admits that within the town of Tokar there were many sympathizers with the Dervish cause there was not the slightest excuse for the surrender of the town, more especially as it was widely known that British troops were marching to its relief.

On the morning of March 1st, when it was ascertained beyond all possibility of doubt that British troops were close at hand, the Dervishes wished to kill the remnants of the garrison, with whom they had been fraternizing, but were dissuaded from doing so by a religious sheikh of the Ashraf tribe, Sheikh Sayyid Abu Bakr.

Some rifles and ammunition, etc., were found on the next day, but, as the enemy had scattered and showed no further inclination to fight, the whole force withdrew to Trinkitat.

The last troops to leave Tokar consisted of the 1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders, the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers, and the 1st Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment. The distance to Trinkitat was seventeen miles, the going heavy, with great stretches of moving sand or salt-encrusted soil in which the foot sank almost to the top of the boot; the sky was swelteringly hot.

Two hours were allowed for halts. The brigade marched out of Tokar at 8 a.m and arrived at Trinkitat at 3 p.m. and not a man fell out.

Thus were the defeats of Valentine Baker and Lynedoch Moncrieff avenged. The troops were all in excellent spirit and there was no one on the sick-list.

It is hard to imagine a foe more worthy of conflict with the picked forces of England had they met on terms of greater equality. The Dervishes scorned to live, and even when wounded and helpless on the ground they made a last desperate effort to kill the men that came to help them and in that effort died. The country was not an altogether easy one for the English force to manœuvre in, being covered with sandhills, mimosa scrub, and bush, a type of terrain that lent itself to irregular warfare, and this was the reason that the losses of the British forces were as heavy as they were: 4 officers killed, 4 died of wounds, 16 wounded, and 26 men killed and 139 wounded.

The inequality of the fight is still more emphasized when it is considered that of the killed no less than thirteen, or nearly half, were from the small force of cavalry of General Stewart, and that of the rest all the deaths were caused by the bullets of the enemy and not their spears, so little chance had the Dervishes of reaching the British troops.

§ 5

In the meantime Osman Digna, although in supreme command of the Arab troops, remained near Suakin, merely sending reports to his chieftain that it was totally untrue that the English were about to attack them—reports that earned for him undying hatred among the relatives of many who were thus ignorantly lured to an untimely doom. The Arabs had no cause of grievance against the English, however bitter may have been their intolerance of the tyranny of the Egyptian Government. Another effort was made to induce the chieftains to submit and save the useless slaughter that must ensue. Admiral Hewett sent a further message to Osman Digna, who made the following reply:

In the name of the Most Merciful God, the Lord be praised, etc. From the whole of the tribes and their sheikhs who have received your writings, and those who did not receive writings, to the Commandant of the English soldiers, whom God help to Islam. Amen. Then your letters have arrived with us, and what you have informed us in them: to come in. Then know that the Gracious God has sent his Mahdi suddenly, who was expected, the looked-for messenger for the religious and against the infidels, so as to show the religion of God through him, and by him to kill those who hate Him, which has happened. You have seen who have gone to him from the people and soldiers, who are countless. God killed them; so look at the multitudes.

Here followed verses from the Koran.

You who never know religion until after death, hate God from the beginning. Then we are sure that God, and only God, sent the Mahdi so as to take away your property, and you know this since the time of our Lord Mahomet's coming. Pray to God and be converted. There is nothing between us but the sword, especially as the Mahdi has come to kill you, and destroy you, unless God wishes you to Islam. The Mahdi's sword be on your necks wherever you may escape and God's iron be round your necks wherever

you may go. Do not think you are enough for us, and the Turks are only a little better than you. We will not leave your heads unless you become Mussulmans and listen to the Prophet and laws of God. And God said in His dear Book: "Those who believe in Him fight for Him, and those who do not believe in Him shall be killed."

Here followed many verses from the Koran, referring to permission to kill infidels.

Therefore God has waited for you for a long time, and you have thought that He would always go on waiting for you, but God said He would wait for you, as you were bad people But know that during the time of the Mahdi He will not accept bribes from you, and also will not leave you in your infidelity, so that there is nothing for you but the sword, so that there will not remain one of you on the face of the earth.

A small reconnaissance to Handub took place on March 5th, and on the next day the following proclamation was issued in the names of Rear-Admiral Hewett and Major-General Graham:

We, the English Admiral and General, ask the sheikhs to come in and meet us at Suakin.

We warned you that England had come to relieve Tokar, and that your wrongs under which you had so long suffered should be redressed.

You trusted in the notorious scoundrel Osman Digna, who is well known to you all as a bad man, his former life in Suakin has shown it. He has led you away with the foolish idea that the Mahdi had come on earth.

We tell you that the great God that rules the universe does not allow such scoundrels as Osman Digna to rule over men.

Your people are weak, and England always spares such people. Awake then out of your delusions. Chase Osman Digna from your country and we promise you that you shall be protected, and pardon granted to all.

Come in at once or the fate of all those who fell at El Teb will surely overtake you.

As this last effort at conciliation had failed it was determined once more to attack.

On March 13th the force, which had been concentrated at a zariba formerly made by Baker Pasha, some eight and a

half miles from Suakin, moved towards Tamai. The British contingent was composed of:

Mounted troops	41	officers and 696 men.
Infantry - -	106	officers and 3,050 men, including those of the Naval Brigade.
Artillery - -	10	officers and 166 men, with 12 guns.

The next day the force advanced some six miles to where the enemy was reported to be in strength. The troops were halted 1,200 yards from a ridge on which was posted the main body of the Arabs.

That night the Dervishes contented themselves with keeping up a casual and indiscriminate fire, which did practically no harm beyond preventing the troops from having a much-needed night's rest.

The village of Tamai, which at the time was the headquarters of Osman Digna and his army, lay in somewhat of a depression with barren hills and stony ridges surrounding it. The village itself was composed of a few mud huts, but its position depended for its importance on the fact that there were many wells here and that it was the key to the Erkowit and Sinkat roads.

After a brisk fight the place was captured just before noon, with a few casualties which would have been far less numerous but for a regrettable omission to make use of a report that had been received.

As it happened, a spy from Osman Digna's forces, who received a hundred pounds for his information, arrived on the very day of the fight to say that the bulk of the Arab force would be in the bed of a khor (or dried-up stream) and would thus be hidden, as well as protected, from an advance in the open. This intelligence was not made sufficient use of, and General Graham, who apparently intended to sweep it with artillery fire, either, in the heat of battle, forgot to do so or else came to the conclusion that the report need not be seriously considered. The consequences were unfortunate. The second brigade, coming unexpectedly upon a horde of the enemy hidden in the ravine, were driven back in confusion, while the Naval Brigade were compelled to abandon their machine-guns, after rendering them useless to the Dervishes. The set-back was only a temporary one, as the troops soon rallied and recaptured the guns, but they had to pay a heavier price than they need have for their victory—5 officers and 104 men being killed and 8 officers and the same number of men wounded.

Their losses were, however, insignificant in comparison with those suffered by the enemy, who left behind over 2,000 men in killed alone.

On the conclusion of the battle Osman Digna's camp, which extended some two miles in length, was sacked, among the spoils captured being a standard of Osman Digna's as well as that of Tewfik. Many stores also fell into the hands of the enemy.

General Graham, hearing that Osman Digna had announced to his followers that the British had shot their bolt and could do no more, decided to make a demonstration in force along the Berber road. On March 18th, three days after the return to Suakin, a force comprising mounted infantry, the Gordon Highlanders, and the 19th Hussars marched to the wells of Handub twelve miles distant from Suakin. The next day General Stewart—who was anxious for a mounted force to make its way to Berber and thus relieve the pressure on Khartoum—made a reconnaissance as far as Otaw with two squadrons of the 19th Hussars and some mounted infantry. Another squadron reconnoitred towards Osman Digna's camp at Tammeb, which was occupied by General Graham on the 27th after slight resistance.

These various reconnaissances and forced marches did little except weary the troops and confirm Osman Digna's views that the British could not follow him into the mountains. From a military point of view they were as useless as politically they were ineffective. It is true that their failure could not neutralize the effect of the victories of El Teb and Tamai, but they must have afforded additional proof to the shrewd brain of Osman Digna that the forces of the Government had a very limited field of action unless elaborate arrangements for transport were made.

On April 8th Lord Wolseley submitted a report to the War Office, in which he stated that if an expedition was to be sent to relieve Khartoum it should consist of not less than 6,500 British troops.

In describing to the Mahdi the fighting of these last two weeks Osman Digna gave free rein to his imagination, though he admits his losses were far heavier than even those he had incurred at El Teb in the previous year :

> On the 14th Jamad el Awal [12th March, 1884], an English army of, it is said, 20,000 men, including 6,000 horsemen, arrived in the neighbourhood, and, making a strong zariba, spent the night there.

The ansar surrounded them, and kept up a continuous fire on them during the whole of that night, so that the English got no sleep, and suffered some loss.

When the morning broke the English began firing their guns and rifles. The ansar attacked them, and fought them the whole day until both forces retreated; the English returned to Suakin with a loss of 8,000 men. In this battle the ansar lost 2,000 and had a similar number wounded.

At the end of Jamad el Awal, the English returned with a force of 13,000 men, but before they reached us, God struck fear into their hearts, and they returned again to Suakin without fighting; but only 5,000 or 6,000 of them reached Suakin, and the remainder of them were destroyed on the road, by what calamity is not exactly known, unless it was that the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up.

In short, the English army, with the exception of 5,000 or 6,000, was completely destroyed. They had about 28 steamers waiting for them in the harbour, but on their return they only filled five of them, and the rest returned to their country empty. One of these steamers was wrecked on the way; and previous to this, the Egyptian Government, lost many steamers carrying soldiers, horses, mules, and treasure.

The battle of Tamai caused the utter discrediting of Osman Digna and the dispersal of his army. He had, as usual, taken no actual part in the fray, which he preferred to watch from the top of a ridge. The fighting of the past few weeks had resulted in the death of most of his bravest warriors: it is probable that over 5,000 men had actually been killed. Osman Digna's prestige had fallen so low that a small mobile force, with the help of the friendlies, might quite well have been able to effect his capture. If so the whole of the Eastern Sudan would have been rescued from Mahdiism, the Suakin–Berber road would have been opened, the garrisons in the Eastern Sudan (that were afterwards compelled to capitulate) would have been saved, possibly Gordon would not have been sacrificed. But the home Government—unwilling to enter upon a Sudan campaign—refused to allow any more military operations to be undertaken. And when Admiral Hewett published a proclamation offering a reward to anyone who would bring in the person of Osman Digna dead or alive he was immediately instructed by Her Britannic Majesty's Government to withdraw it. As it was, the British Government had on its hands the blood of over 5,000 men, which had been spilt for no purpose except of revenge, "to teach the Arabs a lesson," a purpose that failed of its object at no small sacrifice of men,

money, and material. Winston Churchill rightly remarks that as we fought without purpose so we conquered without profit. And yet the Arabs themselves were sick of fighting, and after the British victories they began once more to settle round Suakin and to recommence their trading At this time it was probable that a flying column could have made its way across to Berber, where its presence must have had a considerable moral effect on the wavering tribes But as the Government was too late in attempting to rescue Sinkat and Tokar, too late for Gordon, so it was too late in arranging for a force to try and catch Osman Digna or open up the road to Berber.

On the expedition in general a few brief observations may be made.

Firstly, the fighting showed the enormous advantage that weapons of precision in the hands of disciplined troops give over an untrained, ill-armed horde of savages. This lesson was not altogether lost upon Osman Digna, who, for the rest of his career, tried to fight shy of British rifles and bayonets. And, though present at the battles of the Atbara and Omdurman, he found discretion the better part of valour. At the former he left as soon as he decently could and in the latter he took up an unostentatious position in the rear, where he was unexpectedly embroiled in the charge of the 21st Lancers.

Secondly, the magnificent courage and coolness of the British soldier is to be noted. He was never hustled, even when the square was temporarily broken at Tamai. He carried out the evolutions required of him with as much deliberation as if he was parading on the barrack square. The Dervishes were immensely impressed with the difference in the quality of the troops that they were now called upon to face. They had become so accustomed to winning the day without encountering any real opposition that they were all the more amazed at the bravery and discipline of the British. In fact, after the first battle of El Teb, they had composed a little song which is still to be heard to-day :

E Tarbushi firkak,
Malha-alski gincehit.
Hashin hoi yefnunneit
Shamla w' kilmi raeemna.

(The tarbushes are divided in half, and are now used as sandals for our feet,
Each two of them are worth a guinea
At Hashin we collected them,
And profited from the shamla and small luggage.)

Thirdly, the extraordinary rapidity of the British mobilization calls for especial comment. The news that the expedition had been sanctioned only reached Cairo on February 12th. Sixteen days after, in spite of the delay due to the transports "Neæra" and "Mansoura" striking the reefs, a force of 4,000 men had been collected at Trinkitat, fought the successful engagement of El Teb, and rescued the survivors of the Tokar garrison After ten days' rest the troops once more moved out, defeated the enemy at Tamai, occupied Tamineb, and dispersed the Dervish army.

Lastly, the inutility of the whole campaign cannot be passed over. Its avowed objects were threefold: to rescue the garrison of Tokar, defend Suakin, and open the Berber to Suakin road. The expeditionary force arrived too late to do more than rescue the survivors of the Tokar garrison and was withdrawn shortly afterwards. It is true that the successful engagements of El Teb and Tamai prevented for a time any further attacks upon Suakin, but all that the expedition really accomplished was to afford added proof, if such were needed, of the fine fighting qualities of the British Tommy. To massacre 5,000 or more natives against whom the English had no real grounds for quarrel was an extravagant method of proving the proven. The final result was to leave Osman Digna with a scattered but not an annihilated force. The victory was one of the soldier rather than the strategist. Osman Digna, though routed in the field, could boast, as indeed he did, that he had met the British troops in the open, had killed many of them, and then the British had retired. The little matter of his own enormous losses would be glossed over as only an incident in the campaign. In the last object it also failed, and yet, had General Graham been allowed a free hand he might well have sent a detachment to Berber as an earnest of England's intention to save the Sudan. Gordon pleaded for only a small force, just as later on he asked for the sight of a few redcoats. "The Mahdi," he telegraphed on March 7th, "has attempted to raise the people of Shendi by means of an emissary. Should he succeed we may be cut off. I think it therefore most important to follow up the success near Suakin by sending a small force up to Berber." But General E. Stephenson opposed this project and General Gordon's request was refused by Her Majesty's Government,

The policy of the Government was characterized throughout by wavering and indecision. Little by little it was forced to take one step after another along a road that it had decided

not to follow. No considered schemes, save of inaction, were thought out. After stating definitely that the Sudan was no concern of England's and that Egypt must rely upon its own resources Her Majesty's Government had, in only four months, successively appointed British officers to command at Suakin, dispatched General Gordon to the Sudan, guaranteed the safety of Suakin, and, finally, sent a large British force to conduct a limited campaign in the Eastern Sudan

The whole episode affords a good illustration of the confusion that may arise from the clash of political and military objectives. So anxious was the home Government to be quit of the Sudan at the earliest possible moment that the powers of her military commanders in the field were limited to an extraordinary degree General Graham, for instance, after the capture of Tokar, had to telegraph to the Marquis of Hartington for permission to evacuate 700 men, women, and children of Egyptian origin who did not want to be left behind to the tender mercies of the Arabs.

Osman Digna was therefore given time in which to collect a force that harried Suakin and the neighbourhood for nearly a decade. He speedily took advantage of the failure to follow up the victories of El Teb and Tamai and dispatched four guns to assist the rebels besieging Berber. Mohammed el Zein Hasan, of the Jaali tribe and a member of the Gadria tariqa, was closely investing this important town. Ali Gulhawwi, of whom mention has been made above, was ordered to attack Gemmeiza, where there was a small Government post. The sanjak in command managed to escape and the Dervishes captured the place. But so great were their losses in doing so that they were compelled to fall back on Berber, which capitulated towards the end of May. Later that same year Mahmud Bey Ali of the Fadlab, who was at Trinkitat with a few police, was driven out to Khor Tar-roii, where he was again attacked and retired to Suakin.

The year 1884 had been one of varying fortune for Osman Digna. Heavily defeated in the spring at El Teb and Tamai, he had had to encounter in the summer much opposition from the neighbouring tribesmen. But, as the Government failed to follow up their advantages, Osman Digna was enabled to gain a few minor successes and by the end of the year was once more in command of a large force of rebels.

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CHAPTER V

Attack on Aqiq. Attitude of the friendlies. The Nile Expedition. Fall of Khartoum and death of Gordon The siege of Suakin Water supply of Suakin The 1885 campaign The second expeditionary force arrives at Suakin Attack on McNeill's zariba. The Berber–Suakin railway. Fruitless reconnaissances. Expeditionary force withdraws. Desultory fighting round Suakin. Close of the 1885 campaign.

§ 1

THE victories of Sir Gerald Graham at El Teb and Tamai in the spring of 1884 had resulted in the dispersal of nearly all of Osman Digna's fighting men. Osman Digna retired into the hills to brood upon his losses and to make efforts to gather again his wayward followers. The people began to hope that the tide of war had receded from the shores of the Red Sea. In May the rebels round Suakin became slightly more aggressive, but no fighting of any importance took place. The fall of Berber, however, on May 26th gave a new lease of life to the moribund forces of Osman Digna. On June 14th Vice-Admiral Lord John Hay reported that the numbers of his followers had risen to five or seven thousand. They were then encamped some twelve miles from Suakin, but small bodies of the enemy continued to harass the neighbourhood. The numbers of the enemy steadily increased, but the only episode was an attack on July 4th by Mohammed Musa, the nephew of Osman Digna, upon the friendly tribesmen near Aqiq.

Aqiq was a small port some seventy-five miles to the south of Suakin. There was a good harbour although of no very great importance. But it lay on the flank of Tokar and was a useful base for anyone wishing to operate against Kassala. Its retention was necessary to the Government because it closed an avenue to the Dervishes for the importation of ammunition and for the export of slaves. At the beginning of July there were some 2,000 of the Beni Amir tribe living there who could supply the Government with butter, cattle, timber, and lime. They consisted mainly of women and children, as the able-bodied men were tending their flocks and herds in the

hills. The 500 Hadendoa whom Mohammed Musa collected had no difficulty in defeating the few men who could try and protect their women-folk, with the result that they carried off many of the women and children, killed ten of the defenders, and seized their jewellery and cattle. The Beni Amir were infuriated, and the remnants of the colony were compelled to take refuge on the island of Bahdur, two miles out to sea. Here they were visited once a month by a Government steamer, which supplied them with water and other necessaries.

Three nights later there was some brisk firing once more upon Suakin, and though these night-attacks continued for several months the forces of Osman Digna began to dwindle away as the heat of summer increased and the time for sowing the crops at Tokar and elsewhere drew near. By the end of July the Amarar felt themselves strong enough to attack those that remained. They approached the Government and asked for troops to participate in the foray. Instructions, however, had been issued to the effect that no operations were to be undertaken at any distance from Suakin. Rifles and ammunition were, on the other hand, given to them against the receipt of five sheikhs as hostages, who were to be detained until the arms were called in again if desired. Osman Digna, who had been told not to attack a fortified position but to try and win over the friendlies by kindness, had achieved some success amongst the southern sections of the Amarar, but the northern Amarar still remained loyal, and on July 27th (under the command of Sheikh Beshir Kurub and Ali Hamid) attacked Mohammed Adam Saadun and captured some men, women, and cattle.

The friendlies were now based upon the harbour of Sheikh Barghut, where they could be easily supplied with food and ammunition. They continued to harass the rebels, and on September 11th engaged them again, losing 14 killed in exchange for 20 killed of the Hadendoa. A little later they were more successful near Sheikh Barghut, killing 2 chiefs and 129 others, with a loss of 3 police and 41 of their own people.

Kurub Hamid, who had undertaken to take Disibil (Esibil) and Handub in order to keep part of the Berber road open continued loyal, but received no active assistance from the Government On September 27th Osman Digna once more appeared at Tamai and the number of his followers increased. Three weeks later the Amarar, thinking themselves abandoned by the Government, came to terms with him; the Rashaidar

and Habab also went over to him and the port of Massaua was in consequence threatened.

In November came news of the Nile expedition, and the tribes once more began to reconsider their position Osman Digna and Sheikh Tahir were rumoured to have been summoned to Omdurman to help repel the invader, and the tribesmen went to him and said that if Osman Digna or the holy sheikh went to Omdurman they would all make terms with the Government. The Amarar, as a matter of fact, did desert Osman Digna and made submission to the authorities.

Although the Mahdi may have wished for Osman Digna to join him in defence of his capital, he was fully alive to the importance of the Berber to Suakin route. He was anxious that no troops should come this way, whether they were the disorganized forces of the friendlies or the more disciplined troops of the Government Threats must therefore be made against Suakin in order to immobilize the garrison and prevent any reinforcements coming over to join the Nile expedition

Suakin thus in the Dervish eyes assumed a strategic importance that had already been fully appreciated by the Government. But beyond sending four guns to Mohammed Ragaa at Berber to fire upon Gordon's steamers when they approached Osman Digna did nothing to oppose the advance of the Nile column. In spite of his numerous successes he realized full well that the people of the Eastern Sudan were kept under control only by force, and any decrease in the strength of his army would at once react upon the tribesmen generally. He therefore made strenuous efforts to augment the number of his followers, with the result that all the attempts that had been made throughout the past year by the Government to win the tribesmen over came to naught. The rebels collected once more and recommenced their night attacks upon Suakin. On December 8th a strong demonstration was made against the town, but mines laid along the main approaches to the entrenched camp proved successful in putting an end to these nightly assaults.

On Christmas Eve the rebels captured the port of Rawaya, where the Government salt mines were situated, and the inhabitants fled to an island five miles out to sea. Here they were unsuccessfully attacked by the Dervishes. The Government also received another severe set-back in the deaths of Ali Bey Bakhit and Ali Shogali, the chiefs of the Beni Amir and Halanga. Both of these tribes had rendered valuable service in the defence of Kassala and by their presence on the

flank of the Kassala to Aqiq road had prevented the Dervishes from making a concentrated attack on the harbour of Aqiq. The loss of these chieftains deprived the tribesmen of their most able leaders and as a fighting force their value almost ceased to exist.

§ 2

On November 4, 1884, Gordon dispatched from Khartoum a letter which came into Wolseley's hands thirteen days later at Wadi Halfa. In this he said that he could hold out for forty days with ease and after that with difficulty. On December 30th a letter that Gordon had sent off on the 14th was received at Merowe In this he said, "We want you to come quickly," but at the same time qualified his request for help by advising the English commander-in-chief not to leave a hostile Berber in his rear.

On the receipt of the first of these two letters, which clearly showed that Khartoum was in dire straits, the home Government suggested the possibility of creating a diversion in the Eastern Sudan. Lord Wolseley favoured this proposal provided the concentration of a sufficient body of troops to force a decisive action could be effected within sixty days This was, however, doubtful, and Lord Wolseley was averse to employing a British force whose numbers might prove too small to crush the enemy. A failure in the eastern desert would prejudice his chances of relieving Gordon, while a success, in order to have any real effect upon the Nile campaign, must be obtained with the minimum loss of time. On the other hand, he did not wish to leave the campaign in the hands of the Bashi-bazouks, whose defeat might cause him considerable damage and loss of prestige, and whose victory might lead to the committal of excesses If it was undesirable for a band of freebooters who bore so cruel and ruffianly a reputation to serve under the British flag it was equally impossible to give them an independent command. Lord Wolseley proposed the dispatch of a force of 3,000 British troops, of whom 2,000 were to be specially picked, with a view to settling disorder on the eastern coast Two thousand strong, thick, white umbrellas were to be sent for the use of the expeditionary force. "I have always," he said in his dispatch, "contemplated the possibility of sending all mounted troops back by Berber and Suakin, to open the road and crush Osman Digna. There can be no tranquillity in the Sudan as long as he remains

defiant. Of course I may not eventually be able to do that."

This advice of Gordon's that Berber should first be captured delayed the advance of Lord Wolseley's force, which had been expected by its commander to reach Khartoum by December 7th. Possibly owing to the sanguine nature of Gordon's messages Lord Wolseley failed to realize the seriousness of the situation in which Khartoum was placed. It could hold out, as Gordon himself had said, up to December 14th with ease, then for a period of time further, although with difficulty. As a matter of fact, the relief force never reached Khartoum until forty-three days after the danger-point had been passed. From the military point of view it may have been bad tactics to leave an enemy so near the lines of communication as a hostile force based on Berber would have been. But, as events were to show, every day was of supreme importance, and the time that had been wasted by the tardy decision to furnish a relief force was still further squandered by a determination to proceed methodically and with all due military precautions, instead of making a bold dash for Khartoum in defiance of tactical or strategic considerations. It was the moral effect of only a few redcoats in Khartoum for which Gordon asked, not for a large military force. Gordon himself knew only too well the honour in which the Englishman was held and the fear with which he was regarded at that time. When the Mahdi had completed the conquest of Kordofan and captured El Obeid, after he had routed Hicks' force, he delayed his attack upon Khartoum for many months, largely on account of the prestige that attached to Gordon's name. At the same time, although the expedition arrived too late to save Gordon, it is impossible to say by how many days it was too late. It is most probable that for several days before the actual capture of Khartoum the Dervishes had had the place at their mercy. It was only the approach of the British troops that drove them to obtain at the spear's point the victims whom hunger would in any case have soon delivered into their hands.

Sir Evelyn Baring supported, and probably originated, the suggestion that a demonstration should be made at Suakin in order to prevent Osman Digna sending reinforcements to the relief of Berber. But the home Government did not approve of a mere demonstration and proposed that a force should be dispatched that could deal once and for all with Osman Digna. Lord Wolseley, however, objected to such an expedition, which he thought would be too expensive and would prove an

unnecessary waste of money. He still felt confident of his ability to relieve Khartoum and to crush Osman Digna on his return. On the other hand, he welcomed the proposal for a naval demonstration and advocated the frequent exercise on shore of the Marines in red coats in order to create an impression that an attack was pending. For political reasons it was decided to send a fleet to Suakin, but the elaborate preparations recommended by the Cabinet, which were to include the dispatch of a large military force and the construction of a railway, were opposed by Lord Wolseley. In a communication from Korti on January 8, 1885, he wrote: "I have from the first endeavoured to impress upon the Government that I am strong enough to relieve Khartoum, and believe in being able to send a force when returning, by way of Berber to Suakin, to open the road and crush Osman Digna."

The proposal to dispatch a large force to Suakin was dropped for the time being, although, on January 18th, the Secretary of State for War decided to send some reinforcements to Suakin.

On January 26th, 1885, Khartoum fell before the Dervish onslaught and Gordon was killed. The expedition under Sir C. Wilson that reached within sight of Khartoum two days later was withdrawn and the whole world rang with the news of the tragic and heroic death of General Gordon. Never was a famous man so sincerely mourned; never was public opinion so deeply stirred; never before did so great a wave of indignation sweep the country.

It is no part of the present work to allot the blame for the failure to relieve Gordon. Perhaps the reliance that Gordon placed in Divine aid to rescue him induced him to write in too hopeful a strain, so that the optimism which helped him to hold Khartoum thus assisted to a certain degree in its downfall. Lord Wolseley was confident to the very end in his ability to rescue Gordon. But, whatever the contributory causes, the main blame was placed by almost every thinking man and woman, rightly or wrongly, upon the Radical Government. Before the rising storm of public fury the Gladstone Government cowered. As it had erred on the side of dilatoriness in the dispatch of the relief expedition so it hastened now, in accordance with its original proposals, with ill-considered and untimely rapidity, to try and cover its mistake. British prestige had undoubtedly suffered by the failure to rescue Gordon, the French Anglophobe press was only too ready to find any whip with which to scourge the British policy in

Egypt; the opinion in which the Radical Cabinet was held was universally hostile. Something had to be done to restore the one and rehabilitate the other. The Mahdi was out of reach, but there was another name on the lips of the British public—Osman Digna. He must be crushed in order to counterbalance the success of the Mahdi, who would thus meet with a vicarious punishment.

It might have been thought that the failure to accomplish this object the previous year, in spite of two overwhelming victories, would have damped the ardour of the home Government. Possibly the facility with which the thousands of Dervishes had been slaughtered at El Teb and Tamai had blinded the Government's eyes to the difficulties that lay beyond.

At any rate, it was decided to dispatch a large force to the Eastern Sudan to crush Osman Digna—a pointless and costly act of vengeance with no political or other advantage to be gained in any way comparable with the cost, either in men and money, that it must inevitably involve.

Little wonder that with the capture of Khartoum the last scruple was removed and that the Eastern Sudan went over almost as one man to the Mahdi's cause and its mouthpiece in those districts, Osman Digna.

Politically, too, the whole situation had changed: the instructions that Lord Wolseley had received from Her Majesty's Government dated October 9, 1884, were to the effect that the primary object of the expedition up the Nile was to bring away General Gordon and Colonel Stewart from Khartoum. "When that object has been secured no further offensive operations of any kind are to be undertaken Although you are not precluded from advancing as far as Khartoum, should you consider such a step essential to secure the safe retreat of General Gordon and Colonel Stewart, you will bear in mind that Her Majesty's Government is desirous to limit the sphere of your military operations as much as possible. They rely on you not to advance farther southwards than is absolutely necessary in order to obtain the primary object of the expedition."

Nothing was said in the instructions given to Lord Wolseley as to the policy to be adopted in the event of his failure to relieve Khartoum. Thus was a large British force, many thousand miles from England, placed in the Gilbertian situation of being in a hostile country with no orders of any sort to follow. The episode is typical of the manner in which the

question of the Sudan was mismanaged by Her Majesty's ministers At the beginning they under-estimated the strength of the Mahdi and the spirit that inspired his followers; later they over-estimated the power of endurance of the Khartoum garrison. Possibly they were unable to read between the lines of Gordon's cheery dispatches, which were written in a sanguine vein in case they fell into the hands of the enemy. It is not my purpose to go over this well-trodden yet prickly path once more; for the purpose of the present book the death of Gordon meant that the centre of interest was transferred from the Mahdi and Khartoum to Osman Digna and Suakin.

On hearing that his mission had failed of its object Lord Wolseley telegraphed to England for instructions and was informed that his duty was to protect the province of Dongola, which still remained in the hands of the Egyptians, and that, after the hot weather, England intended "to destroy the Mahdi's power at Khartoum in order that peace, order, and a settled Government might be established there." Thus when it was too late it was decided to carry out the policy that Gordon had recommended long before and "smash the Mahdi."

In the same dispatch Lord Wolseley urged the crushing of Osman Digna before the summer came in order that his defeat might act as some sort of a counterpoise to the Mahdi's success. This was to be followed by the making of a 4.8½ gauge railway from Suakin to Berber and the occupation of the Sinkat and Tokar districts. The military control of the Hadendoa country would afford a healthy station in which the horses and camels of the mounted troops could graze during the summer. This railway was originally intended to convey men and stores to Berber in co-operation with a force marching up the Nile The scheme was altered later (as practically all questions dealt with by the Government of this time) to the construction of a narrow-gauge railway in order to impress the people of the country with Great Britain's irrevocable decision to reconquer the Sudan. It was to be a political instead of a military railway.

On February 8th Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Lord Hartington: "The sooner you can now deal with Osman Digna the better. I should recommend a brigade of Indian infantry and one regiment of Punjaub cavalry to be sent to Suakin as soon as possible to hold that place during the summer and co-operate with me in keeping the road to Berber

open ; the English troops you send to Suakin might then either go to the mountains and remain there for the summer or to Egypt for the autumn campaign."

A dispatch was at once sent to General Stephenson in Cairo ordering camels for the Suakin expedition, which was at once approved by the home Government.

It is only necessary to add that although Her Majesty's ministers had decided in February to hold Dongola they determined in April to withdraw entirely from the northern Sudan, a policy which was, as a matter of fact, adhered to.

In the meantime a definite start had been made with the operations that were to be undertaken against Osman Digna. On February 17, 1885, a contract had been made by the Government with Messrs. Lucas & Aird for the construction of a broad-gauge railway from Suakin to Berber. Three days later the command of the Suakin Field Force was given to General Sir Gerald Graham by the Secretary of State for War. He was instructed to " make the best arrangements to secure the first and most pressing objects of the campaign on which he was about to enter—viz. the destruction of the power of Osman Digna." These orders were never countermanded, although on February 21st the capture of Berber was definitely postponed and the river column recalled.

The force recommended by Lord Wolseley for this purpose included four battalions of infantry, three squadrons of cavalry, four guns from the Horse Artillery battery in Cairo in addition to the troops already stationed at Suakin, which consisted of 109 officers, 2,526 non-commissioned officers and men, as well as details.

Besides the British troops an Indian brigade of 3,000 men, complete with all equipment, supplies for three months, and regimental transport, was dispatched in order to hold Suakin through the summer. This force included the 15th Sikhs, 9th Bengal Cavalry, 17th Bengal Cavalry, 28th Bombay Infantry, one company of Madras Sappers, which set sail in the order named between February 22nd and March 2nd.

The assembly, however, of the actual fighting force represented but a small part of the labour that had to be expended and the details of organization that had to be thrashed out. From the barren and inhospitable country-side round Suakin nothing but a few slaughter animals could be collected. The British force asked the Indian Government to supply them

with camels, muleteers, labourers, dhooley bearers, bhistis, etc., etc. There was also little or no drinking water at Suakin, so four ships were fitted with condensers able to furnish 30,000 gallons of water daily. Later five more ships were similarly employed and an average supply of some 75,000 gallons was produced every day. But the supply of the water was a far simpler problem to tackle than its distribution. Regimental carts conveyed water to the troops, while two supply depots, in which were placed a number of 400-gallon tanks, were established for the use of the men at the base of the railway. For those encamped at or near railhead two high water-towers were erected in order that the water might be carried by gravitation to a large reserve tank containing 100,000 gallons, which was built near the Quarry Junction.

So much for the garrison in the immediate neighbourhood of Suakin; but, as advanced zaribas were formed, still more elaborate arrangements had to be carried out. First of all, 400-gallon tanks, 56-gallon barrels, india-rubber cisterns, and canvas tanks were conveyed to the zaribas and then sunk in the ground. To these water was brought by camels in tins, barrels, skins, or india-rubber bags, which all had to be filled from troughs into which the water was supplied from the storage tanks near the harbour. Thanks to the searchlights of H.M.S. " Dolphin " the work of filling these various utensils could be carried on continuously night and day.

Besides the men, however, there were some 10,000 animals that also had to be looked after, and for this purpose forty well-sinkers were employed in the various khors; new wells were opened, old ones cleaned and repaired, and, although pumps were employed, the water was for the most part drawn in the native fashion by dilwas, or skins, at the end of a rope. The water thus obtained was poured into troughs, which for watering horses were made of masonry with a concrete bottom and were some 50 feet long, 3 feet broad, and 18 inches deep. Even food and fodder and, for Suakin itself, wood had to be obtained from abroad; meat from Odessa, forage from England, Egypt, and India; wood from Cyprus, India, and Egypt. Some idea of the quantities required may be gauged from the fact that 18,400 Europeans and natives, 3,550 horses, mules, and ponies, and 7,000 camels had to be dealt with. Even a balloon detachment was added to the Field Force, though the prevailing high winds rendered the balloon of little value

Sir G. Graham arrived at Suakin on March 12, 1885, and took

over the command from General Lyon-Fremantle. The camp of the Suakin expeditionary force was now of so extended a character that the enemy could snipe it with impunity. A harassing fire night after night not only caused several casualties but prevented the troops from getting a much-needed rest. From March 7th to 15th the attacks were continuous, and General Graham determined to reorganize his defences on a smaller perimeter.

The Suakin Field Force now consisted of 500 officers, 12,522 non-commissioned officers and men, and numberless followers, while Osman Digna was in command of about 10,000 men, of whom 1,000 were at Hashin and 7,000 at Tamai, where his own head-quarters were. A small force was also defending Tokar.

Instructions were issued by the Secretary of State for War to General Graham ordering him to make such arrangements as possible before the hot weather set in to "secure the first and most pressing object of the campaign, viz. the destruction of the power of Osman Digna."

Osman Digna was to be attacked wherever his position could be located in order that the railway might be pushed through to Berber. The Hadendoa country was to be occupied, and suitable posts for garrisons were to be found for the British troops in the mountains, and for the native troops elsewhere. Tambuk wells and Ariab were to be occupied to facilitate the progress of the railway, which had been commenced on the 16th. But if Lord Wolseley had not succeeded in capturing Berber by the summer General Graham was advised that it would not be practicable in all probability to carry the railway beyond Ariab.

There were thus two distinct phases in the 1885 campaign: first, and most important, the destruction of Osman Digna's organized forces; and second, the dispersal of any guerilla bands that might be likely to interfere with the building of the railway and the establishment of posts along it.

The fall of Khartoum, however, not only released a large force flushed with victory for service elsewhere in the Sudan but gave an enormous impetus to the Mahdist movement. Anyone who had previously entertained any doubts as to the divinity of the Mahdi's mission can hardly have failed to be convinced by the capture of Khartoum and the death of its almost mythical defender. Nor if he still had any lurking uncertainty could he have given expression to it. Thousands of Dervishes once more collected under the banner of

Osman Digna, who announced his intention of sacking Suakin. On February 2nd a cavalry reconnaissance under General Fremantle had found the enemy in large numbers near Hashin and had shelled the enemy's camp. A reconnoitring patrol in the direction of Handub on the next day had been cut off and lost a number of men killed, and, on February 4th, Sir E. Baring telegraphed that all the reports received in Cairo from Suakin went to show that Osman Digna's power was very great.

Reinforcements were brought, and by the beginning of March many British and Indian troops had once more been assembled at Suakin. Osman Digna was again prepared to take the field, but, in spite of his bombastic utterances, he had much too shrewd an opinion of the British troops to wish to engage them in open fight. He accordingly confined his activities to harassing the garrison either by a dropping fire at night or by sending men singly or in small groups between the lines to kill any of the troops they could manage to cut out.

Owing to the confined space behind the walls of Suakin the main camps of the British and Indian contingents were situated outside the walled ceinture and protected by the various forts beyond. The north flank of the encampment stretched from the ordnance store to the west redoubt; the western flank extended from this redoubt to the Shata Fort, while on the south the defences were continued to the sea and entrusted to Indian troops. Behind the west redoubt were the Coldstreams, Scots Guards, and Grenadiers, and in rear of them were the Berkshires. To the left of the Guards brigade was a gap, and then came the camps of the Shropshire and East Surrey Regiment. Behind these camps were those of the Army Hospital Corps, Royal Horse Artillery, Marines, Hussars, and head-quarters.

Between the gaps the Dervishes crawled night after night, and although there was plenty of thick scrub right up to the lines no attempt was made by the besieged to utilize the thorn for a zariba. The rebels covered their bodies with grease and were able to make use of every little bush or tussock of grass, every little gully or fold in the ground. Sinuous as snakes, and even more deadly, they were invisible in the darkness, and only kept in touch with one another by imitating the plaintive cries of the desert birds. The first intimation of the presence of these marauding assassins would be the piercing shrieks of some unfortunate soldier awakened from his sleep to meet his doom. A rattle of musketry followed, disturbing the occupants of all the neighbouring tents. One particularly daring assault was made by a standard-bearer of Osman Digna named

Abdu el Asad (Abdu the Lion) upon the Ordnance stores, which were isolated from the rest of the encampment and protected by a small guard of the Berkshire Regiment. Abdu had formerly been a porter at Suakin, where he had learnt a few words of English. When challenged by the sentries he answered " Friend " and thus gained time for his fifty followers to rush the tent where the fifteen men who made up the guard were quartered. Although outnumbered by three or four to one, and suddenly awakened to find that a horde of Dervishes was upon them and had butchered the sentries, the remainder behaved with such coolness and intrepidity that they succeeded in killing the leader and many of his men. Osman Digna was so much upset at the loss of Abdu that he promised large sums of money for the recovery of the body, and even offered to cease his nightly sniping.

But if there was little peace by night the days were almost as trying. The weather at Suakin in March is usually sultry and enervating; the air is often filled with clouds of burning sand, and this caked into a plaster upon the perspiring faces of the heat-sodden troops. There were no comforts in the camp; flies swarmed everywhere, while the stench of dead camels—in death hardly less evil-smelling a creature than in life—poisoned the whole atmosphere. The gradual fouling of the ground caused much sickness. Day after day trenches were dug only for the Dervishes to fill them in by night. A thirsty, sand-parched, weary day was followed by a restless and only too often a death-haunted night.

At this time the Dervishes were concentrated along the line Handub—Hashin—Tamai, the main army being at the last place. As the force at Hashin threatened any advance on Tamai, which was General Graham's main objective, he decided to make a reconnaissance towards Hashin. This he did on March 19th, and returned to Suakin with the loss of one killed and two wounded. The following day he advanced against Hashin with a force of 306 officers and 7,886 men, 317 followers, and 10 guns. The dense, thorny scrub rendered manœuvring difficult, but the troops were successful in dispersing the hostile force, estimated at about 3,000, with a loss of 1 officer and 8 non-commissioned officers and men killed, and 3 officers and 36 non-commissioned officers and men wounded. The East Surrey Regiment was left behind with some Royal Engineers and Madras sappers and miners at Hashin to hold the redoubt.

From this time the nightly sniping of the troops ceased,

and, with the occupation of Hashin, the way was clear for an attack on Osman Digna's main force at Tamai. In preparation for this, however, it was necessary to make an advanced depot in the desert in order to overcome the difficulties of transport and arrange for supplies and water. On March 22nd Sir J McNeill was ordered to march out eight miles from Suakin and make three zaribas, one capable of containing 2,000 camels, with two flanking zaribas each to hold one battalion. The Berkshire Regiment, Marine battalion, four Gardner guns with the Naval detachment, and a company of the Royal Engineers were to remain here. The Indian Brigade was to make an intermediate zariba half-way to Suakin and leave one battalion to protect it. Instead of following the old and comparatively open road to Tamai a new route was taken which led through dense bush Owing to the thickness of the scrub and the fact that the baggage animals were badly loaded, many halts were necessary, and the rate of progress fell to one and a half miles an hour in the thorny scrub and stony watercourses. It was therefore found impossible to reach the eight-mile depot, and it was decided, with the approval of Sir G. Graham, not to advance more than six miles. The force was halted at Tofrik and commenced to make the zaribas in accordance with the instructions issued. At 2.50 in the afternoon, before the zaribas were completed, the Dervishes attacked that held by the 17th Bengal Native Infantry. These had been rendered disorderly owing to the 5th Lancers riding through two companies on their right, and, as a result, the six companies broke and allowed the Dervishes to capture their zariba. The steadiness of the rest of the troops saved the day, and, after a short but desperate fight, the enemy was beaten off. In fact, the battle lasted only twenty minutes; yet, in that brief space of time, the Dervishes lost no less than 1,500 killed out of a force that numbered about three times that amount.

Just before two o'clock Major Graves, of the 20th Hussars, had left with his squadron for Suakin. After proceeding about two miles he met with a squadron of the 9th Bengal Cavalry on the way to relieve him. On hearing heavy firing at Tofrik, known in days to come as " McNeill's Zariba," he turned back, and was in time to save the lives of many refugees, composed of some native infantry, a few British soldiers, and a number of camel drivers. These were being cut down by the Dervishes, who were driven off by Major Graves and his two squadrons after a determined little engagement.

The total losses of the Imperial troops amounted to 8 British officers killed and 5 wounded, 2 native officers killed, and 58 British non-commissioned officers and men killed, 14 missing, and 60 wounded; the Indian Brigade lost 49 non-commissioned officers and men killed, 10 missing, and 90 wounded, while 33 of the camp-followers were killed, 124 were reported missing, and 19 wounded. These casualties are a striking commentary on the desperate savagery of the fighting, the killed and missing (practically all of whom were killed) outnumbering the wounded by 298 to 174. At the same time the engagement, though successful, was an unfortunate one. The action had taken place when the Dervishes had chosen their opportunity. They met only a comparatively small force of the Government troops instead of the army that Sir G. Graham had waiting in Suakin. But the Dervishes were so amazed at the terrible havoc wrought by the steady fire of the troops and the dreaded rattling of the machine-guns, and their losses were so heavy, that they dispersed and would not face another battle against the British.

One episode of the battle is still recounted with amusement by the Dervishes. They had spent the day at Sal-hat, and, after capturing the zariba defended by the Indian troops, they proceeded to assault the next one. Here they met with a withering fire from the machine-guns, which killed friend and foe alike. Those of the Dervishes who survived were compelled to run for their lives. Amongst them was a young man of twenty-five years of age named Feki Medani, who belonged to the Digna family. He saw a man lying full length behind a little bush in the vain hope that it would prove some sort of shelter from the hail of bullets. Feki Medani took cover behind him and tried to find some temporary protection in the other's body. The ground spat up in anger beneath the storm of machine-gun bullets and Feki Medani was in despair. "Why do the Inglizi," he said, "shoot at me and me only? What have I done to draw down their wrath upon me? They must be mad to expend so much energy and so many bullets upon me who am but a dog" He began to recite the prayer for the dead and the dying, "*La Allah ill' Allah; Mohammed rasul Allah*" ("There is no God but God; Mohammed is the prophet of God"). The other then replied, "They do not shoot at us alone, the bullets are everywhere; the whole world is in a blaze."

The Dervishes were so much impressed by the reception they received from the English when they had looked to win

an easy victory that they made up a little song which was frequently to be heard in their camp, and is still sung to-day:

E miskīna angūda [1]
O māk Ba-hamoisei
Willat Inglīz eiya,
W' ard ombīb hawāsta.

(The Egyptians are a miserable race,
In war they make no effort to retaliate.
An angry Englishman came
And in the morning the very earth played.)

The Dervishes, who had not been present at El Teb, had all looked forward to the first fight in which they were to face the English. They had been told so often that the latter were pagans and heretics who would fade away and wilt before the blast of the chosen people that the result of the battle of Tofrik came to them as a bitter disillusion This engagement was the last really serious opposition that was encountered in the Eastern Sudan, although further fighting was to take place.

The noise of these battles forty years ago still re-echoes down the ages. The bravery of the British soldier is still the theme of songs, and is commemorated among a people who do not know what fear is, but appreciate fearlessness in others.

A letter had been received from Osman Digna on March 8th, warning the troops against leaving the comparative security of Suakin. In this he recalled the capture of Sinkat, Tokar, and Khartoum, the defeat of Hicks and Baker, the withdrawal of Lord Wolseley. After the battle of Tofrik a reply was left to this message at Hashin

The zariba was completed and the troops kept a sharp look out all night, but no attack developed.

§ 3

As far as Suakin is concerned the history of the remaining days of the 1885 campaign can be dismissed in a few sentences.

On March 24th a small fight occurred, resulting in the loss of 1 man killed, 3 officers, 26 non-commissioned officers and men, and 5 followers wounded. Two days later a convoy was attacked just outside Suakin, the Dervishes being beaten

[1] A vulgar term of abuse for the Egyptians.

off with the loss of about 100 killed while the British casualties only amounted to 3 men wounded.

On March 29th a contingent arrived from New South Wales, consisting of 28 officers, 500 men, 33 men of the Ambulance Corps and 30 artillerymen, under the command of Colonel Richardson

On April 2nd Sir G. Graham decided once more to try and capture the elusive Osman Digna. He bivouacked at McNeill's zariba and left at 10.15 a.m. with a total force of 8,175 of all ranks. The night was spent in zariba at Tosellah, and next day at 8 a.m. the troops set out for Tamai, 6,300 strong. Tamai was occupied without opposition at 9 o'clock, the enemy having all withdrawn to the hills in an attempt to get the British to pursue them into the broken ground there. General Graham destroyed most of the enemy's stores and ammunition at Tamineb, burnt Osman Digna's village, and, after suffering a few casualties from snipers, withdrew owing to lack of water.

Between April 11th and 20th various reconnaissances were made to Hashin, Otaw, Debereit, and Tambuk, some sheep and goats as well as a few prisoners being captured.

In retaliation Osman Digna cut the telegraph line and destroyed any parts of the railway that he could reach. He also raided the camp of General Graham night after night and inflicted a few casualties upon him, but so spasmodic were his efforts that Graham was able to report that the tribesmen were deserting him and that determined action could bring him to account.

Although no such striking results had been gained as had marked the previous year, the Dervishes for the time being had been thoroughly beaten and driven back to the hills, so that Suakin was in no immediate fear of attack. Sir G. Graham could therefore proceed with the second part of the programme and continue the building of the railway towards Berber.

Overtures were accordingly made to the neighbouring tribes in order to try and win the co-operation of the natives near Suakin and the tribesmen living along the route of the proposed railway. Osman Digna's hold upon the inhabitants of the Red Sea hills had never been anything but slight and impermanent. It was strengthened by his successes at Sinkat and elsewhere, but it was not strong enough to stand the strain of an unprofitable campaign which involved the hardy, yet easygoing, Arab in a prolonged and unpleasant discipline. His

forces had scattered to the hills and were unwilling to come down into the sweltering plains of Suakin until the summer had come and gone. There was a reasonable prospect of every one being safe from Osman Digna and his hordes, at any rate for some months.

The people were heartily sick of Osman Digna's domination; few, if any, had profited from it; almost all had suffered from it. Trade was ruined, and even the casual goat or unsophisticated sheep of a lone herdsman was exposed at all times to an unexpected razzia by one of the followers of Osman Digna. The natives were ready to join forces with the British provided that they had a definite guarantee that the Government would not abandon Suakin and leave them later to the savage vengeance of Osman Digna. General Graham telegraphed on April 12th to the Secretary of State for War asking whether he could give this assurance. Three days later Lord Wolseley was informed that the construction of the railway for any considerable distance was to be suspended pending further consideration. Suakin was to be held for the present, but Graham was to be instructed not to enter into any engagements with the tribes inconsistent with the policy of the home Government.

The work on the railway was continued, and by the end of the month the line had reached as far as Otaw, four and a half miles beyond Handub. In all a length of eighteen and three-quarter miles had been laid at a cost of £850,000.

But though the Dervish forces had been periodically dispersed they had been quick to collect again. Mohammed Adam Saadun, one of Osman Digna's chief leaders, had managed to reorganize a large body of rebels. These had taken but a small part in the battle of Hashin and had not been engaged at all at McNeill's zariba. On May 6th Graham attacked this force at T'Hakul, in the Wadi Abent, and defeated it with little difficulty. The enemy lost about 100 killed as well as 10 prisoners and 3 standards, while over 2,000 sheep and goats fell into the hands of the friendlies. The British casualties only amounted to one officer and two non-commissioned officers wounded.

The defeat of the last organized army of the Dervishes near Suakin brought the fortunes of Osman Digna to the lowest ebb. His followers not only deserted him but many made alliances with the Government. The rebellion in the Eastern Sudan was on the point of fizzling out and might possibly have been put down altogether had the recent

successes been followed up. But the home Government was still unwilling to embark upon any offensive operations of which the end could not definitely be seen. Lord Wolseley went to Suakin to report on the situation, and on May 4th he telegraphed to the Marquis of Hartington advising the withdrawal of the garrison. If the Suakin–Berber expedition was to be abandoned the railway line already laid should be taken up, as its retention would involve unnecessary waste of life. The home Government sanctioned the cutting down of the garrison, but wished to preserve the railway line to use on a future occasion. Lord Wolseley replied that military operations without a clearly defined Sudan policy were a mischievous squandering of men and money.

It was decided to evacuate Suakin, and the British and Australian troops began to depart.

The second expeditionary force to Suakin was then withdrawn. Troops of the finest quality, both black and white, had been collected. An expenditure of over three and a quarter million pounds had been incurred, but the results were almost entirely negative.[1] A few minor successes had been gained, many of the enemy had been killed, but Osman Digna was still at liberty. It is true that Suakin was safe for the time being and that no invasion of Egypt by way of the eastern desert routes could be made so long as many of the tribesmen remained loyal to the Government, but there had been no spectacular victories like those which had distinguished the previous year, even though the Dervishes had been routed at Tofrik. The Suakin–Berber route had not been opened, the proposed railway had not been built, Osman Digna had not been crushed. No wonder that the wily Arab boasted to the Mahdi that he had once more driven the English out of the country!

The departure of the Scots was particularly regretted by the inhabitants of Suakin, who had been much attracted by the picturesqueness of their garb and the regimental mascot of a dog that attended them on parade. The kilts especially appealed to the imagination of the Suakinee, and (tell it not in Gath!) the lavish generosity of the wearer. The humane attitude of the troops generally in abstaining from killing the wounded also made a profound impression upon a populace who had become inured to the most brutal form of merciless warfare.

In May, 1885, General Hudson took over the command of Suakin from General Graham. The troops left behind were

[1] Royle, 437

reduced to a battalion of the Shropshire Regiment quartered on Graham's Point, 2,405 Indians, and some 2,500 Egyptians of the newly organized army, who formed part of the regular army and served with distinction during the next few months.

The siege of Suakin continued in a desultory fashion, but, apart from this, no events of any importance took place in the Eastern Sudan. Osman Digna had gone to Tamai, after posting a few troops at Hashin. But though there was a little spasmodic skirmishing the warfare was irritating rather than severe; and the gradually extending rows of crosses in the little cemetery by the lagoons testified to the trying conditions of the heat and the ravages of disease rather than to wounds received in action.

Towards the end of the year Osman Digna withdrew to Kassala, having gained the whole of the Eastern Sudan, with the exception of Suakin.

Thus closed the 1885 campaign. General Gordon had won his martyr's crown in Khartoum; Lord Wolseley's army, after heroic exertions, had retreated from within sight of the fallen city; many gallant officers and men had laid down their lives. In the East, Osman Digna had again been defeated, but at what a cost and with how little to show for all the vast expenditure of energy, money, and men! Osman Digna had not been humbled, as the events of the next few months were to show, and millions of pounds had been poured into the salty sands of Suakin Wooden piers were mouldering in their places, rusting boilers and railway lines cumbered the ground

Osman Digna had seen vast preparations made to bring about his downfall. Men had come from the uttermost parts of the earth and they had gone away licking their wounds. His own followers had been beaten and bruised, but they had not been crushed Strange sights had the Sudan seen that historic year. Voyageurs and Red Indians from Canada, Punjabis, Sikhs and Bengalis from India, mule-drivers from Cythera, Kroo boys from West Africa, Somalis from the East coast, Maltese, troops from India, Australia, and the British Isles. Frenchmen, Italians, Americans, Greeks had viewed the fighting in Suakin.

It is no part of the present writer's intention to criticize the strategy of the campaign or to discuss its details except in so far as they are interwoven with the woof of Osman Digna's life. At the same time it is fair to ask if the Liberal Government was in earnest over its professed desire to crush Osman

Digna. Rails from Tilbury, beer- and beef-consuming navvies may have added a veneer of serious intention, but it is difficult to believe that it had any well-thought-out Sudan policy, except that of inaction, and even in this it was inconsistent The Egyptian empire over the Sudan was abolished. Tajourah was ceded to the French, Massaua to Italy, the province of Bogos was given to King John, Berbera and Zeyla passed to Great Britain, Harrar to the native chieftain from whom it was captured in 1887 by King Menelik , Kassala was occupied in 1897 by the Italians, only to be recovered in December of the same year by Colonel Parsons on the defeat of the Italians by Menelik. The question of ceding Suakin to Turkey was seriously considered. So far there is little to cavil at in the action of Her Britannic Majesty's Ministers, however distasteful their policy may have been to the Egyptians. Neither the financial nor military position of the latter was such as to warrant them in attempting to hold these isolated posts. The attitude of the Abyssinians was uncertain. The British Government, in view of its relations with France and the war-clouds gathering in Afghanistan, could not afford to immobilize a large body of troops in the Sudan. And yet, in spite of all this, the British Government dispatched several thousands of men to Suakin. Unless this mobilization was intended to test the machinery of war in the event of its having to be put into motion against Russia on the north-west frontier of India, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the Suakin campaign was inaugurated to capture the suffrages of the British voter at home. The Liberal Government had received a rude shock over Majuba Hill and had almost been overthrown by its failure to relieve Gordon. The Irish question, now coming into prominence, might have completed its downfall. A brilliant success against Osman Digna would have been useful in rehabilitating the Government in the eyes of the people. A Frenchman who was once asked what he thought was the outstanding characteristic of the British race replied, somewhat unexpectedly, that he thought it was " forgetfulness." Perhaps the voters would forget Majuba Hill and Gordon.

§ 4

The close of the 1885 campaign affords a suitable opportunity for reviewing the events of the last two years and the part that Osman Digna had played in them.

The Mahdi had first raised the standard of revolt in the summer of 1881, but the British Government had paid but little attention until the revolutionary movement had spread so rapidly that, by November, 1883, the question had to be seriously considered whether Egypt itself might not be in danger from the Mahdi's hordes. The Egyptian Government had then put forward certain schemes for dealing with the insurrection in the Sudan. None of these met with the approval of Her Majesty's Government, who had so unwillingly assumed responsibility for the conduct of Egyptian affairs. The finances of Egypt were in a parlous condition, her army was totally unreliable. The Sudan was regarded as a worthless possession. Her Majesty's Government came to the conclusion that neither the financial nor military resources of the Egyptians were adequate to control and administer the Sudan. Very reluctantly, therefore, it was decided that the Sudan must be abandoned.

There can be little doubt that, however regrettable such a course of action was, however distasteful to the self-respect of the Egyptian people, the decision, under the circumstances, was a right one. Unfortunately, the abandonment of the country was not to be effected so easily as had been anticipated. The Sudan was like a prickly pear. One might decide to throw it away, but still some of the prickles remained adhering to the skin. Little by little Her Majesty's Government had to modify its original cut-and-dried policy until troops from all parts of the world were sucked into the maelstrom. It is difficult, even forty years later, to see how the complications in which the British Government was subsequently involved could have been avoided, yet the mistakes that were made are sufficiently obvious. Someone once remarked that a critic was a far greater man than an author, as the critic pointed out mistakes that the author had committed While few will be found to subscribe to so iconoclastic a doctrine, whether applied to literature or politics, certain grounds for criticism offer themselves. And it is hard to avoid the conclusion that in its handling of the Sudan situation the Radical Government committed three great errors:

(1) In response to popular clamour it appointed General Gordon, against its better judgment, to rescue the garrisons in the Sudan.
(2) In dispatching an expedition to the Sudan to rescue Gordon it dispatched this expedition three months too late.

(3) It yielded once more to popular opinion and embarked on the Suakin campaign of 1885.

The two subsequent errors were both the outcome of the first. Talleyrand held the view that Public Opinion was a useful check but a dangerous guide for governments. The events of the years 1884 and 1885 in the Sudan afford a good illustration of his aphorism.

The Gladstone Government permitted itself to be inveigled into a line of action that it felt certain was wrong, and, as events were to prove, the original policy was the right one. At the same time no Government situated as was the Radical party could have afforded to allow General Gordon to have been sacrificed in the Sudan without making some attempt to save him The Gladstone Government was meeting with much opposition over its Home Rule policy; it had only recently survived the disgrace of Majuba Hill. The death of General Gordon, selfishly sacrificed by a stony-hearted Government, would have brought the Radicals to an immediate and ignominious end. Moreover, the difficulty of deciding on a definite policy was complicated by dissensions even within the Cabinet itself, where there was a small but influential Imperialist party

Whether General Gordon had, by his obstinacy (or nobility of character), contributed to his own death would have received scant consideration amid the turmoil of party politics. One can therefore sympathize with the difficulties of the Gladstonian Government without denying the evil effects of the policy that it chose to adopt.

But once Khartoum had fallen there was no excuse for the Government committing itself further in the Sudan. The Sudan had, by the force of circumstances, been abandoned; the policy of defending Egypt at its frontiers—previously agreed upon—presumably still held good. The Government was therefore called upon to deal with exactly the same problem of defence that had confronted it at the end of 1883, except that the whole question was simplified by the fall of Khartoum. Osman Digna could hardly invade Egypt by the east coast, the Mahdi could not do so by the Nile.

The 1885 campaign can scarcely be considered in any other light than one of revenge for the death of Gordon. The Mahdi was out of reach, Osman Digna was near at hand.

Even if one admits that the defeat of Osman Digna might have had some moral effect on the rest of the Sudan it is

difficult to avoid the conclusion that Osman Digna was chosen as the whipping-boy of the Mahdi.

And yet even in its revengeful desire to crush Osman Digna the Radical Government appears to have had no settled policy. On February 7th Lord Wolseley had urged the undertaking of operations against Osman Digna and the building of a railway from Suakin to Berber in order to facilitate his autumn campaign against the Mahdi. The railway could bring supplies, heavy artillery, and steamers more easily than they could be dragged along the Nile route. Yet why undertake a campaign against the Mahdi at all in the autumn of 1885 if the British Government had already guaranteed to defend Egypt from invasion? The Sudan was still just as worthless a possession as it had been towards the end of 1883. The sack of Khartoum and overrunning of the central provinces by the Mahdi's hordes can hardly have increased either its agricultural or mineral value. In the instructions issued to Lord Wolseley on October 9, 1884, it was clearly laid down that the purpose of the expedition up the Nile was to bring away General Gordon and Colonel Stewart. When that object had been achieved no further operations of any kind were to be undertaken. In fact, Lord Wolseley was not to advance farther southwards than was absolutely necessary in order to attain the primary object of the expedition.

The Suakin campaign can only, I think, be justified on one of three grounds:

(1) As a preliminary to an advance to Khartoum in the autumn.
(2) As a testing of the machinery of war in view of the possibility of a war in Afghanistan.
(3) To render an attack on Egypt by the eastern desert routes impossible.

If the home Government ever seriously contemplated the crushing of the Mahdi in Khartoum it very speedily abandoned all intention of doing so, while it is extremely doubtful if the Dervishes ever had any idea of invading Egypt by any route except that along the Nile.

The varying policies adopted in the Sudan probably reflected the indecisions of the home Government itself. Even in Gladstone's Radical Cabinet there were to be found some Imperialists who may have agreed with their Premier on questions of domestic policy while differing in their attitude

towards Foreign Affairs. The temporary predominance of one or other of these contending factions at home determined the policy that was to be pursued abroad.

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CHAPTER VI

The death of the Mahdi Relations with Abyssinia Siege of Kassala. Fighting in 1886. Battle of Kufeit Osman Digna returns to Suakin Friendlies attack Osman Digna Difficulties of Osman Digna. The Dervishes defeat the Abyssinians at the battle of Debra Sin. Defences of Suakin. Close of the 1887 campaign.

§ 1

ON June 22, 1885, the Mahdi died in Omdurman under circumstances that aroused a good deal of suspicion among a people that was always ready to attribute to the black art a death which had not been caused by spear or sword. Whether Mohammed Ahmed died of typhoid or of poison—as was suggested—his sudden demise did not lead to the trouble and unrest that might have been expected to ensue on the passing away of so notable a personage. In accordance with the example of the Prophet Mohammed he had already nominated as his successor Abdallahi el Taaishi, more commonly known as the Khalifa.

At about the same time the British troops were withdrawn from Dongola province, the boundary of Egypt being placed at Wadi Halfa. Encouraged by this withdrawal the Dervishes raided the abandoned provinces and tore up and carried off the telegraph wires, and even the railway lines themselves, in order to increase their supply of spears and daggers.

Before his death the Mahdi had seriously considered the possibility of invading Egypt, and the Khalifa, who doubtless felt it was desirable to take some action to establish his prestige, at once commenced to make arrangements for carrying out the project. He was, however, prevented for a time from doing so by a revolt in Darfur and an invasion of the Sudan by the Abyssinians. These internal difficulties were soon overcome, and, by the end of October, a force, estimated at about 7,000 men under the command of the Emirs Abd el Magid and Mohammed el Kheir, was reported to have established itself a few miles south of Ginnis. After various skirmishes the main body was attacked by Generals Grenfell and Stephenson with 5,000 British and Egyptian troops on December 29th. The Dervishes were driven back after losing Abd el Magid

and eighteen other chiefs, as well as 500 men killed and 300 wounded, while the losses of the allied troops only amounted to 7 killed and 34 wounded. The Dervishes, whose ideas of commissariat—as can readily be imagined—were exceedingly primitive, suffered severely on their return journey. Many of them were reduced to eating any miserable grasses or herbs that found a precarious footing in the desert wastes. Few retreats can have been conducted under more depressing conditions. A beaten, starving force must have found the present miserable enough while the anticipation of their reception by the disappointed Khalifa can only have added to their dejection.

§ 2

At the time of the Mahdiist rebellion the Egyptian garrisons in the East consisted of those at Sinkat, Tokar, Kassala, Gira, Senhit, Gedaref, and Gallabat, as well as one or two smaller posts in Abyssinia.

In April, 1884, the Gedaref garrison surrendered, and, as has been seen above, Sinkat and Tokar had by that time also capitulated. Two months later a mission headed by Admiral Sir W. Hewett, R.N., visited King John of Abyssinia and concluded a treaty with him, in accordance with which he was to receive Bogos and Keren in return for the evacuation of the Kassala, Amadib, and Senhit garrisons. " The Almighty King of Sion " also agreed to relieve Gira and Gallabat

Bogos was handed over to King John on September 12th and he at once began to make arrangements for the rescue of the troops in Gallabat. Towards the end of November he established touch with the besieged and inflicted a severe defeat on the Dervishes. The defenders were all evacuated safely in February, 1885. Senhit and Amadib were relieved in April and July respectively.

By this time the fortress of Kassala was in imminent danger of falling, and Colonel Chermside sent urgent messages to King John to hurry on the relief expedition. Ras Alula marched to the rescue in September, but it was then too late.

The siege of Kassala had begun in November, 1883. For many months it had been able to hold out without much difficulty owing to the assistance rendered by the Shukria tribe under the famous Abu Sin family, who were hostile to the Mahdi's cause. Their chief stronghold was at Gedaref, known as Suq Abu Sin (or the market of the Abu Sin). They

were followers of the Mirghania sect and thus bitter opponents of the Magadhib, with whom they would have nothing to do; in fact, one of their most important members, Awad el Kerim Bey Abu Sin, always remained loyal to Gordon and paid for his loyalty by dying in the "saier," the stone prison in Omdurman that saw the end of so many notable captives. Six years later they were to suffer dreadfully in the terrible year "6," when, according to Father Ohrwalder, although they slaughtered nearly all their animals to keep the flickering flame of life alight, their numbers were reduced from 40,000 persons to only a tenth of that total. But in the meantime they were a power to be reckoned with, and, almost to a man, opposed the Dervish rule.

The Mahdiist army in front of Kassala was under the command of Mustafa Hadal, an "emir of a quarter," as well as generalissimo. He had under his orders three other emirs—El Hasan wad Hashi, Bilal el Samaranduwab, and Ali Hamid.

In January, 1884, the enemy launched a big attack against the town, but though it was beaten off the defenders lost so heavily that the friendly Arabs realized that the Government was powerless to protect them and most of them went over to the Mahdi's cause The siege was then pressed more closely, and the Shukria were not able to put in any more supplies.

Day after day the wearisome siege wore on and the food began to give out. Ahmed Eiffet, the Turkish Governor, sent to Massaua for help, and when assistance from that quarter seemed unlikely, he wrote in despair to the Khalifa offering to surrender to any of his representatives other than Osman Digna. He said that he could not trust the lives of his men to so cruel a chieftain and that he had no wish to share the fate of the prisoners of Gabab.

On June 15th another assault was made upon the town, but again the Dervishes were defeated. Ahmed Effendi counter-attacked and killed 300 of the enemy and captured 1,000 head of cattle—a gastronomic success that was especially welcome to a garrison that had already eaten all the donkeys in the neighbourhood.

Towards the end of the month another attack of the Dervishes succeeded in capturing the outlying portion of Kassala called Khatmia, Sayyid el Bekri of the Mirghania being wounded in the engagement. The garrison was still more closely beleagured and the only meat left was the flesh of dogs. When even the leather thongs that bound together the chairs and the native bedsteads were consumed the garrison was

forced to capitulate, which it did on July 30th. News of the surrender was at once dispatched to Osman Digna at Tamai. After appointing his nephew Mohammed Musa to represent him, Osman Digna set out for Kassala

Confirmation of the reports of the Mahdi's death had by this time reached the Eastern Sudan. On arriving at Kassala, Osman Digna, who was the bearer of a letter from the Khalifa announcing his succession, at once collected the chiefs and their followers. Climbing to the roof of the main Government building he read the Khalifa's letter to the assembled throng. At its conclusion Osman Digna called on the multitudes to acknowledge the accession of the Khalifa, saying to them: "If you have worshipped the Mahdi, he is dead; but if you worship God He is alive and never dieth. The Khalifa Abdallahi is the successor of the Mahdi who followed him in accordance with his orders Do you acknowledge the Khalifa and will you obey his orders?"[1]

Then the people paid homage to the Khalifa and to Osman Digna as his representative.

With the capture of Kassala the Dervishes had now almost complete control over the whole of the Sudan. Sennar, it is true, held out another twenty days, and there was a strong hostile force at Suakin. But apart from these isolated posts the Dervish conquest of the Sudan was complete. The last of the British troops had left Dongola on July 5th and the Egyptian Army head-quarters had been withdrawn to Assuan. An advanced brigade under Brigadier-General Butler at Wadi Halfa, with outposts at Kosheh, was the only sign that the whole of the Sudan had not been definitely abandoned to barbarism.

In rather over three years a mob armed with sticks and spears had defeated in successive engagements an army that, at any rate, was supposed to be trained and disciplined—an army that had been officered by educated men (in some instances Europeans) and had been well supplied with all the up-to-date appliances of war. Starting with a few poverty-stricken adherents the Mahdi had gone from strength to strength until he had conquered a country of a million square miles in extent and driven the foreign rulers back to the land from which they came.

Even if we admit the fact that the Egyptian dominion of the Sudan was based on rotten foundations, that the building was badly planned and constructed, and contributed, from its

[1] See Naum Bey Shoucair, "Tarikh el Sudan."

own inherent weaknesses, to its ultimate downfall, the success of the Dervishes was a marvellous one, almost without parallel in history. Who would have foretold of them, when they first took the field, armed only with sticks and clubs, that they were, in so short a space of time, to compass the downfall of fortified garrison towns, protected by ramparts and well supplied with artillery?

But after the month of August, 1885, although the Dervish kingdom was to exist for another thirteen years and prove a menace to the safety of Egypt for much of that time, the Mahdiists had no more successes to record except against the Abyssinians. Wherever they attacked they failed, and on more than one occasion they were to meet with severe reverses.

By this time the relief force of the Abyssinians under Ras Alula was nearing Kassala. Osman Digna at once dispatched an army, which is said to have numbered nearly 10,000 men, under the command of Mustafa Hadal with El Hasan wad Hashi, Bilal el Samaranduwab, and Awad el Kerim Kafot as emirs of quarters. When Ras Alula heard of Osman Digna's advance he sent a message to the effect that he had heard of the proposed expedition and if Osman Digna would remain at Kufeit for three days he would be very pleased to meet him and, God willing, to send him to hell.

On September 22nd Ras Alula, with an army reported to have been twice as numerous as that of the Dervishes, arrived at Kufeit. The advanced guard was under the command of Dejaj Gobra. Ali Nurein (sheikh of Sabderat), Abd el Qadir Bey, Mohammed Eilah, and Mohammed el Fil (a Beni Amir sheikh) also accompanied the Abyssinians. Osman Digna opened the attack and met with an early success, killing Dejaj Gobra and dispersing his followers with heavy loss. But on advancing against the main body he was badly defeated and compelled to return to Kassala after losing nearly 3,000 men in killed and wounded. In furious disgust at the turn which events had taken Osman Digna sent for Ahmed Bey Eiffet, Ibrahim Effendi Shawki el Sharkasi (the head clerk), Hasan Agha Bedawi el Arnaoti (the officer commanding the cavalry), Saleh Baghdadi (a sanjak, or captain), and three of the merchants—Ali Shawish el Hegazi, Mr. Tadros Manioseh (an Armenian), and a Greek, Stello Apostolidi. Two days later the drums were beaten, the crowds collected, and Osman Digna, after releasing Ali Shawish and Ibrahim Effendi, had the others publicly executed. The reason for this high-handed action is not quite clear. It may have been due to mere pique

at his recent defeat, but more probably the reports current in Kassala that Osman Digna had found among the Abyssinians letters addressed to Ras Alula asking for help against the accursed Dervishes had some truth in them. Or possibly the request of Eiffet Bey that the Khalifa should send someone other than Osman Digna to receive the surrender of Kassala irritated the commander who had just met with so unwelcome a reverse.

Ahmed Bey Eiffet was given the posthumous rank of pasha as a reward for the good services that he had rendered to the Government in his lifetime.

Osman Digna then proceeded to pull down all the houses of the Mirghani family. He destroyed the tomb of El Sayyid el Hasan el Mirghani and the mosque of his son El Sayyid Osman. The tomb, which was frequently visited by women devotees who wished for children, was profusely decorated with silver ornaments and enriched with rugs and carpets Out of one of these carpets Osman Digna had a banner made, saying that as it had covered the bones of so holy a man it would bring him good fortune. By a curious coincidence this flag was to be captured in years to come and from the day of its capture Osman Digna had no more successes to record. Osman Digna also issued orders to the effect that anyone who went to the remains of the tomb should receive twenty-seven lashes.[1]

The booty was then divided and the prisoners sent to Omdurman, together with the captured guns, rifles, and ammunition On the road Adjutant Farag Effendi Wanni managed to escape with fifty-four of his men and made his way to Massaua. Osman Digna then imprisoned the head of the Hadendoa tribe, Mohammed Ibn el Sheikh Musa, and treated his followers so harshly that a messenger went to the Khalifa asking for Osman Digna to be dismissed. Mohammed Osman Abu Girga was sent to Kassala with about 1,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry. The population was terrified; the forces of Osman Digna and Abu Girga remained in Kassala while their respective leaders quarrelled and wrote to the Khalifa, who told Abu Girga to go to Tokar, but to be under the orders of Osman Digna, who was to remain at Kassala. Abu Girga went to Tokar, and shortly afterwards Osman

[1] An interesting little sidelight on the spirit of the times is thrown by Sheikh Mohammed Awad, who was formerly head of the Halangi tribe. He had gone to El Gadein intending to join the Dervish leader As soon as El Gadein heard of Osman Digna's defeat he seized Sheikh Mohammed and his friend Sheikh Nafia el Halangi and took them to Asmara where they were put to death by Ras Alula.

Digna was instructed by the Khalifa to continue the siege of Suakin. After appointing his nephew Mohammed Fai Ali Digna as Emir of Kassala and Abdallah Abu Bakr as keeper of the treasury, Osman Digna set out for his old camp at Tamai, where he arrived on February 21, 1886.

§ 3

The year 1886 passed quietly throughout the greater part of the Sudan, and only a few isolated incidents tended to keep interest alive in the East and to show that there was still a state of war.

In the spring Osman Digna was at Tamai, where a large collection of people was gathered together. Their huts and tents stretched for two miles and a half towards Tamineb. Each little dwelling was enclosed in a zariba made of thorn and scrub, and would have proved difficult of capture if ever it had been found necessary to attack it with the bayonet. His authority still extended as far north as the salt-pans of Rawaya and Halaib, from where a brisk trade in slaves, who were chiefly prisoners of war, and other goods was carried on with Jedda in exchange for foodstuffs.

Rawaya was under the command of Mohammed Medani, a nephew of Osman Digna, who administered the country as far as the harbour of Sheikh Barghut.

The influence of Osman Digna was now at a very low ebb. He found himself faced with an increasingly difficult situation that his unrelenting sternness had done much to create. The Government's policy of conciliation was beginning to bear fruit; the tribesmen were becoming less and less inclined to continue fighting in so unprofitable a campaign.

In order to maintain his power in Omdurman the Khalifa had brought from Kordofan a body of Taaisha, who were devoted to him and whose fortunes were entirely bound up with his. They were utilized to raid the tribes who showed any disposition to break away from him, and were his personal supporters. On a lesser scale Osman Digna did the same and had a nucleus of men entirely dependent upon him for their very existence

In revenge for his various set-backs Osman Digna initiated a policy of oppression, endeavouring to win back by force any who attempted to disregard his orders. Wherever possible the neighbouring tribesmen, scattered usually over a wide area

and unready for any troops that could be brought suddenly against them, were attacked and their chieftains imprisoned.

At this time Mohammed Adam Saadun was in command at Hashin, and he was dispatched by Osman Digna in May with 900 men to exact taxation from the Amarar. Owing to lack of food and general dissatisfaction many of his men deserted The Ashraf and Amarar, rendered desperate by this continual harrying of their tribes, fell upon the remainder near Khor Arbat. Mohammed Adam Saadun was taken prisoner and died shortly afterwards of small-pox.

On May 11th the remainder of the British and Indian troops left Suakin and the garrison was reduced to 2,500 Egyptians Every effort was still being made to utilize the services of the friendly tribesmen who took the field and defeated a force commanded by Feki Medani near Barghut. There was also a battle on a considerable scale between Osman Digna and the Fadlab, which resulted in the death of 500 Dervishes. The Government took off the survivors in boats, while Mahmud Bey Ali sent three sambuks (or native sailing vessels) and fifty men to fetch the Fadlab women into Suakin. Osman Digna received news of this and sent an emir with 1,000 men to capture these women at the harbour. A fight took place in which seventeen Fadlab and an emir were killed, as well as Mahmud Bey Ali's son and a close relative of Osman Digna. Many of the Dervishes used rifles on this occasion for the first time—an excuse that they afterwards brought forward to explain away their defeat. On the side of the friendlies one Ibrahim Tallag greatly distinguished himself by his bravery, to which the victory was largely attributed by the Fadlab.

Osman Digna, hearing of these various set-backs, sent reinforcements, which arrived too late to take part in the fighting, and the whole country from Barghut to Rawaya was thus cleared of the rebels.

With the coming of summer Osman Digna's influence was once more on the wane, the able-bodied men departing into the hills to tend their flocks and herds and only the very old or very young members of the tribe were left behind in the plains. And though these were placed more or less in the position of hostages for the good behaviour of the fighting men their presence was by no means an unmixed blessing for Osman Digna, who found his resources taxed to the uttermost in order to supply them with food.

These continual reverses irritated Osman Digna, who retaliated by avenging himself on any tribes or sections of

tribes that were within his reach. No one—whatever his feelings towards the Government may have been—felt himself safe against an unexpected and possibly a wholly undeserved attack.

In particular Osman Digna attempted to compel the Amarar into obedience, and imprisoned many of them in a zariba, where the unfortunate creatures were left in the burning sun with no shade, food, or drink. The passers-by were ordered to pay no heed to their piteous cries for help, and when small-pox broke out amongst them some 150 (including Kurub Hamid, the chief of the Omar-Hassayab) were done to death by sun, thirst, hunger or disease.

In order to protect the friendlies and prevent these constant raids of Osman Digna the Government established a post at Sheikh Barghut somewhere about the month of June.

Desultory fighting and firing continued in the neighbourhood of Suakin, and every effort was made to induce the Amarar to take the offensive, which they did in various successful little engagements between June 17th and 24th. In fact, on one occasion, during an attack on Tosellah, they captured Dereir Musa Digna, a nephew of Osman Digna.

On July 10th the Government established a post at Mohammed Gull, with the result that the Bisharin made submission and early in August fifteen of the Beni Amir sheikhs came from Aqiq to do the same.

About this time Osman Digna was deserted by the Gemilab, and the Khalifa—anxious about the situation in the East—sent instructions to Osman Digna that he was to try and conciliate the neighbouring tribes. So far from doing so he put Hamad Mahmud, whose daughter he had married, and Hasab Abdallah of the Nurab section to death.

The reason for this tactless execution has never been made quite clear. It may have been, as was said at the time, because he had intercepted some letters from the Government to them, or, even without any direct incriminating evidence, Osman Digna may have felt that the only method of cowing the Amarar tribe was by depriving them of their leaders. Hamad Mahmud was head of the important Mussayab section and his death, as did that of Sheikh Hasab, infuriated the Amarar. At any rate, both chieftains were publicly executed at Tosellah, with the result that the Amarar in a body left Osman Digna. They had never been really friendly with him; none of them belonged to his religious sect, the Magadhib; most of them were followers of the Gadria confraternity and a

few were adherents of the Mirghania denomination. It was only the uncertainty of the policy that the Government meant to pursue which drove them, in self-defence, to join, however reluctantly, a cause which they felt would probably prove the stronger. The Amarar were then all collected near the Shata wells under the protection of the Government, who gave them food and rams.

The continuous fighting and general unsettlement was by now beginning to tell upon the local inhabitants, who were tired of the discipline imposed upon them. Many of them hated the cruelties of Osman Digna, and had never been more than lukewarm adherents of the cause that he espoused. The attitude of such tribes as the Hababb, Ashraf and Amarar became more and more hostile.

The forces besieging Suakin had by now been withdrawn to Tamai and the neighbouring foothills. Hashin and Handub were evacuated, and on August 10th Osman Digna himself withdrew from Tamai. Ten days later a large meeting of Suakin notables urged the Government to finish off Osman Digna, who had lost all authority. The friendlies asked for assistance in order to attack Tamai; they were given arms and ammunition and promised all the loot except munitions of war.

On September 6th the Amarar tribe attacked Osman Digna, who had returned in the meantime, and drove him into the fort at Tamai, where they besieged him. This fort was a stone building some thirty yards square situated on a ridge near Khor Gwob It was formed of high masonry walls with a gun embrasure and a semicircular redoubt to guard the doors. The neighbouring defences at Tamai consisted of a series of redoubts surrounded by thorn zaribas These were further strengthened by a breastwork of gum-bags filled with sand or gum. Defended as it was with eighteen guns captured at various places, it was a formidable defensive system for natives, unsupplied with artillery, to capture. In spite of this it fell on October 7th, together with the outworks, before the assaults of the friendlies, who killed 200 of the garrison, including the son of Sheikh Tahir Magdhub, and revenged themselves for the loss of their chieftain by mutilating the bodies of the rebels found near the spot where the executions had taken place. At the same time many of the rifles captured from Baker Pasha's force were recovered and taken to Suakin, but the elusive Osman Digna had succeeded in making good his escape before the final assault.

Near the fort was the mosque some 200 feet long by 50

broad, with a mimbar, or pulpit, in the east end, from where Osman Digna, Sheikh Tahir Magdhub, and other dignitaries had so often addressed the assembled throngs. The mosque was thickly thatched with grass and mats supported on some twenty rows of telegraph poles placed ten feet apart Besides being used for the daily prayers and the occasional sermons that were inspired by a special occasion the mosque also served as a hall where trials took place. To the left of the mosque was the Beit el Mal, or treasure-house, covering an extent of four acres, and within this enclosure was a thick zariba in which prisoners were kept.[1] It was the scene of punishments, torturings, and executions. Two posts ten feet high remained to show where prisoners were tied up by their hands drawn taut above their heads while they were left for twenty-four hours to the heat of the sun or fury of the elements. Here, too, prisoners were confined with their face upwards and their arms and legs stretched ×-wise upon the ground In the same place was to be found the boiling fat in which the bleeding stumps of a man mutilated for theft or some other offence were dipped to stop the flow of blood. A stalwart black, named Abdallah, was the chief executioner, and was also responsible for the carrying out of punishments or torturings. When an execution was to take place the prisoner's hands were tied behind his back and a piece of string was drawn tight round his head just above the ears. The prisoner knelt down and an assistant held on to the string tied round the head. Abdallah, with a large two-handed sword, severed the head from the trunk while the assistant pulled the string so that the head might fall at some distance from the body.

The success of the Amarar brought over Mohammed Abu Fatma, head of the Ashraf, and the two tribes marched towards Tokar in order to try and induce the people to surrender. They reached El Teb, of bloody memory, but, on hearing that Feki Musa had left Tokar with a large force they withdrew, on November 9th, without fighting at all.

Relations with the neighbouring tribes now became increasingly friendly; trade with the interior was resumed; in fact, Colonel Kitchener, who had succeeded Major Watson as Governor of Suakin on September 7th, was able to report "the collapse of Osman Digna's power."

The year 1886 had seen a marked decline in the influence of Osman Digna; not only were the tribes more hostile to him than at any previous period of his career, but he had himself

[1] See Wylde, II, 204.

not gained even a minor success to set against the numerous reverses that had befallen his followers. In consequence of the unsatisfactory position in the Eastern Sudan the Khalifa summoned all the Hadendoa leaders to discuss the situation. He offered to replace Osman Digna by Abu Girga, but to this the Hadendoa objected. The Khalifa in indignation then put them all in prison and sentenced them to death. But after a short time he relented, the chiefs were released and sent back to their country after leaving their head man Mohammed Musa as a hostage in Omdurman.

Osman Digna then went to Omdurman to ask for reinforcements, but the Khalifa was dissatisfied with what he had done, and when the Amarar complained of the execution of their chief, the Khalifa threw Osman Digna into jail. He was soon afterwards allowed to leave and was told to try and win over the Shukria. He failed to do so and returned to the East with a few reinforcements given him by the Khalifa.

§ 4

When first he had come from Kordofan to Sinkat, Osman Digna had been regarded by many of the people as the spiritual representative of the Mahdi, and shone with his reflected glory, but, little by little, the feeling began to gain ground that he was too fond of temporal power and that his conduct, so far from springing from the pure fount of a religious enthusiasm, was prompted rather by hatred for the Government and, in particular, the British. There can be little doubt that in this view native opinion was right. Osman Digna was not the pious zealot that the Mahdi was, and though now, when his temporal powers have long since passed away into the limbo of forgotten things, he chooses to pose as a high-minded spiritual enthusiast, this attitude does not reflect his feelings of forty years ago when the sap of life ran strong and he was at the zenith of his manhood. Osman Digna never forgot that the British, by capturing his slave dhow and preventing the traffic in slaves between the Sudan and Arabia, had completely ruined him and deprived him of all material wealth.

As time went on Osman Digna's methods tended to become increasingly severe. In the early days of his insurrection he attempted to win over the tribes by bribery or cajolery. The character of the inhabitants was one peculiarly adapted for the playing off of one tribe against another; the native, with

no very urgent or insistent demands upon his time, was willingly enmeshed in the net of intrigue that Osman Digna cast over the Eastern Sudan. For many years Suakin itself was divided into two camps. While the Dignai and Arteiga families were inclined to favour Osman Digna and believed that he would not only show them the way to Paradise, but also give them the dominion over the earth, there was a large and influential party which was bitterly opposed to him and foresaw the ruin of trade and of their own private fortunes in the general upheaval. These men knew the strength of the Government. Many had travelled to India, Egypt, and other parts of the world. They were able to appreciate the real significance of the Mahdist movement and to judge its limitations by comparison with the world beyond the confines of the Sudan. Their wealth was a tempting bait to the impoverished hordes without the gates, so that their prosperity, and even their lives, were dependent on the maintenance of law and order and their interests thus became identified with those of the Government Being, too, in constant touch with the natives who came and went in Suakin, they had access to sources of information that were very useful to the Government and enabled the authorities to control the hostile element within the walls. Curiously enough, this very hostile element, though it caused a good deal of anxiety and required very careful watching, was, in a sense, a source of strength to the Government. Osman Digna knew full well that not only El Obeid and other towns, but even Khartoum itself, had been forced to capitulate very largely owing to the faction inside the beleagured camps that had co-operated with the besieging force outside. Osman Digna always hoped to be able to bring about the downfall of Suakin by treachery and thus avoid the heavy losses that a direct assault must bring in its train. He was also unwilling to expose his allies in the town to the indiscriminate slaughter and looting that would follow the successful sacking of the place. For these reasons Osman Digna never pressed home an attack upon Suakin. No serious assault was ever delivered. The occasional alarums and excursions or intermittent sniping never developed into anything beyond a rather wearying nuisance.

The petty plots and counterplots that occupied unceasingly the people of Suakin were reproduced on a larger scale among the tribes and sections of tribes outside the gates of the city. Here the general hostility of one tribe against another or one section towards another was complicated by minor feuds and

dissensions between families or even individuals. However alluring the bait that Osman Digna dangled before the eyes of the tribesmen, there was no knowing when some unexpected dispute over a grazing area, or a blood-feud about a woman, would not upset all his carefully concocted schemes. There was so much intrigue that the people were unwilling to commit themselves and openly declare for one side or the other owing to their uncertainty as to the attitude not only of other sections of their tribe but even of their intimate friends. The Hadendoa as a whole were the allies of Osman Digna and the Amarar hostile to him. But individuals and families, both of these tribes and others, were to be found in the opposite camp. Thus though the Arteiga generally were favourably disposed towards Osman Digna, the Kurbab section—to which Mahmud Bey Arteiga belonged—still held aloof from him. The port of Aqiq was besieged by the rebels from time to time, but the presence in the neighbourhood of the hostile Beni Amir prevented the siege from being closely pressed for many years. Nor was it until October, 1884, that the Rashaida and Habab declared for the Mahdi and threatened the important harbour of Massaua. Osman Digna never had more than a very few followers on whom he could implicitly rely; the others came and went at their own sweet will, unless they were compelled to join him for a particular purpose. This uncertainty as to the attitude of the tribes was not only a cause of much anxiety to Osman Digna but drove him to contradictory and ill-advised acts of alternate hostility and cajolery in his behaviour towards them. For if they failed to respond to his overtures he had no scruples about attacking them and gaining their allegiance by force. The old men were killed and the young men enlisted. Thus when the Omarhassayab section of the Amarar refused to join Osman Digna at Tamai, their chieftain, Kurub Hamid, and many of his followers were arrested, put into a compound, and starved to death—to the intense disgust of Mohammed Gwilaor, who had asked for their lives to be spared. The result of this high-handed action was to alienate the sympathies of the Fadlab tribe and Shattrab section of the Sinderaieit tribe. Mahmud Bey Ali, the sheikh of the former, and Mohammed Gwilaor of the latter, who had married a grand-daughter of Mahmud Bey, had never been friendly towards Osman Digna, and they were now bitterly opposed to him.

In fact, Osman Digna frequently found his wishes thwarted by some leader whom he was not strong enough to coerce and whose unfriendliness he was compelled to overlook. Many of

the chieftains remained loyal to the Government throughout, and even some of those who pretended to owe allegiance to Osman Digna were always ready to help the Government. Mohammed Gwilaor of the Amarar, for instance, warned two British officers [1] who had gone out to a place called Daror to shoot that they were in danger of being captured, and they managed to make good their escape in time. Osman Digna quite realized what had happened, but his hold upon many of his followers was so tenuous that he dared not take any notice.

Mohammed Gwilaor wished to proclaim his allegiance to the Government but was afraid to do so. He accordingly went to Lord Chermside and said that though well-disposed at heart he could not openly show his loyalty to a Government which was not strong enough to protect him from Osman Digna. Lord Chermside told him to remain with his tribe and give what help he could, and it was not until later, in 1887–1888, when Kitchener was Governor at Suakin, that a definite promise of assistance could be given to those people. Moreover, no one, however influential, was safe from the machinations of Osman Digna. If a man became rich or was reputed to be in possession of too many of this world's goods Osman Digna sent a messenger to throw cigarette ends into his shop or house. The police arrived, searched the place, and arrested the unfortunate occupier, whose property was then confiscated. This was credited to the Beit el Mal (or Treasury of the Mahdi and his successor), and later part of it was available for distribution among the Dervishes as pay.

The troops of Osman Digna were recruited from two main sources. There was a small nucleus of impoverished scalliwags, with no visible means of subsistence, thieves and other blackguards, who formed a more or less standing army. From time to time, when fighting was contemplated, a general summons was issued to the tribesmen, who collected for a particular fight and scattered again when the operations were concluded These people for the most part took no real interest in the fighting, and in order to induce them to muster at the appointed time and place their chiefs had to be heavily bribed. Then, as now, the main object in life of the Hadendoa, Beni Amir, and cognate tribes of the Red Sea hills was to be left severely alone while they peacefully pastured their flocks and herds in their inhospitable mountain fastnesses. The prospect of loot, which might have appealed to their cupidity,

[1] Messrs Wyllie and Mason

was a very remote one, and the most that many of them could ever expect to capture, even after so successful an engagement as the first battle of El Teb, was a rifle and ammunition, for which, like the Shilluk, they had no real desire.

The fortunes of Osman Digna vacillated in a curious manner. When he first raised the standard of revolt the attitude of the Eastern Sudan was either neutral or actually hostile to the cause of the Mahdi. Even the few followers that he succeeded in scraping together deserted him after his failure to capture Sinkat. The inaction of the Government during the autumn of 1883 renovated his dilapidated fortunes and then came the news of the destruction of Hicks Pasha and his force. The natives began to join him with more enthusiasm and his various successes near Suakin enabled him to collect a formidable army. The overwhelming defeats of El Teb and Tamai scattered the tribesmen once more, and for almost a year the fortunes of Osman Digna were at a very low ebb.

In February, 1885, came reports of the fall of Khartoum and the people began to join Osman Digna in still larger numbers. The waverers came to the conclusion that it was no longer worth while sitting on the fence. They would be helped to this decision by the scattered nomadic lives they led. In search of water or grazing for their flocks and herds, the natives led an isolated existence. There were no large settlements except for short periods in the summer. Otherwise a solitary tent of camel hair or grass matting, or at most half a dozen clustered together, was the usual form that their colonies took. They were therefore an easy prey for the filibustering hordes of Osman Digna, even though these were as yet but ill organized. Nor was Osman Digna overscrupulous as to whom he attacked. On the word of a spy, and with no proper investigation, a tent would be raided, the flocks and herds, women and children carried off and the men-folk slain.

These cruelties recoiled upon Osman Digna's own head. He was hated while feared, and was always faced with the problem of trying to keep control over a medley of tribes which were continually attempting to break away. Thus when Ahmed Mahmud Ali of the Fadlab went from Suakin to visit the Khalifa and tell him that he wished to have no more to do with Osman Digna, and that if he were given a free hand he would win over the Amarar, the Khalifa gave him charge of all the country north of the Suakin–Berber road. But no sooner had Ahmed returned than he went to Handub, got into

touch with the Government, and arranged for merchandise to be transported to Berber by means of the Amarar.

§ 5

By the end of the year 1886 the defensive works round Suakin, which had received numerous alterations and additions from a series of military governors, had assumed their final form. Suliman Pasha Nyazi, who was Governor-General of the Eastern Sudan in 1883, had been superseded by Baker Pasha for a short time, until Admiral Hewett, in February, 1884, had been given civil and military command over the district. He was succeeded by Sir Cromer Ashburnham, Colonel Chermside, General Fremantle, and General Hudson. In 1886 General Dixon had been appointed to command the station, only to be replaced that same year by Sir Charles Warren, Major Watson, and Colonel Kitchener.

The brief tenure of their office found expression and commemoration in a gradually improved system of fortification. In the year 1882 Colonel Harrington had dug a few trenches round Suakin, but when the town was first threatened with attack its defences were very inadequate and consisted chiefly of two antiquated Krupp guns. Rear-Admiral Hewett and General Baker had hastily thrown up some fortifications and made some trenches towards the end of 1883, and the streets had been barricaded to keep the enemy as far as possible from capturing the town.

Major Wood, R.E., was then sent to Suakin in order to assist Rear-Admiral Hewett with his technical advice. He made few alterations in the scheme of defence and lines of fortifications drawn up by Baker Pasha except to adapt these for defence by a smaller garrison than had at first been contemplated.

A description of the defences of Suakin which appeared in "The Times" and "Daily News" of February 18, 1884, may be quoted here:

> The main line of entrenchments surrounds the suburb of El-Kaff on the landward side, and is semicircular in form, at a radius of about 1,000 yards from the head of the causeway connecting El-Kaff with the island on which stands Suakin proper.
>
> On this main line are two redoubts, named respectively Forts Euryalus and Carysfort. The former was manned by 80 marines

and 80 seamen, and the latter by 141 marines and 53 seamen. The rest of this line was kept by black troops.

At a distance of 1,200 yards from the main line is a line of 12 small redoubts, a quarter of a mile distant from each other. They have ditches, and are strong against assault, and were each garrisoned by from 12 to 50 black troops. The ditches and the ground in front were thickly strewn with crows' feet.

Still farther in advance there is a large detached fort, known as the water fort, protecting the wells, armed with one Krupp gun and one mountain gun.

The gunboat "Ranger" was moored so as to be able to sweep the causeway, while the "Sphinx" was in position to flank the right of the outer line of forts, and the "Decoy" to flank the left of the line.

But as the power of Osman Digna became greater and the natives began to join him in ever-increasing numbers it was felt that these defences were inadequate—more especially as the successive defeats of the Government troops put rifles and guns into the hands of the rebels. The Dervishes would approach close to the town and fire into it. There was one point in particular, near the village of Mashil, which proved especially annoying. So much inconvenience was caused that finally Admiral Hewett, Brewster Bey (the British Consul), and Mohammed Bey Ahmed reconnoitred the position, and buried some explosives, which were electrically connected with the town. The ships were constantly firing rockets, and when there appeared a good number of Dervishes assembled for the nightly sniping the charges were exploded with devastating results. On one occasion some thirty Dervishes were reported to have been killed, and the moral effect on the enemy was considerable when the rumour went round that no portion of the dead larger than a thumb could be found anywhere.

An earthen redoubt was then built to keep the Dervishes at bay, but one night a successful raid of the enemy captured the redoubt and killed all its defenders, including their British officer in command. In consequence of this set-back a circular stone fort called "Mashil" was erected in place of the redoubt, and effectually prevented any more sniping from this direction either upon the town or the ships moored in the harbour. After the battle of El Teb, however, when the loss of the Central and Southern Sudan was an accomplished fact, when Khartoum was being invested and the Dervishes were close to Suakin, when nearly the whole of the Eastern Sudan was in the hands of the Dervishes, it was realized that to make

Suakin reasonably safe from capture the defences must be strengthened. Suakin was then, as now, but ill supplied with water, and it was necessary, when a large number of troops arrived, to install condensing plants on what is now known as Condenser Island, but which forty years ago went by the name of Quarantine Island.

The needs of the native population had, however, for the most part to be supplied from shallow wells, twenty to twenty-five feet deep, a thousand yards outside the city walls. A dam three-quarters of a mile long, twenty feet high and as many thick, had been made by Mumtaz Pasha to hold up the rain-water from the hills. This flood-water, percolating through, afforded sufficient water to last through the dry weather until the next rainy season came round But, in addition to the inhabitants of Suakin itself, there were usually many friendlies congregated near the outer walls These grazed their flocks and herds between the water-pools and the Geif; they were useful to the Government not only in supplying information as to the movements of the enemy but by increasing the food supply with some fresh meat and milk.

The defensive system of Suakin thus had not merely to cover the Geif and town of Suakin but had to be extended to protect the numerous natives and their animals scattered outside the walls.

Prior to the arrival of Colonel Chermside the main schemes of defence consisted chiefly of some rough-and-ready measures to make the inhabitants of the Geif and Island safe from a sudden onslaught of the rebels. The streets were barricaded and various obstacles put in them. Party walls were knocked down so as to permit of easy inter-communication behind some sort of cover.

By the spring of 1884 many of the people had openly declared themselves either for or against Osman Digna. Colonel Chermside had the houses of all those who had joined the enemy pulled down and the stones and materials used for building a wall round the Geif.

In order to protect the water-supply and grazing various redoubts were at first put up at a distance of a mile or thereabouts from the walls These were soon abandoned and two main lines of redoubts were built, one running approximately east and west on the north side of the town, while another series from north-west to south-east linked up with the two forts of Shata and Gemmeiza, which were constructed so as to guard the water-supply in Khor Shata.

These forts were for the most part sexagonal in form, the sides measuring some twenty-one feet in length and about thirty feet in height: they were constructed of shaped lumps of coral stone A deep ditch, usually surrounded by thorn, furnished additional security to the defenders. From them a commanding view could be obtained over many miles of the country round. These forts proved so successful that others were added, named Fula (to protect some wells to the south of the town) and Mahgar. After Commodore Molyneux' arrival further improvements were effected—additional works were carried out and some more small forts were erected. In the year 1886 Colonel Kitchener made the outlying forts of Hashin, Handub, Mansura, and Tamai. Of these forts six are still in a good state of preservation—Handub, Hashin, Mansura (or Mataris), Tamai, Mahgar, and Shata. The remains of Gemmeiza and El Fula can also be seen to-day, as well as several others along the wall.

These outer forts were originally four in number, while the inner ring of blockhouses—for the immediate defence of the town—consisted of fourteen.

The defences of Suakin had now assumed their final form. The old chains of earthwork redoubts had given way to outlying forts composed of stone with a ditch round each. These protected the water-supply, and the natives congregated with their flocks and herds outside the town itself. The inner defences consisted of a wall eighteen feet high, six feet thick, with a fire parapet near the top, and guarded at frequent intervals by blockhouses, which formed part of the wall.

Warships were also stationed on either side of the causeway and were of especial value by night, when their searchlights scoured the country in search of a gathering of the Dervishes. Rockets were fired and often disclosed a massing of the enemy, who were then dispersed either by fire from the ships or by the troops who manned the blockhouses.

To the south of the town the fort of Fula was an added safeguard, but even without such an outpost Suakin was always secure from attack on this side as well as to the east, where the open sea and coral reefs rendered impossible any onset of the Dervishes. Not only would they have been perpetually shelled by the warships in the harbour, but they had no means of crossing from the mainland to the island, or even along the mainland itself.

It was for this reason that the main defences of Suakin

were situated to the west of the town, with extensions towards the south-east and north-east.

The wall and the forts would have been sufficient to have made the town and harbour of Suakin reasonably safe from attack, though there was always the possibility of the enemy learning to use the guns they had captured from Baker or even of bringing up cannon from Khartoum.

The question of the defence of Suakin was, however, complicated by two difficulties—the safeguarding of the friendlies and the water-supply—and this meant the holding of an extended line that required a large body of troops. The attitude of the friendlies was therefore throughout the siege largely determined for them by the number of men defending Suakin. As soon as the garrison was reduced the natives were compelled, whatever may have been their private wishes, to make peace with Osman Digna rather than wait before the walls of Suakin for his inevitable revenge.

§ 6

By the beginning of the year 1887 conditions at Suakin were almost those of peace-time. Colonel Kitchener, by his energy and tact, had succeeded in reassuring the natives, who showed an ever-increasing disposition to submit to the Government. He had caused to be inscribed over the main gate into the town the words, " Peace to those who enter and who leave this place." Sometimes it was possible to walk about and shoot game birds near Suakin, and there was frequently a kind of informal truce, the Dervishes in their jibbas bringing in ivory and other articles of commerce, which they exchanged for grain and foodstuffs At others, and particularly in the following year, the garrison would be closely invested. The officers would be sitting at mess in the " New House " facing the sea when bullets, zipping through the open windows, would drive them hurriedly from their unfinished meal. Colonel Kitchener lived in what is now known as the " Muhafza," while sailors with Gatling guns were mounted on the roof. The " Dolphin " and " Gannet " remained in the harbour, and shells from their howitzers occasionally were sent into the enemy's territory beyond the forts to remind the Dervishes that there was still a state of war.

The tribesmen, however, on the whole, utterly sick of the prevailing turmoil, began to settle down and recommence

their agricultural and commercial pursuits, though some of them were engaged in besieging Tokar, which was now the head-quarters of Osman Digna's forces An army of 3,000 Baggara under Mohammed Musa Digna was sent from Omdurman to relieve Tokar, and though the friendlies were compelled to withdraw they refused to have any more to do with Osman Digna During the summer Colonel Kitchener took a company of the 10th Sudanese and some Bashi-bazouks and established them at the port of Halaib, which was thus opened for trade with the neighbouring tribes. In July Osman Digna was once more summoned to Omdurman, his departure being the signal for the almost complete cessation of hostilities.

The garrison was reduced by two more battalions in the autumn, and this news brought Osman Digna hurriedly back from Kassala, where he had gone after his visit to Omdurman. He collected a force of 5,000 men, chiefly from the followers of Abu Girga, and laid siege to Suakin, with the intention of carrying the place by assault. He had, however, received instructions from the Khalifa not to assault a fortified post, and for a long time the attack was delayed, while he dispatched expeditions in all directions in order to induce the tribesmen to invest the town. His efforts met with but scant response and in some instances his followers were actually set upon by the natives, whose intertribal jealousies had recently been accentuated by various episodes.

The year 1887 therefore closed with Osman Digna encamped at Handub in command of a large but discontented army which had little heart for any more fighting. He could snipe the inhabitants crowded together inside the town, and kill a few of its defenders, but the searchlights of the men-of-war, which were still moored in the harbour, prevented the rebels from gaining any real or permanent successes.

Elsewhere in the Sudan the year was notable for the fighting between the Dervishes and the Abyssinians. The latter, under the command of Ras Adal had inflicted a severe defeat on the Mahdiists at Gallabat in June. The Khalifa, in revenge, dispatched an army which is said to have numbered as many as 87,000 men, the largest force that ever took the field in the Sudan. Under Abu Anga and Zeki Tummal the Dervishes routed the Abyssinians at Debra Sin and pursued them to the capital of the Amhara province, Gondar. Here they stopped long enough to sack the town and throw from a double-storied house of stone a wretched priest whom they found there before returning in triumph to the Sudan. Thus, though

Osman Digna had lost ground in the East, the followers of the Khalifa had every reason for satisfaction at the results of the year's fighting The Abyssinians had been an ever-present menace to their peace and security; they were the only remaining force of any size in the field that could seriously threaten the dominion of the Khalifa.

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CHAPTER VII

1888 : Siege of Suakin continues. Kitchener wounded at Handub. 1889 Battle of Gemmeiza Defeat of Wad el Nejumi Famine and pestilence sweep through the Sudan. Recapture of Tokar. 1891. Osman Digna retires to Adarama 1896 : Reconquest of the Sudan determined on. 1898 · Battle of the Atbara, Battle of Omdurman; Downfall of the Dervish kingdom

§ 1

BALKED of his intention of carrying Suakin by assault, Osman Digna determined once more to attack the Amarar. From Handub he dispatched a large force on January 13th in order to try conclusions with them at Dara, where they were congregated. After various preliminary skirmishes the Amarar were routed with the loss of 700 men and Mohammed O'Sheikh, brother of the chief Ahmed Mahmud, was killed. Colonel Kitchener, hearing that the main body of the Dervishes had left Handub, thought it a favourable opportunity to make another attempt to capture Osman Digna. There were but few of the enemy left behind at Handub, so that an unexpected raid upon him had a reasonable chance of success. Colonel Kitchener was given leave by the authorities to make the attempt, provided no regular troops were employed and that he relied only upon the local police and any friendlies who could be induced to join him. It was not intended to take any further action in the event of the expedition failing of its object, so that the Dervishes would not be able to say that they had defeated the Government troops if any force sent against them were compelled to withdraw.

At one a.m. on the night of January 16th to 17th a party of about 450 irregulars set out for Handub. They included in their numbers some natives who had recently deserted Osman Digna and knew where he lived at Handub. Their duties were to make straight for his tent and attempt to capture him. Just before dawn Kitchener, who had Lieutenant Prinsep as his A.D.C., halted his mounted troops (which were under the command of Lieutenant McMurdo [1])

[1] Afterwards McMurdo Pasha, Director of the Slavery Repression Department.

in order that the grunting of the camels might not betray the presence of the troops to the unsuspecting Dervishes. Captain Hickman [1] was sent on ahead with the foot soldiers, police, and friendlies. The mounted troops were to join in the fight as soon as the attack had opened. The irregulars were successful in taking up their positions, and, when they heard the Dervishes recite their morning prayers before the dawn, they swept down upon them. The enemy, taken unawares, were speedily driven out of the village, which the irregulars proceeded to loot. The deserters made at once for the tent of Osman Digna and captured his horse before he had time to mount it. When almost within the reach of his pursuers Osman Digna seized a camel which happened to be near and, hastily swinging himself upon it, succeeded in making good his escape before the eyes of his would-be captors.

As the irregulars were scattered amongst the tents the Dervishes rallied, and seeing, in the growing light, how small was the force that had attacked them, they in turn rushed upon the village. A short but sharp fight resulted, and unfortunately the mounted troops were too far away to take any effective part in the mêlée that ensued. Kitchener at once hurried them to the rescue and succeeded in enforcing discipline amongst the disordered mob. While embroiled in the general retreat he was wounded by a bullet in the jaw. Dr. Galbraith, who happened to be near, tried in vain to persuade Kitchener to dismount. Reeling in his saddle from loss of blood, Kitchener merely stopped to bandage up his wound with a policeman's cummerbund and continued to direct the operations. The Dervishes pursued the Government troops for six miles, but Captain Hickman, on whom the command of the expedition had devolved, handled the situation so successfully that he managed to extricate his men with the loss of ten men killed, three officers and nineteen men wounded, and six missing. Amongst the wounded were some soldiers of the 10th Sudanese battalion who had smuggled themselves into the ranks of the irregulars in the expectation of a fight. Their presence, which Kitchener and Hickman had hoped to have overlooked, was therefore brought to light when the casualties were reported to Cairo.

The expedition which had opened so brilliantly thus failed of its object, although the Dervishes had lost some 300 men. Kitchener himself had to go to Cairo, where he narrowly escaped death. The bullet one night became embedded in

[1] Afterwards Brigadier-General T. E. Hickman, M.P

his throat, and he was on the point of being suffocated when, by a great effort, he succeeded in swallowing it. He shortly afterwards recovered, but, on being appointed Assistant Adjutant-General of the Egyptian Army in Egypt, did not return to Suakin, where Major Rundle was dispatched to take his place.[1]

The failure of the sortie encouraged the hostile tribes in the neighbourhood to increase their activities and to press the siege more vigorously. Continued sniping took place and the Suakin garrison was closely invested. The Dervishes occupied a disused position at Fort Hudson and worked their way until they were not more than 1,500 yards from the gates of Suakin. An attempt on March 3rd to dislodge them was repulsed with the loss of Colonel Tapp and seven men killed. Seventeen of the Government troops were also wounded, and several of the friendlies were unfortunately killed by the premature bursting of a shell from one of the warships moored in the harbour.

During the next few months Osman Digna confined his attentions to making overtures to the neighbouring tribes and endeavouring to conciliate his own following. In particular the Baggara and Jaalin, who had been brought from Kordofan and Berber, caused him much anxiety. In the absence of loot no material successes rewarded their activities. Pay, such as it was, was in arrears. Food was running short and there was general dissatisfaction. The cultivators of Tokar were also becoming disgusted at seeing the fruits of their agricultural labour devoured by the hordes who still regarded themselves as dependent on Osman Digna for their food supply. In March reinforcements, under Mustafa Hadal, arrived from Kassala, and were followed in April by some more Baggara and Jaalin commanded by the famous Emir Abu Girga. The latter considered himself too great a man to take orders from Osman Digna and quarrels were frequent.

The defences planned by Kitchener were completed by May, Lieut.-Colonel Gordon, R.E., building a wall of stone on the landward side of Suakin to replace the old mud fortifications. These were so strong that, in spite of the large forces concentrated in the neighbourhood, Osman Digna was afraid to attack. During the next month or two there was little serious fighting, though skirmishes were frequent. The Amarar tribe continued to harass the Dervishes, and the

[1] See the "Life of Lord Kitchener," by Sir George Arthur, I, 157.

Khalifa, becoming anxious for his food-supplies, instructed Osman Digna in June to abandon all offensive operations The Baggara and Jaalin were withdrawn to the river.

§ 2

On September 15th Osman Digna held a meeting of the chiefs at Handub, when it was decided that another effort should be made to capture Suakin. The natives were, however, unwilling to try and storm the town, though it was known that it was very lightly held by the Government troops. In fact, feeling ran so high that the Dervishes actually fought among themselves over the policy to be pursued. But trenches were stealthily dug and some guns were brought into action which caused considerable annoyance in the town. On September 17th a hostile force, under the command of Osman Naib, suddenly established themselves before the forts of Shata and Gemmeiza and sniping was continuous

Although the rebels did not feel themselves strong enough to capture Suakin by direct assault their proximity to these two forts very seriously threatened the safety of Suakin.

These Water Forts, as they were called, were the most important link in the chain of defence, as they guarded the only drinking supply available for the friendlies congregated round the town. They were each under the command of a British officer, who remained on duty for twenty-four hours. Every night a hurried gallop across the open brought the reliefs for these isolated posts , the horse was put under cover in the trench surrounding the fort ; the officer was hauled up in a basket on the side which was not being enfiladed by the enemy. The next night the officer was lowered again in the basket and galloped home once more to the comparative peace of Suakin. Frequently the thorn zariba round the forts was set on fire and the fort was ringed in flames—a burning torch outlined against the inky blackness of the western sky.

As a determined attack might be made upon the town at any minute, the military authorities in Cairo decided to send reinforcements.

In a very short space of time 750 British, 2,000 Egyptians, and 2,000 Sudanese, in addition to mounted troops, were concentrated at Suakin under the command of General Grenfell. These numbers were shortly afterwards increased by half of

the first battalion of the Welsh Regiment and a squadron of the 20th Hussars.

At 6 a.m. on December 18th, after a preliminary bombardment of the enemy trenches by the men-of-war, two brigades under Colonel Kitchener and Lieut.-Colonel Holled-Smith attacked the trenches. They succeeded in driving the enemy out at an insignificant cost after a brief engagement. The Dervishes lost 500 men out of a total of 1,500 and were completely routed. The British troops then returned to Cairo.

This successful little fight was known as that of Gemmeiza, or Mataris—"the holes in the ground."

Osman Digna, in order to prevent the British commander-in-chief from attaching too much importance to his victory, sent him part of the loot which had been captured from Stanley and Emin at the fall of Rejaf.

§ 3

In January, 1889, the Abyssinians determined to avenge the sack of Gondar and an army of over 80,000 men invested Metemma, which was held by Zeki Tummal with some 60,000 followers. Some of the Abyssinians penetrated the defences and the rout of the Dervishes was imminent. But it chanced that the personal supporters of King John had taken no share in this success and the King, unwilling for them to be deprived of their part in so notable a victory, ordered them to advance. By way of encouraging them he was himself carried nearer to the firing line. The glittering staff that surrounded him attracted the bullets of the enemy and King John was wounded. The Dervishes had by this time commenced to scatter in all directions when, to their amazement, the Abyssinians withdrew from inside the town, where many of them had made their way. And though later the Abyssinians took heart and renewed the fighting the death of King John, who succumbed to his wounds, disorganized the whole of the army, even in the hour of triumph, and the Dervishes were left masters of the field, on March 9th.

By the end of January the British had been withdrawn from Suakin, and, although a little skirmishing took place, no fighting of any importance occurred for some time.

At this period the flood of the Dervish dominion was at its height. Throughout the vast length and breadth of the

Sudan the Khalifa's power was supreme. The revolt of Abu Gemmeiza in Darfur had been finally crushed and its leader killed. The defeat of the Abyssinians had removed a menace that had for many a month haunted the Khalifa's waking moments. Internal dissensions had been quelled. No enemy threatened from the north. The presence of Government troops at Suakin, although a nuisance, was as yet no real danger.

Osman Digna, finding that he was making no progress towards the capture of Suakin—in spite of having inflicted some losses upon the friendlies and annoyed the garrison—asked the Khalifa for leave to withdraw to Tokar and reopen trade. Permission was granted him, and on February 11th he left Handub after burning his camp. Tokar was now the head-quarters of the Dervish army. There was a general feeling of tranquillity everywhere, which was little affected by the arrival of Wad Tahir Magdhub and a brother of the Khalifa from Omdurman with a large sum of money in order to try and win over the people with bribes. Any successes that might have attended their efforts were neutralized by the appearance on the scene of Abu Girga towards the end of March, when the inevitable quarrels broke out between him and Osman Digna. Osman Digna by his harsh measures had alienated the sympathies of the neighbouring tribes, and the situation in the Eastern Sudan had long caused the Khalifa anxiety. It is difficult to understand with what object Abu Girga was sent to Tokar seeing that he had already fallen out with Osman Digna. When appointing his emirs of emirs the Khalifa had nominated Wad el Nejumi as chief of all the emirs, with Osman Digna second. The latter was therefore hardly likely to view with equanimity the arrival of so important an emir as Abu Girga, even though he was his superior officer. Possibly—although apparently by now committed to an attack on Egypt by the Nile route—the Khalifa thought that an invasion might be practicable along the east coast to Kosseir and then to Keneh. He would in any case have been fully alive to the strategic importance of Berber, and may only have wished to make arrangements for preventing the Suakin to Berber route passing definitely under the control of the British or friendlies. At any rate, the dispatch of so enterprising an emir as Abu Girga led to immediate friction in the east, which did no good to the Mahdist cause. And it seems extremely probable that though the Khalifa realized that Abu Girga's arrival could hardly fail to be displeasing to Osman Digna, he

felt that it was advisable to set someone to spy upon him and attempt to curb his brutalities

The harvest at Tokar during the past year had been a good one, but the grain supplies of the Khalifa in the Sudan generally had fallen exceedingly low. The whole country was faced with famine. Abdallahi had already begun to appreciate the fact that the dread year "6"—as the year 1889 was known in the Arabic calendar—was likely to prove a critical one. It was essential that the corn plains of Tokar should not pass out of the control of the Dervishes by the desertion of the Hadendoa *en masse* to the Government.

Nothing of any importance occurred until, on April 19th, the little post of Halaib was rushed by the Dervishes. The twenty-seven police put up a gallant fight against overwhelming odds, but were finally compelled to withdraw to the coral reefs with the loss of two killed and five wounded. The Dervishes then began to massacre the women and children until they were driven off by the fire of H.M.S. "Ajemi," which was moored in the harbour. A few days later Colonel Holled-Smith re-established the post. A redoubt was built and the strength of the garrison increased to fifty men.

The natives continued to protest their hatred of Osman Digna, and some of the chiefs, finding his iron hand no longer able to control them, indulged in spasmodic raids on their own account. In fact, by the month of August, Osman Digna had so little hold on the natives of the Red Sea Littoral that he could only maintain his authority with the aid of a large body of Baggara, or cattle-owning Arabs from Kordofan.

In the meantime Kitchener was proceeding with his policy of conciliation. A league of friendly Arabs was formed in which both the Amarar and their hereditary enemies the Hadendoa joined. On August 12th a force of 700 strong set out for Sinkat as a preliminary to trying conclusions once more with Osman Digna at Tokar. The Government supplied them with food and money, but lent them no actual assistance, with the result that, after looting a few animals, they withdrew to Tamineb. Mohammed Musa Digna, whom it had been hoped to capture, made good his escape, and, though he returned with a few followers and engaged the friendly league, the action was speedily broken off after a few casualties had been inflicted on either side.

But though comparative peace reigned in the east, elsewhere in the Sudan events of vital importance were taking place.

§ 4

The Khalifa had long contemplated an invasion of Egypt, either by the Nile route or along the east coast. The former was barred by the concentration of troops at Wadi Halfa and elsewhere, the latter by a hostile force, based on Suakin, which threatened the lines of communications. An expeditionary force sent against Keneh via Kosseir would be liable to an attack on the flanks.

There were four main routes to Egypt from the Sudan. To the west the Arba'in route (the road of forty days), an almost waterless track, across moving sand-dunes, that was only practicable to a small caravan and was impossible as long as the large and powerful tribe of the Kababish remained loyal to the Government. Next came the main Nile route from Abu Hamed and round the bend to Dongola, or across the desert to Korti or Debba. Thirdly, another almost waterless track to the wells of Murat and Korosko And, lastly, the way from Berber to Suakin and thence by sea. The Government therefore had this advantage that while two ways were open to it for the invasion of the Sudan, either by Suakin or the Nile, the Dervishes could only attack Egypt along the Nile. The tribes in the Northern Sudan too, although, with the exception of the Kababish, they were not of much real fighting value to the Dervishes, were exceedingly important to the Government. As long as the Kababish to the west, the Bisharin and Amarar to the centre and east remained loyal, the Government could attack along one of the two roads open to them with full security to their northern flank.

In the beginning of the year 1889 a powerful force under Wad el Nejumi and Abd el Halim started for the north. In spite of a defeat at the hands of Colonel Wodehouse at Argin—by which he lost 500 killed and twice as many through desertion or capture—Wad el Nejumi pushed on to some hills four miles to the south of Toski, intending to hasten to Egypt. On August 3rd General Grenfell, after a vain attempt to induce him to surrender and avoid the inevitable slaughter, forced him to fight. Wad el Nejumi and 1,200 men were killed; no less than 4,000 prisoners were also captured. The few survivors struggled back to their homes after enduring terrible privations from hunger.

Owing to the defeat of Wad el Nejumi the Khalifa summoned a meeting of the chief emirs to Omdurman to discuss

the situation. By the death of Wad el Nejumi, Osman Digna was now the chief of all the Khalifa's emirs. He left Tokar on October 7th for Omdurman, leaving Abu Girga in command. The latter at once made overtures to the Government, although his protestations of loyalty were open to doubt. At any rate, peace for once reigned in the east and trade recommenced.

Osman Digna was invited to take Wad el Nejumi's place in command of the Dongola forces, but stated that his influence did not extend to those parts. He asked to be allowed to return to the east, where his name was well known.

He left Omdurman on December 20th and travelled through Gallabat, Gedaref and Kassala in a vain attempt to obtain recruits.

By the death, on December 22nd, of Mahmud Bey Ali, the Government was deprived of the services of one of the most influential of the natives in the neighbourhood and one who had always been loyal to it.

That same year (1889) pestilence and famine swept through the Sudan. Many of the best cultivators had been ordered to Omdurman to serve with the Khalifa's armies; others were under arms elsewhere or had been killed in battle. The fighting and universal unsettlement of the past few years had depleted any little stores of grain that the people may have had; their supplies of seed corn had run low. Terrible though the losses by war had been during the past few years, they were dwarfed into insignificance by the appalling fate that overwhelmed the wretched inhabitants. Millions died in a few months, and, when the crops were ripe, locusts darkened the skies and devoured the only foodstuffs that the people had. No part of the Sudan was spared: the natives dropped down in the streets and their friends were too weak to give them burial. Cannibalism became the horrible habit of many of the strictest of the true believers, who in more normal times would not even eat a sheep unless its throat had first been cut " in the name of God " in order to make it lawful meat for the dutiful Mohammedan. In Kassala, where Osman Digna now was, the hyænas became so bold that they abandoned their usual custom of scavenging round the town by night and actually invaded the main streets in the middle of the day. The unclean brutes ate dead and dying; the strong fled before them, the weak were eaten in their tracks. So dread was the menace that Osman Digna was compelled to marshal the whole of his army and lay siege to Jebel Kukram, where most of the

hyænas had their lairs. A slaughter extending over three days brought relief to the inhabitants, who were once more able to leave their houses without the fear of meeting a terrible death.

§ 5

The year 1889 closed amid general confusion in the East. Osman Digna's influence was at a very low ebb. Inter-tribal friction had increased. Raiding and brigandage were rife. The natives generally were more heartily sick of the turmoil than before.

They were anxious for the termination of the Dervish rule of oppression, but owing to their mutual distrust of each other they were unable effectively to combine against it. The insecurity of their life and the uncertainty as to what might happen to their families and their herds while they were peacefully occupied about their everyday business became more and more irksome.

The attitude of the Government towards them was uncertain. It had openly announced its intention of abandoning the Sudan, as it had, as a matter of fact, done. The natives not only feared the vengeance of their neighbours, but there was always a risk of an army of Baggara, Jaalin, and others swooping down upon them.

During the year 1890 the slave trade in the Sudan once more came into prominence. The British sloops and other men-of-war were powerless to stop the crossing to Arabia of the various Arab dhows, which could lie up in many creeks, where a large ship could not enter, and then slip across to the other side of the Red Sea in under two days. There was also the question of relieving Suakin, which could best be done by the capture of Tokar and the consequent cutting off of the supplies for Osman Digna. The loss of Tokar would mean that Osman Digna had no other base near at hand and would be forced to abandon his hold on the Eastern Sudan. The obstacle in the way was a doubt as to whether Tokar could be the final military objective. Sir Evelyn Baring felt that possibly the strategists might urge the occupation of some other advanced post beyond Tokar in order to ensure its safety, and so on until the ultimate objective was still far away. The Egyptian finances could not yet support a costly military campaign. Lord Salisbury, in a characteristic private letter to Sir Evelyn Baring, gave expression to this feeling of

uncertainty when he said that the soldiers, "if they were allowed full scope, would insist on the garrisoning of the moon in order to protect us from Mars."

It was finally decided to capture Tokar, if this could be accomplished at a small cost. Reinforcements were sent to Suakin. Communications with the Dervishes suddenly ceased. There was no more trade. The inhabitants of Tokar found their supplies cut off and they were reduced to a state bordering upon starvation. Many of them deserted the man whose appearance in the district was the signal for death from hunger or from wounds. Cholera, moreover, broke out near Suakin and the friendlies were not allowed within the walls of the town. With the fear of cholera on one side and the enemy inland they were in a parlous condition and implored the Government to crush Osman Digna once and for all. They were all ready and eager to assist, but were not strong enough to tackle him by themselves.

The stopping of trade and the supplies and of all commercial relations was rightly interpreted by the rebels to indicate the reopening of hostilities, and they, on their part, began to make preparations for the coming fight.

Colonel Holled-Smith, in command of the troops in Suakin, asked for permission to attack Tokar, and, as a preliminary, advanced against various isolated posts round Suakin which continued to harry the friendlies. On January 27, 1891, Colonel Holled-Smith, with 150 men, captured Handub, the Dervishes under the command of Mohammed Adam Saadun making no attempt at resistance. Other minor successes were gained which gave the neighbouring tribes confidence in Government. Particularly gratifying was the capture of Osman Digna's personal flag at Tamai. Its loss was regarded by Osman Digna as ominous, and, by a strange whim of fortune, these fears proved well-founded. Osman Digna from this time onwards met with nothing but reverses.

Suakin was now free for the first time for many years from the threat of attack. It was felt that if an assault were made upon Tokar the Government could at last rely upon the support of many of the inhabitants whose attitude in the past had been uncertain owing to their not knowing what the policy of the Government was and whether they might not once more be left to their fate by it.

On February 8th Colonel Holled-Smith left Suakin and three days later Trinkitat was occupied. Osman Digna, who was kept well informed of all the movements of the Govern-

ment troops, set out for Handub as soon as he heard that it had been captured. The soldiers had been withdrawn from here to participate in the attack on Tokar and only a few police held the place. Reinforcements of friendlies were rushed to its relief, but before Osman Digna could attack it he received an urgent request for assistance from Wad Tahir Magdhub at Tokar, who informed him that a great force of English and Egyptians was advancing against him. At this time Tokar was guarded by only some 500 Dervishes under the command of Wad el Sheikh Tahir Magdhub; so Osman Digna, hurriedly abandoning his original intention of recapturing Handub, made a series of forced marches in order to save his headquarters.

The proposal of Colonel Holled-Smith to effect the capture of Tokar was received with some apprehension in Cairo, and General Grenfell was anxious to assume command if there was any possibility of operations developing on a large scale. The situation in the Eastern Sudan was still uncertain; so Major Wingate of the Intelligence Department, accompanied by Colonel Settle, who was to assume the duties of Chief Staff Officer, was dispatched to make a report, but, on arriving at Suakin, they found to their astonishment that the expeditionary force had already left for Tokar. They immediately set out for Trinkitat, but as the captain of the ship refused to enter the harbour after dark, they were compelled to make their way as best they could through the coral reefs in a rowboat. After a hazardous voyage they succeeded in finding Colonel Holled-Smith, who had given orders for the force to advance early the next morning in the firm conviction that he would not be faced by anything but an insignificant force.

Meanwhile Osman Digna had celebrated his return to Tokar by executing Waj Hassan and two other chieftains who were suspected of a desire to desert to the Government and had made all preparations to offer a strong resistance.

The expeditionary force camped at El Teb, where a redoubt was constructed. On the morning of February 18th the troops prepared for the final stage of their advance, when fortunately a dense sandstorm blew up and immobilized the column.

Major Wingate seized the opportunity to send out a few spies in order to obtain any information they could. A shot soon rang out in the thickening clouds of sand, and shortly afterwards the spies returned leading one of the Dervishes by the ear and carrying the saddle from the horse of another who had been killed. The first of the Dervishes was then taken

into a tiny shelter by Major Wingate, who spent four weary hours in an attempt to obtain news. Threats and cajolery alike proved unavailing for a time, but at length the prisoner was induced to speak and said that so far from Osman Digna being present at Tokar with an insignificant following there were 7,000 men under his command ready at Afafit to attack Colonel Holled-Smith. Wingate insisted on the seriousness of the situation and before going ahead to reconnoitre with a few friendlies and a squadron under Major Beech, he asked the A.A.G., Colonel Rundle, to use his influence and prevent the main force from advancing until the scouts were well in front. If there was a large body of the enemy at Afafit, as Wingate believed, the scouts would be able to locate them, or at any rate give warning of their presence if suddenly attacked in the thick scrub.

The little party went on ahead and found the enemy in between the ruins of old Tokar and Afafit. A few shots were fired without inflicting any serious loss and Wingate returned with all speed with his reconnaissance party to the ruins, where he found the Government troops standing at ease unconscious of the 7,000 Dervishes less than a mile away. The Commander accompanied by his Staff then climbed up the ruins, but all seemed quiet over the sea of green scrub which met their gaze, and Holled-Smith was about to descend unconvinced of the enemy's proximity when suddenly the banners of the Dervishes appeared above the scrub only 1,500 yards away. With dramatic swiftness the attack developed. The troops were hastily formed up and the camels brought into the centre of the square. A desperate fight ensued in which the Dervishes displayed their usual intrepidity and dash. The result, however, was a foregone conclusion, so different was the mettle of the troops of the Egyptian army from the days when the men had allowed themselves to be slaughtered like sheep less than ten years before. The enemy were defeated with a loss of 700 killed, including 17 of their chieftains. The Dervishes scattered, but appeared to re-form on some distant sandhills and a second battle seemed imminent, but a shell fired at long range from one of the guns dispersed the gathering, and Wingate and Beech with a small reconnaissance party of cavalry and mounted friendlies warily approached the Dervish settlement of Afafit which turned out to be a vast collection of straw huts—a township that had but recently housed 20,000 of the Arabs. There was no sign of life, and the advanced guard made their way into the middle with the intention of setting fire

to the houses. They reached the praying square in the centre without seeing a sign of life and then an ancient greybeard appeared upon the scene. Lifting an emaciated hand above his head the old man asked in a high-pitched scream, " Is it peace ? " " It is Peace," said Major Wingate. Twice was the query repeated and answered, and the ancient appeared convinced. " Peace," he screeched as loud as he was able, and at the sound men, women, and children, hens, sheep, and goats poured from the silent huts as if at the waving of a conjuror's wand. In a few minutes the camp became a humming hive of activity. Women set themselves about their household tasks, grinding their millet and relighting their hastily extinguished fires. The fighting men surrendered, and only a few of Osman Digna's personal followers were still sufficiently irreconcilable to remain by the side of their defeated leader. Some joined the forces of El Amin Shaib and followed him to Kassala. Others, to the number of 300, accompanied Osman Digna to Adarama, which was henceforward to be his head-quarters.

The losses of the Anglo-Egyptian army only amounted to one British officer and nine soldiers killed, in addition to forty-eight wounded.

This victory was all the more gratifying to the authorities as the fourth battalion of the Egyptian army, consisting of Egyptians, took part in the fighting with distinction. The Egyptians had fought well at Argin and Toski, and it was felt by those who had worked so hard to reorganize the Egyptian army after its various defeats eight years ago that the fruits of their labours were beginning to ripen. If the men could face the hordes of Osman Digna they would be able, when the day came, to hold their ground against the Khalifa.

Tokar was entered by the victorious troops, who were enthusiastically received by the inhabitants, many of whom bore only too tragic traces of Osman Digna's rule in their mutilated limbs.

Osman Digna with difficulty made his way to Temerein and thence to Adarama. Many of his followers died of starvation, and those who survived were reduced to eating the figs of the wild sycamore and any grasses that they could find by the wayside.

Mohammed Khalid was sent by the Khalifa to warn Osman Digna against being embroiled again in a general engagement, and from this time onwards Osman Digna played but little part in the history of the times.

With the disappearance of Osman Digna the Suakin–Berber route was once more opened for trade, but in the summer

of 1892 the elusive Hadendoa returned again and attacked the Temerein post, only to be beaten off with a loss of seventy men.

Nothing of any note occurred during the next three years, during which time Osman Digna remained for the most part at Adarama.

§ 6

After the loss of Tokar, Osman Digna was compelled to withdraw from the neighbourhood. He was given instructions by the Khalifa to choose a camping ground from which he could raid any hostile force that came from the west and also to collect food for his army from the nearest natives of the Red Sea Littoral. Gedaref at this time was under the command of Zeki Tummal; Berber was held by Zeki Osman. Osman Digna decided on Adarama, seventy-five miles to the south-east of the junction of the Nile and Atbara Rivers.

After a visit to Omdurman, where, according to Slatin, he was very favourably received by the Khalifa, who condoled with him over his defeat at Tokar, Osman Digna set sail with some thirty boat-loads of grain for Dakhila, not far from the present town of Atbara. From here the grain was carried on camel-back to Adarama, where Osman Digna began to make a permanent settlement for his subjects. Shaigia labourers were summoned to put up some mud buildings; a large mosque was erected, as well as houses for the chief emirs. A township sprang up in the desert.

From here Osman Digna set about the administration—or perhaps it would be more correct to say the domination—of the neighbouring tribes. Special postmen on whom he could rely implicitly for the safe and expeditious conveyance of the mails were appointed, an office that carried with it considerable authority and prestige. Emirs or heads of the sections of a tribe were chosen—a grandiloquent term, meaning prince. This title was not only different from the old Turkish rank of Nazir (and to be preferred for that reason) but was calculated to inspire the subordinates with an impression of sublimity on the part of the holders of the office. For the common title of sheikh the rank of "aamil" was substituted. Once these chieftains were appointed they were given supreme powers, although the duties which were most important, and in comparison with which others sank into insignificance, were the assessment and collection of taxes.

When the hard life of the camp was over and there was no immediate prospect of any fighting, Osman Digna altered his method of living. His escort was well equipped and well turned out; a good class of building was put up for all his followers. Osman Digna fared more sumptuously and wore clean clothing. The Dervish was now a despot and able to gratify all the animal pleasures that are so often associated with that character. His family, however, only shared to a very limited extent in these improved conditions. Osman Digna wished for no rival near his throne. His relations, accordingly, complained to the Khalifa, saying that all the posts of honour were in the hands of the Hadendoa. The Khalifa ordered Osman Digna to help his family, and the Dignai were in consequence installed in many of the most important offices and became the chief representatives of Osman Digna in various parts of the Eastern Sudan.

The next few years passed peacefully away and were entirely devoid of incident until, in the year 1895, Osman Digna raided the Tokar district without doing very much damage. By this time all was quiet in the east, the people were pasturing their flocks and herds, and war was but an ugly memory. At the same time so long as Osman Digna was anywhere in the neighbourhood there was always the possibility of some unexpected razzia to disturb the serenity of the inhabitants. Many of the people were anxious to deal with Osman Digna and either to remove the ever-present menace of his existence or to avenge wrongs that they had received in the past at his hands. Among these people was Sheikh Omar Tita, the hereditary chief of the inhabitants of Erkowit. He had long suffered from the raids, euphemistically termed collection of taxes, of Osman Digna's followers, and, with the approval of the Government, he determined to tolerate them no more A protracted fight ensued amongst the hills of Erkowit, in which Omar Tita succeeded in gaining a slight success. In token of his prowess he sent to the British commander at Suakin a few horses and the hands of some of the slain.

In April, 1896, it was decided to embark upon operations on a more ambitious scale, and troops were dispatched from Tokar and Suakin with a view to meeting at Khor Wintri and forcing an engagement upon Osman Digna or his adherents. At an early stage of the operations the Egyptian cavalry fled back to Suakin, where rumours of disaster were quick to spread through the town, and only the timely arrival of the

10th Sudanese prevented an early set-back from developing into a serious reverse. After some desultory fighting the Dervishes were driven off with a loss of about 100 killed and the same number wounded.

Osman Digna fled with some 600 men and troubled the district no more.

The two expeditionary forces from Tokar and Suakin, which had been under the command of Major Sidney and Colonel Lloyd, had been almost entirely composed of Egyptians, and it had been hoped that, even though many of them were merely reservists, they were now in a position to take the field against the Khalifa. Events had proved that the defence of Tokar and Suakin could not safely be entrusted to them, with the result that Indian troops were once more brought back to the Sudan. Their losses from sickness during the summer months were appalling, and they were compelled to return to their country without the gratification of active service to compensate them for their diminished numbers.

§ 7

On March 12, 1896, the British Government determined on the reconquest of the Sudan and voted a sum of £800,000 for the purpose. The new Egyptian army that had been trained since the disastrous days of 1882 was felt to be strong enough, with the support of the British, to break once and for all the power of the Khalifa and to free the Sudan from the oppression and internecine warfare beneath which it had groaned for so long. Other and far more able pens than that of the present scribe have recorded the details of those stirring times and there is no need to dwell upon their history except in so far as the web of Osman Digna's life is interwoven with them. This is soon spun.

By June 22nd the railway, following the Nile from Wadi Halfa, had reached Akasha. On September 19th was fought the successful engagement of Hafir and, six days later, Dongola was reoccupied.

For the next eleven months the scene of operations was shifted to the 200 miles of sandy desert that separated Wadi Halfa from Abu Hammad.[1] Here by night and by day the desert railway, meandering through the waste like the thin

[1] Common usage has compelled this word to appear in various guises such as Abu Hamad or Abu Hamed or Abu Hammad.

trickle of water that heralds the spate of a mountain torrent in the Red Sea Hills, gradually crept nearer and nearer towards the Dervish stronghold.

Abu Hammad, where it was to join the Nile, was captured on August 8, 1897, though it was not until October 31st that the railway actually reached the river after Berber had been effectively occupied on September 6th.

Osman Digna remained at Adarama, whence small raids were still carried out in many directions Shortly after the capture of Berber news came that Osman Digna with a force of 5,000 men was to be found at Adarama. On October 3rd General Hunter set out in an attempt to deal with the wily Arab, but Osman Digna would not give battle and made his way to Abu Deleiq. It was disappointing that efforts had once again failed to bring the Sudan De Wet to a decisive engagement, but the departure of Osman Digna at any rate had the satisfactory effect of freeing finally the Suakin–Berber route for trade. This was now carried on without any fear of molestation from hostile bands of marauders.

Osman Digna was shortly afterwards summoned to Omdurman by the Khalifa, who realized that the final struggle could not long be delayed He made his way to Halfaya Muluk on the opposite bank of the river to that on which Omdurman was situated. During the winter he moved his camp to the northern end of Omdurman near Khor Shambat.

§ 8

On March 27, 1898, a force operating along the Nile had captured Shendi, and the stage was cleared for the coming fight near the Atbara River.

In the meantime, Osman Digna had left Omdurman and gone to the Shabluka hills, where he had taken over the command from Ahmed Fadil, who was sent to Gedaref. After stopping some two months in this place Osman Digna was ordered to go to Shendi and join Mahmud. The British troops were then coming south towards Shendi to attack the Dervishes, and, after spending some twenty days here, Mahmud and Osman Digna set out for the north. Mahmud was the Khalifa's nephew and knew nothing about warfare. Owing, however, to his relationship to the Khalifa he was put in supreme command of the Dervish army, while Osman Digna had to be content with a more or less roving commission in

charge of an advanced guard of cavalry. At Zeidab, Mahmud and Osman Digna quarrelled, the former wishing to keep in touch with the river as he advanced; but Osman Digna objected, saying that he had had experience of fighting against the English, that he understood their methods of warfare, and that it was madness to keep within range of the British gunboats.

The matter was referred to the Khalifa, who ordered his nephew to follow Osman Digna's advice and march inland. Mahmud, though much against his will, was compelled to submit, and the Dervishes then made their way to Nakheila on the Atbara River. Mahmud pitched his camp amid a grove of dom palms upon the river's bank and proceeded to make a thorn zariba.

Again Mahmud and Osman Digna quarrelled, though by this time the British and Egyptian armies were only thirty miles away.

Osman Digna had at first tried to induce Mahmud to base his army on Adarama, arguing that if the invaders advanced and left a large hostile force on their flanks they would be liable to have their lines of communication cut, or at any rate could be frequently attacked at any point the mobile Arabs chose to pick out. On the other hand, if the British and Egyptian armies decided to attack Adarama they would have to make a special advance of, at least, three days' journey and would have to fight without the support of the gunboats.

The Dervish force was short of food: some were actually ill from hunger and their bodies were swollen. They were reduced to eating horses, donkeys, the fruit of the dom palm, and any offal they could find; many of them were not in a condition to offer any effective resistance.

But Mahmud was no strategist; his one idea was to fight. He had never faced so organized, well-equipped, and disciplined a force as he was now called upon to meet but he put supreme trust in the overwhelming numbers he had at his command.

Osman Digna argued that, situated as they were, so near the main Nile, the Dervishes could easily be surprised by a night-attack. Mahmud, however, refused to alter his original plan and remained at Nakheila.

Osman Digna then tried to persuade Mahmud to choose a more suitable site for his camp. He pointed out that the dried leaves of the dom palms, whether on the trees or strewed upon

the ground, would be very likely to catch fire and that the Dervish position would automatically become untenable.

Mahmud was adamant and refused to give way even when Osman Digna threatened to retire with all his men and leave him to his own resources Osman Digna was still in command of a considerable force, although of the four chieftains who had fought under his banner at Handub and Tokar only El Shaib, who had by now recovered from his wound, was present with him on the Atbara River, the other three being with the Khalifa in Omdurman. Their places were taken by Wad el Abbas of the Mesellemi tribe (a son of the Sheikh el Ebeid, who had proved such a menace to the safety of Khartoum fourteen years before), Abdallah wad Awad el Kerim of the Shukria, and Abd el Rahman el Sughaiir of the Gamuia. Each of these emirs was in command of a rubaa, or quarter, consisting of some 2,000 men, and these in turn were divided up into groups of hundreds or two hundreds under their own officers.

Osman Digna, disgusted with the plans of Mahmud, then informed his followers secretly that he had no authority in the Dervish army, and that, as Mahmud would not listen to his opinion, defeat stared them in the face. He advised them all to return to their own homes as unostentatiously as they could and not stop for the impending disaster. The hint was taken, and during the next few days many of the Hadendoa in small parties deserted from the army.

On the night of Tuesday, April 5th, Generals Rundle and Hunter made a reconnaissance with the cavalry. A few shots were fired into the Dervish camp and this decided most of the remaining Hadendoa to make good their escape. Osman Digna was left with but sixty-four followers

Early on the morning of April 8th the attack of the British and Egyptian armies on the Dervishes began Mahmud had given orders to his men to hold their fire as long as possible. The allied troops advanced with fixed bayonets as steadily as if on parade. As the attack developed and the British and Egyptians advanced without eliciting any reply from the Mahdist troops, Osman Digna, in a fury, seized a rifle and fired, an example in which he was followed by many of the Dervishes near him. Some casualties were inflicted. The British opened a hot fire and soon the Dervish zariba was in flames, as had been foreseen by Osman Digna.

In the general confusion Osman Digna made good his escape with his sixty-four followers, many of whom were

wounded. They had not, however, waited for the main assault on the zariba or the hand-to-hand fighting that ensued, so that they took no real part in the battle, in which Mahmud was totally routed with a loss of 3,000 killed and 2,000 prisoners. Mahmud was captured and the remnants of his army were scattered in all directions.

When the battle was over diligent search was made for the body of Osman Digna, who was known to have been present at the commencement of the fight. The position he had taken up was pointed out, but even then his war-drum was being beaten two hours' distance away and Osman Digna had once more disappeared.

Some thousand Dervishes rallied to the rolling of the drums, and with them Osman Digna made his way to Adarama, where he stopped for a short time. From this place he went to Abu Deleiq, but, after a brief halt in the stronghold of the Batahin—who were no friends of either the Mahdi or the Khalifa—he left for Gedaref, which he reached on the thirteenth day after leaving the battle-field of the Atbara. His journey was a hard one. With his followers he was compelled to live on any wayside herbs that he could find and even the leaves of trees. He had with him now five emirs and rather over 1,000 men drawn from the Hadendoa, Bedeiri, and Dongola tribes. These had all fought under their respective leaders, but made good their escape with Osman Digna in a general *sauve qui peut.*

At Gedaref he remained for a month, when his restless spirit goaded him on the road once more. After a short visit to his friend Tayib el Suakini in Rufaa he left for Adarama, where he found a large village settled down to agricultural pursuits. Looking after their cultivation and tending their flocks and herds were sufficient occupation for the peaceful inhabitants here, and they had no further use for the firebrand from the east. Osman Digna therefore made his home amongst them as an ordinary individual until he was summoned once more by the Khalifa to Omdurman to take part in the great battle that was to break the Dervish power for ever.

On his arrival at Omdurman he was given a special steamer in which to cross the river and met the Khalifa on the west bank. The Khalifa's escort and band accompanied the two chiefs back to the Khalifa's house.

On the next Friday a vast concourse of people assembled in the praying square. Osman Digna took up an unobtrusive

position just behind the Khalifa. After some prayers had been said, Osman Digna rose among the seated masses and made a speech that is reported to have lasted four hours. It was an attempt to console the people for what all now knew to have been the overwhelming defeat at the Atbara. "Do not be sad," he said, "or anxious because Mahmud has been captured; do not dwell on the losses that we have suffered; do not exaggerate the extent of our defeat. Zubeir ibn Awwam [1] was a man twenty thousand times better and greater than Mahmud, yet was he captured The loss of Mahmud, although he is our Khalifa's nephew, is nothing really and cannot ruin our cause. We cannot always win; we must inevitably suffer temporary set-backs."

The four hours' discourse is said to have put fresh heart into the people; the Khalifa was much cheered by it and the Dervishes once more made ready to fight.

Some of Osman Digna's former followers then came and rejoined him, and they all settled down near Shambat.

§ 9

Towards the end of August, 1898, the British and Egyptian armies had reached to within striking distance of the Dervish capital. The final attack could not long be delayed. The followers of the Khalifa realized full well that the next few days would settle the fate of the Dervish dominion. They awaited the issue of the fight with mixed feelings. Many were still whole-heartedly loyal to the Khalifa; their lives and livelihood were bound up with his fate. But there were also vast numbers of the population who had suffered terribly from the exactions of the Mahdi's successor; who had seen the population diminish by three-quarters during his disastrous thirteen years of tyranny, and who welcomed any change of Government to which the pangs of battle might give birth. But, even so, the Khalifa was able to put into the field over 50,000 devoted Dervishes, who were prepared to live or die with their master. Prayers became more frequent as the long-expected day drew near; the Khalifa daily exhorted his followers to be ready for the now imminent battle.

At last news came to them that "the unbelievers" had reached the neighbourhood of Kereri, and on Thursday, September 1st, the whole fighting force in Omdurman sallied

[1] His wife was a sister of Abbas, the uncle of the Prophet.

forth. On the extreme left was Ali wad Helu, and next to him Osman Sheikh el Din. Next again was Osman Azrak, with Khalifa Sherif on the right. The Khalifa and Yacub, with their black flags, were in the rear, and rather behind the centre of the line from where reinforcements could be sent to any part that needed them.

The followers of Osman Digna had only a few rifles, and for this reason they were given a position in the rear, but close to the river. It was hardly a coincidence that Osman Digna had pointed out to the Khalifa the chance of the right flank of the Dervishes being turned by a force marching along the river's bank. Osman Digna was accordingly given this position in the rear of the battle line, where there was little chance of his being called upon to take a very active part in the fighting, although he was in a very favourable position for executing a strategic movement towards the rear if the battle began to go against the Dervishes. His actual post was in the Khor Shambat, and for some reason or other he placed behind his men most of the cattle that they had brought from Adarama. The men spent the night in the khor itself, where they were hidden from view in every direction, while the Khalifa took up a position about 600 yards away from Osman Digna in the direction of Jebel Surgham. He slept little, however, and spent most of the night resting upon his arm. The searchlights from the gunboats worried him, nor is it fanciful to suppose that his thoughts must have been troubled as he pondered upon all that the morrow might bring forth. An unexpected turn of fortune's wheel had elevated him from a lowly position, now thirteen years ago, to one with supreme command over the life and death of nearly ten millions of people. Would the kingdom that he had so fortuitously inherited survive the shock of battle, and even if it did would he live to see its triumph?

His anxieties were increased by the news brought in by two men who said that the British intended to attack during the night—a message that had the invaders but known it would have given them much cause for congratulation. General Kitchener, by his skilful conduct of the Nile campaign, had succeeded in transporting 25,000 troops for a distance of 1,900 miles by land and river. They were all in the best possible condition and ready for the fray. There were two contingencies, however, over which Kitchener had no control at all. The Dervishes might refuse to fight and withdraw from Omdurman, or they might make a night-attack. In the latter

eventuality the British and Egyptian armies could only have gained the battle at tremendous cost of life. The fanatical Dervish with rifle and spear would have been almost as good as the best of the troops pitted against him in the darkness of the night. Some of the newly organized army might possibly prove undependable · whether they would stand firm in a hot encounter had still to be determined; even a small or temporary break of the zariba at night-time might create a panic in the small but crowded piece of ground that the invading armies had taken up.

At this point Slatin Pasha, who was on the staff of the Intelligence Department, gained his reward for ten years' captivity in the Dervish capital. He knew the people individually, he understood the workings of the native mind, and he suggested that the best way to prevent the Dervishes from launching a night-attack was to give them the impression that their stronghold would itself be assaulted that night. Spies and friendlies passed to and fro between the Dervish and the British armies. Slatin took a few of these aside and told them as a deadly secret that the British meant to attack Omdurman during the night, and that, as these individuals had proved loyal and useful servants to the British, they should go at once and warn their own particular families to make good their escape immediately. The importance of telling no one but their own near relatives was impressed upon them, and they were urged to exercise their utmost discretion in order not to give warning of the impending attack. These various messengers hurried off and, as had been anticipated, the news was soon spread far and wide throughout the Dervish camp. Two messengers, as we have seen, even went straight to the Khalifa with the information.

Just before the dawn the Dervishes offered up their morning prayers, of whom nearly 10,000 did so for the last time. Those who had a little food with them ate it, but there was no time to prepare their wonted cup of coffee. Ali Wad Helu and Osman Sheikh el Din moved on towards the Kereri ridge, while the Khalifa and Yacub advanced near Jebel Surgham. Osman Digna remained behind in the rocky watercourse of Shambat.

And here Kitchener's proverbial luck held good once more—the luck that had found him water in the middle of the Nubian desert, above the level of the waters of the Nile a hundred miles away, in a sand-strewn desert waste where rains but seldom fell. The night-attack that he had dreaded had failed, to

materialize, but it was hardly to be expected that having lost so golden an opportunity, when all the odds were in their favour, the Dervishes would actually have the audacity or foolhardiness to assault the entrenched position in broad daylight, when all the scales of battle were heavily weighted against them. Yet so they did. But for all their wonderful bravery the wretched, undisciplined hordes could not live against the withering fire of the rifles, machine-guns, and shells that mowed them down in thousands. The rattling of the machine-guns, which spat bullets and sand at the defenceless Dervishes in particular demoralized the hapless creatures. The uncanniness of the hail of bullets unnerved them in spite of the innocence of the sound, which they likened to that of water seething in an earthenware jar: for which reason they referred in after days to the machine-guns as the "*goolah gedid*," or "new jar."

When he at last realized that the day was lost the Khalifa mounted his white ass and set off for Omdurman, accompanied by his faithful servant Abdallah, an Abyssinian who had been captured by the Dervishes at the battle when King John was killed. On their way they came to the rock-strewn watercourse where Osman Digna still lay hidden. In accordance with the traditions of the times he prepared to meet his fate in company with the remnants of his stricken host. A few yards behind the watercourse the Khalifa spread his sheepskin in anticipation of the end. Hardly had he begun to do so when the 21st Lancers made their famous charge into the khor. All unconscious of the lonely figure, who must have been but a few yards away from them, the Lancers re-formed and charged once more through the watercourse. The Dervishes who had been with Osman Digna tried to make good their escape, most of them running away from the river towards the desert, where they were pursued by the cavalry and suffered many casualties.

Osman Digna himself then went up to the Khalifa and seizing him by the hand said that all was not yet over. They would collect another force and once again try the issue with the forces of the Government. "One day," he said, "we will both die fighting on horseback, but it is of no use waiting here upon your sheepskin, for do you not see that the enemy advance no more? They wish for no more fighting and killing now."

Osman Digna then summoned his groom, who was leading his horse. For a short time he wandered with the Khalifa on

their last journey towards Omdurman. But soon Osman Digna turned away to join his men, leaving the Khalifa on his white ass to make a lonely entry into Omdurman with only the dutiful Abdallah for escort. He went first to his house on the outskirts of the city, where he rested, drank a little water, and for the first time that day sounded his three ombayas and beat his war-drums to rally the people. But they all streamed by in hurried rout, many of them sorely wounded, and refused to join the leader who had brought so many of them to their doom. The Khalifa retired to the mosque and once again tried to collect his fleeing followers, but none responded, and at last he entered his house near the Mahdi's tomb. Here he took some water and honey and prayed. Abdallah, worn out with the fatigues of the day, fell asleep and woke to find that his master had disappeared. He wandered about the house and looked for the swords of Gordon and Hicks Pasha These swords and the crown of King John the Khalifa had been in the habit of throwing upon the ground when he wished to impress the people with the magnitude of the victories he had won. Finding the swords in their place, Abdallah then locked up the house and started forth in search of his master.[1]

During the battle of Omdurman, the fiercest part of which lasted less than five hours, the Dervishes lost over 9,700 men killed and anything from 10,000 to 15,000 wounded, as well as 5,000 prisoners. The rout was complete, and had the Khalifa refused to take the advice of Osman Digna the final destruction of Mahdiism would have taken place a year before it actually did.

It is sad to think of the losses that these brave and loyal Dervishes incurred in defence of so heartless a cause, and that the kingdom of the Khalifa could only be washed away in such tempestuous seas of blood. Kitchener had tried to induce the Khalifa to surrender, and had sent him a letter two days before the battle offering to spare his life and the town of Omdurman if he would give himself up. The Khalifa's only reply had been to tear the letter up and to announce to his followers that the unbeliever would soon be delivered into his hands.

With the flight of the Khalifa, the Dervish kingdom ceased to exist, although the Khalifa himself was to keep the field for another year and collect a sufficient force to harass the new administration that was speedily built up upon the ruins of

[1] Evidence for above: Mohammed Beleil, a Jaali of the Omarab section who was Osman Digna's clerk, Mustafa Mohammed Fagirai, Mussayab section of Amarar, who was with Osman Digna at the Atbara and Omdurman; examination of the slave Abdallah

the old But once the Dervish kingdom began to disintegrate it crumbled to pieces with extraordinary rapidity. It had only been kept together by fear and the inability of the Arab tribes to combine under the leadership of one whom they could severally trust and respect. The centrifugal forces that lay more or less dormant while the Khalifa's power was supreme speedily came to the surface when that supremacy was challenged.

The kingdom had been won by the sword and maintained by the sword, and by the sword it perished.

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MOHAMMED BEY AHMED.

CHAPTER VIII

Battle of Gedid; death of the Khalifa Osman Digna escapes to the Eastern Sudan Capture of Osman Digna. Sent to Rosetta Prison. Brought to Wadi Halfa

§ 1

THE overwhelming defeat of the Dervishes at Omdurman gave clear proof that the cause which so many of the people had espoused, and still more had had reason to regret, was irretrievably lost. The natives hastened to make submission to the Government troops as they continued their march to the south.

On December 11th Colonel Marchand and his gallant band of adventurers started from Fashoda on their weary journey back to Abyssinia and the coast. Five days later Nasser on the Sobat River surrendered.

The successful engagement of Colonel Parsons with Ahmed Fadil on December 26th delivered the Blue Nile as far as Roseires into the hands of the allied troops. By the end of the year 1898 the whole of the Northern, Central, and Eastern Sudan had been reconquered, Only the Khalifa, with a few irreconcilables, including Osman Digna, still defied the Government. For ten months more the Khalifa Abdallahi harried the people of Kordofan, but on November 24, 1899, General Wingate broke his power for ever at the battle of Gedid. The Khalifa, scorning to purchase his liberty by flight, spread his sheepskin upon the ground and bravely met his end. In obedience to his commands Ali wad Helu, Ahmed Fadil, and other chiefs of less importance copied his example and died upon the field of battle. But Osman Digna once more, by an undignified departure, obtained a brief spell of freedom. The battle of Gedid, however, had closed almost the last avenue of escape. Osman Digna found himself in a strange part of the Sudan, abandoned by all his followers. He therefore attempted to make his way back to the neighbourhood of his earliest successes, where alone he was likely to find any of his supporters. But General Wingate had already anticipated the direction in which Osman Digna would try and make good his escape.

It so happened that, after the battle of Gedid, General Wingate had been idly turning over the pages of an old copy of the "Strand Magazine"—the only literature there was in the camp. With his thoughts still occupied by the battle, he chanced to come across an article on criminals and their habits By a not unnatural association of ideas Osman Digna at once came to mind. Criminals, read General Wingate, frequently returned to the haunts of their crimes, and he at once came to the conclusion that perhaps Osman Digna might try and break back to the neighbourhood of Suakin. Telegrams were dispatched to Colonel Collinson at Kassala and Major Godden at Suakin. Osman Digna was known to have crossed the Atbara and to be making for the east. He had already crossed the Nile at Aba Island, and, after stopping for a little time at Adarama, had made off for the Red Sea hills. The natives were warned of the penalties that they would incur by harbouring the fugitive. Search-parties of soldiers and police were ready to receive him. At last rumours began to go round that Osman Digna was in the Waribba hills, an unexplored and tumultuous range of mountains. The Waribba was a massif practically inaccessible in many places to anything less surefooted than an ibex or less agile than a Hadendoa. Here were congregated the Gemilab tribe, who had been among the staunchest of Osman Digna's supporters. Osman Digna questioned the sheikh, Mohammed Ali el Emir Or, as to whether the Gemilab would not once more take the field. He was met with the reply that every single member of the Hadendoa had done with fighting and only wished to tend his flocks and herds in peace. Osman Digna, realizing that at last all was lost, asked the sheikh to arrange for him to make his way to Jedda in a sambuk, or native sailing vessel. The sheikh promised to do so, but, after leaving a servant to look after him and a dog to give warning of the approach of an enemy, Mohammed Ali el Emir Or at once dispatched his nephew to Suakin. But the servant was told to keep Osman Digna short of food and, if the dog barked at the approach of Government troops, Osman Digna was to be informed that it was only the passing of some flocks and herds that had attracted the attention of the hound.

No sooner had the sheikh's nephew arrived in Suakin than he made his way to the head-quarters of the Governor, and told him of where Osman Digna was to be found. The news was passed on to Mohammed Bey Ahmed, the commandant of police, who did not believe that it could be true. So frequent

had been the rumours of the imminent capture of Osman Digna brought by various natives, who wished to obtain some food or clothing or a pecuniary reward, that all reports were received with considerable reserve. Mohammed Bey then questioned the messenger and asked him what it was that he wanted, a sack of grain or a new piece of cloth, that he brought so unlikely a tale. He was, however, met with the indignant reply: "I am the nephew of a sheikh; is it likely that such a man would lie for so paltry a reward?"

At this time all the available troops were searching for Osman Digna in the Red Sea hills, but so great, in spite of all that had happened, was his hold upon the people that only one was found to betray him, and that one from the tribe that had in the past been amongst the most loyal of his followers. In fact, the betrayal of Osman Digna is still commemorated to-day amongst the Hadendoa. A song made up by the Hamdab that a wayfarer sings to his camel when it wants to go in a certain direction to find water represents the detestation that many of them feel. The man remonstrates with his camel, saying that if it goes where the Gemilab sold Osman Digna to the Government he will not find water to sustain life.

Einda w'amir Usman abka,
Miri reiwib diiyaba.
O ri bibai Hassai Musaor
Midhun oarbai harutti

("The men took the chieftain Osman and sold him for a price to the Government. My boy, Hassai, son of Musa do not go seeking him in the hills like that.")

Fifteen police were collected and set out under the command of Mohammed Bey Ahmed. They were instructed to try and meet Captain Burges (of the Gloucestershire Regiment), who was reported to be somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Waribba.

For the first fifty miles the journey lay over a level salty plain with only a little low scrub to break the monotony of the track. After ten hours' steady trekking the first outcrops of the barrier of mountains that guard the eastern approaches of the Sudan were met with. They extend from the boundaries of Eritrea and beyond up to Egypt, where they continue as far as the Suez Canal. They present no great difficulties and consist merely of rocky ridges gradually increasing in height and steepness until the massif itself is encountered. Sheer from the plain to perhaps a height of 3,000 feet these mountain

ranges offer a formidable obstacle to the traveller. Indeed, in many places they cannot be entered at all except by a particularly "well-girt" man. Almost bare of vegetation, they are as inhospitable as the wild tribes who inhabit them. Their mountain passes are steep and difficult of access with loose stones or massive boulders to block the path.

The day was spent at Serobaiet and the night at the foot of the pass of Meiz. From here the little party made its way over the Hazaru defile, where a halt was made for a little while. Once the Hazaru Pass is surmounted a more pleasing prospect greets the eye A plateau of hard sand makes good going for the softly padded camel, and, after the summer rains, the yellow plains take on a gladdening green hue which is especially welcome to the eye wearied by the interminable blacks and browns of the mountain ranges Ridges of shining basalt rocks and granitic outcrops, sparkling with mica, here and there star the plain. In every direction appear ranges of mountains, in some places as many as fifty miles away. The general effect one gets is of being in a rather shallow saucer with mountain tops for the rim. Across the open plateau the police made their way to where the lone peak of Beredimma stabs the sky. In the distance stand the grim heights of Sabeedana. As far as the eye can see in the smoke-blue distance stretches chain after chain of serrated hills. East and south there appears to be no way into these wild fastnesses which flash into a momentary beauty as the rising sun irradiates their pinnacles and bastions, and brings a rosy blush to the fleecy clouds above them. Only to the north and west is an occasional gap visible. Between Beredimma and Sabeedana was the supposed lair of Osman Digna and near at hand was Captain Burges with another small body of police.

Amid these picturesque but treacherous surroundings the stage was set for the final act of the drama. Nor was the setting unworthy of the actor, who was thus to play his last part in the world's history. Boulder was piled upon boulder in precipitous inaccessibility. Deep gullies, across which it almost appeared as if an active man might leap, separated one hill from its neighbour; yet to cross from one height to another might well take a half day's journey, so sheer the drop, so rugged the path. A stone dislodged from a hill-top crashed and reverberated from ledge to ledge as it plunged in headlong flight to the distant depths below; and yet, as soon as the echoes have ceased to resound, a brooding stillness, like the darkness that can almost be felt, once more enwraps the wilder-

ness. Only the rushing of the fitful wind up the inhospitable gorges avails to break the silence.

Hidden in a cave some six feet above the bottom of one of these ravines Osman Digna awaited the return of the messenger who was to betray him.

Mohammed Bey told Captain Burges that Osman Digna was reported to be concealed somewhere in the neighbourhood, and asked him whether he wished to take part in what might after all prove but a futile chase. So often had attempts to capture Osman Digna been brought to naught that his elusiveness had become a byword, his arrest almost a subject for jesting. He had been reported killed at El Teb, Tamineb, Tokar, Kufeit. His presence had been traced from time to time at Kassala, Tokar, Abu Deleiq, Adarama. Wherever he had been for any length of time news of him had at once been brought in to the Government. He had been seen at Omdurman, he was known to have been present at the battle of the Atbara. Many had been the attempts to effect his capture. The only result had been either the dispersal of his forces or the escape by flight of the leader. It was therefore in no very great spirit of confidence that Mohammed Bey Ahmed approached Captain Burges, who however, was willing to embark upon any enterprise that might result in the capture of the last, and perhaps the most famous, of the Dervish emirs.

Captain Burges had gone out to look for Osman Digna with but six men and provisions for only a fortnight. He had reason to believe that the fugitive was hidden somewhere in the Waribba hill. But the maps in those days were so inaccurate and incomplete that the Waribba, so far from being a solitary mountain as was supposed, was a mass of rugged cliffs and precipices covering an area of some 300 square miles. Sixteen days had now elapsed since Captain Burges had set out from Suakin, but he had been able to eke out his scanty store of provisions by shooting an occasional gazelle. Of milk or bread there was none, as nearly all the natives had disappeared, either from fear of the Government or from respect for Osman Digna. In any event, they had no wish to be involved once more in the political upheaval from which they had so recently escaped. Occasionally some woman was encountered, but she either lied or prevaricated to such an extent that any grain of truth there might have been in her statement was too insignificant to be of any use. But little by little the news spread round, and the offer of a hundred pounds for information as to Osman Digna's whereabouts

at last produced the desired results. Information had been taken in to Suakin and the net was now cast in which Osman Digna was to be caught

At sunset on the afternoon of January 12, 1900, Captain Burges and Mohammed Bey Ahmed, with a force that had now been increased to twenty-five police, set off to find the cave where Osman Digna lay hid. The party travelled all night, and just before dawn arrived at the camel-hair tent where lived the Sheikh Mohammed el Emir Or. In the darkling distance could be seen the dim outlines of the hill where Osman Digna was said to be. The situation was discussed and the sheikh, after explaining what arrangements had been made with his servant for detaining Osman Digna, told Mohammed Bey to go in a certain direction and then listen for the barking of a dog. As soon as he heard the noise he should go straight to the spot. Mohammed Bey was furious and exclaimed, "What! Have I, the head of all the Suakin police, come all this distance, and then am I to be told to listen for the yelping of a cur? Lead on until we approach the place where Osman Digna is. Then you can withdraw and leave the matter to us and the police."

The little party once more set off, and, after journeying some three miles, they heard a dog bark close at hand. The sheikh turned back and Captain Burges made his dispositions for the capture of Osman Digna.

The police had now been marching for nearly twelve hours. The camels were tied up to prevent their giving the alarm. The police removed their coats and tarbushes. The men were strung out at fifty paces interval and instructed to advance slowly and take advantage of any little cover there might be. But the Arab police were much too excited to advance at a walking pace and speedily broke into a run. Faint, yet pursuing, the portly proportions of the commandant of police were soon left behind while the rest of the force raced to the cave.

Dawn had now broken and the insistent barking of the dog, wiser than the refugee, had awakened Osman Digna, who inquired the reason of his servant. The slave replied that it was merely the passing of some Arabs with their flocks and herds that had disturbed the dog, and Osman Digna lay back and began to read his Koran. In the meantime the servant busied himself with the preparation of a savoury dish of meat, to which Osman Digna had long been a stranger. A fragrant smell was borne upon the breeze to the hungry outcast. Suddenly the whole police force rushed upon the cave where Osman

Digna lay reading his Koran and lazily watching the preparation of his meal. He ran to the entrance, only to find the police in front of him. But the cave, as so many others in those hills, had another exit, and Osman Digna made his way to the back of it. The police then commenced to scale the boulders, and Captain Burges found his sword a considerable handicap. He had just discarded it when he chanced to look up and caught a glimpse of a dirty jibba as it flitted from one hole to another only thirty or forty feet up the mountain-side. Osman Digna was speedily surrounded, and one of the police, by name Mahmud Adab, shouted to Osman Digna in the Hadendoa language, "Stop! Oh, Abu Halima, your time for running away has now passed." "I do not run away," said Osman Digna, "but now, as ever, and in accordance with my master's commands, I turn my face away from the unbelievers." Osman Digna was then seized and heavily chained.

Neither Captain Burges nor Mohammed Bey had ever seen Osman Digna close at hand, and Captain Burges asked Mohammed Bey how they could know for certain that this was the man for whom they had so long been searching. Then Mohammed Bey remembered the fighting at Sinkat nearly seventeen years before, and said, "Look and see if there is a sword wound in the middle of the head and a bullet wound upon the left wrist, and see if there is a mark of a bayonet in his back. If you find them, then you will know that this is he whom we want." So Captain Burges looked and found the wounds and they knew that at last Osman Digna would trouble the Government no more.

Yet so great was the fear and respect in which Osman Digna was still regarded that Captain Burges did not know whether even now an attempt might not be made to effect his rescue By a long and circuitous route the police once more set out on their weary journey back to Suakin. And though many of the Sudanese gave vent to their joy at his capture with their loud "lulu ings," there was many a frown and muttered curse as the captive made his way through the streets of the town that he had for so long attempted to capture.

From Suakin, where he arrived on January 21st, he was taken to the prison of Rosetta in Egypt. As the train stopped in the station at Cairo on January 26th, General Wingate took the opportunity of asking Osman Digna how it was that on the fatal field of Gedid when the Khalifa and his gallant emirs had bravely met their death Osman Digna had not been

numbered with the slain. "I am a soldier, as you are," said Osman Digna, "and it is my duty to obey orders. Before the battle my master, the Khalifa, placed the women of his harem in my charge It was my duty to look after them. By the time I had assured their safety the battle was over. I could do nothing and fled I had hoped to escape across the sea to Arabia, and should have succeeded but for the treachery of the Gemilab sheikh."

§ 2

After spending a short time in the Rosetta Prison, Osman Digna was transferred to Tourah, and thence to Wadi Halfa, where the climatic conditions were more similar to those to which he was accustomed. As the years passed away the bonds of imprisonment were loosened so as to be almost unnoticeable He lived in a separate compound, which contained two lofty well-aired rooms sixteen feet long by thirteen feet broad. A door and window opened upon the courtyard in which he could read, sleep, or walk whenever he chose. The outer of the two rooms was occupied by his Egyptian army guard of a non-commissioned officer and nine men. But these never intruded upon his privacy and were more necessary for keeping away from him the over-inquisitive visitor, who would have been only too pleased to catch a glimpse of the Dervish leader who had defied the British so long.

A plentiful supply of dates, milk, bread and vegetables, and other food was at his disposal, a far more luxurious and plentiful fare than he has ever known before. In fact, his monthly bill for food came to no less than £6 13s., an inordinate amount in the Sudan, where most of the necessities of life are surprisingly cheap.

As a rule, however, Osman Digna eats but one meal a day, as in the month of Ramadan, when the strictest of the Mohammedans eat once only, after sunset. His diet consists mainly of milk, dates and a special kind of cake, of which he is fond. He has his own box of personal effects and as many blankets as he wishes for in winter, luxuries to which, in his spacious days of freedom and at the height of his power, he was a complete stranger.

In order to cheer his closing days two of his wives were asked if they would care to join him, but they both refused to go back to a man from whose cruelties they were only too glad to be released. For this reason Osman Digna refused to

divorce them and has been, in consequence, frequently abused. According to religious law a slight has been cast upon the fathers of these two women who have been themselves wronged. They are prevented from marrying again; they are in receipt of no alimony or other means of support, and are dependent on the charity of their neighbours for the very means of life.

One of his sons was even asked whether he would take care of his father if he were to be given his freedom, but he, too, refused, knowing full well that both the lives of himself and his father would be endangered by such a release. The relatives of the hundreds of men whom Osman Digna had done to death would not only have been too happy to kill their former leader, but, in accordance with their tribal laws, they would have been in duty bound to do so.

The would-be friends of Osman Digna and other ignorant reactionaries whose chief joy in life seems to lie in trying to embarrass any Government that happens to be in power, would do well to study the history of the times, the character of Osman Digna, and the tribal customs. Even a slight acquaintance with the spirit of the people and of their patriarchal laws would have prevented them from falling into the foolish error of clamouring for his release some years ago.

General Wingate, who has very kindly supplied me with much information concerning Osman Digna, gives a good illustration of what would happen were Osman Digna to be set free from captivity and allowed to go back to the Red Sea hills:

> During one of my many visits to the hilly country above Suakin a rumour had spread that Osman Digna was to be released in order to return and live in the Eastern Sudan. I was even credited with being a party to his release and he was said to be actually travelling in my train. I was not, of course, aware of these rumours, and as my train drew up at the "Summit" station (near Sinkat) I was welcomed by the assembled sheikhs and notables, most of them Osman's former adherents. After the usual civilities, I dismissed them, but instead of departing quietly, a rush was made to the empty train and a feverish search of every carriage followed. When I inquired the cause of this extraordinary behaviour on the part of these usually courteous and well-conducted sheikhs, the chief of the police, himself, like Osman, an officer of Turkish origin, but nationalized Hadendoa, replied: "These people heard that you had released Osman Digna and had brought him back to his country in your train, they will not have him back, and if they find him they mean to kill him." Needless to say they drew a

blank, and a hearty laugh at their credulity soon restored good humour all round.

When first he was imprisoned Osman Digna adopted a cantankerous attitude towards all who came in contact with him. He even refused to partake of any food unless directly ordered to do so by his jailer. He spent his whole time in brooding over the past and in concentrating his thoughts on religion. The result was that his fanatical spirit was accentuated to the point of mania, though for the most part his behaviour was quiet and subdued. There was, however, an occasional outburst for which there could be found no rational explanation. On one occasion he chose to imagine that the Egyptian sergeant in charge of his escort—a devout Moslem—was a Christian. Arguments to the contrary were of no avail; Osman Digna refused to be convinced and the governor of the province was sent for. The governor asked Osman Digna what complaint he had to make and was treated to a voluble outburst as to the indignity that had been put upon him by appointing a Christian jailer. Osman Digna was asked whether he would be satisfied if the sergeant in question became a Mohammedan and replied that he would. In the presence of Osman Digna the governor and the native non-commissioned officer quietly discussed the correct procedure to be adopted. The sergeant, with commendable perspicuity, played his part, although the piece had not been stage-managed and must have taken him somewhat unawares. The sergeant was finally taken away to go before the cadi and become converted to Islam. After a decent interval the sergeant returned and joined Osman Digna in his prayers.

One of the chief difficulties encountered by the Government in their dealings with the prisoner was to induce him to change his clothes. The influence of his early training and life as a Dervish proved too deeply rooted to be easily eradicated. Considerable ingenuity had to be exercised when washing day came round before Osman Digna could be induced to part with his dirty linen.

As years went on Osman Digna lived more and more either in the dim remembered past or in the contemplation of the world to come.

The present world was almost non-existent, though he was always ready to complain about his food if it were not exactly to his liking.

At Berber he owns some land and a garden which the

Government has allowed him to retain. When asked what he wished to do with it he stated that he had given up the things of this world and took no further interest in his property, which has since been administered by the Mohammedan court on behalf of his heirs.

He lives the life of a religious recluse, as cut off from all communication with the outer world as a monk of the Grecian Isles. So abstracted from all worldly affairs was Osman Digna that when the Government last arranged, in the year 1917, for his son Ali to go and visit his father, Osman Digna not only took no interest whatever in the arrival of his son but refused to greet him or have anything whatever to do with him.

Of his three wives that were living at the time of the battle of Omdurman one, the sister of the head of the Amarar tribe, accompanied him in his wanderings and disappeared at the battle of Gedid. Search was made for her in later years by her relatives, but no trace of her was ever found again. Whether she perished in the fight or what her fate was will never be discovered now. The other two, as has been seen above, refused to join him in his exile.

In the year 1924, old and decrepit as he was, Osman Digna made the tedious pilgrimage to Mecca, and thus obtained his heart's desire. Bent almost double beneath the weight of years, he yet succeeded in bearing the hardships and weariness of the journey without undue fatigue and came safely back to a home that had been prepared for him just outside the town of Wadi Halfa, where he is now no more subjected to the vigilance of a guard.

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MOHAMMED BEY AHMED.

CHAPTER IX

Personal appearance of Osman Digna His character. Fond of preaching Attitude towards his cadis Hears complaints Sternness of his punishments. His simplicity of life Disposal of loot. Taxation Attitude towards disease Treatment of the dead Prayers His eloquence Addresses to women Treatment of women Behaviour in battle Character as a young man Quickness of wit His persuasiveness Comments on his administration. Bravery of his followers

§ 1

IN appearance Osman Digna was the typical Arab sheikh familiar to anyone who is acquainted with an illustrated edition of the "Thousand and One Nights." Although his family had intermarried with the local Hamitic inhabitants it had not been sufficiently long in the Sudan for the light yellowish colour that is characteristic of the Yemeni and Rashaida Arab to have been in any way modified. Osman Digna's connexion with the natives of Arabia Felix had been too recent for any facial changes to have been brought about.

Thick-set and of middle height, he was taciturn and morose in expression and seldom indulged in laughter. On the rare occasions on which he was moved to mirth he would cover his mouth with his hand so that his merriment might be hidden from the spectator. His eyelashes were very thick and his forehead had a habit of wrinkling up when he became angry. His nose, partially aquiline, fell away and was inclined to be snub. These peculiarities were sufficiently pronounced for a photograph of Osman Digna to be recognized by some Arabs who had not seen him for twenty years.

His sharp-cut features must have given him, as a young man, a somewhat hawk-like appearance. Time did much to blunt the fineness, but his eyes never lost their piercing and indeed cruel expression, though his persistent concentration on the things of the next world tended to accentuate their far-away look. Conversing with him during the last days of his life one gained the impression of being in the presence of a Buddhist priest who was so enveloped in the contemplation of the spiritual world as to have severed all connexion with the

material. But his early experiences coloured his outlook on life and moulded his expression in sympathy. His life-spring had been poisoned at its source, and the bitterness of his early losses soured his whole existence. His conduct throughout was inspired by hate—hatred of the effete Turkish administration, hatred of the British who came to the support of the tottering Government and ruined his trade. And yet solitary confinement and communion with his own thoughts wrought an amazing and unexpected change in his temperament. It might have been thought that a forced incarceration of a quarter of a century would have bred the bitterest of fancies in the mind of the prisoner; that the violent change from fame to nonentity, from power to innocuousness, would have instilled in the victim hatred for those who had caused this degradation. Yet, paradoxical though it may seem, the hatred that had inspired Osman Digna in the days of his freedom was commuted, in the time of his captivity, into respect and even affection for his captors and jailers.

Never has the political foresight of the Sudan Government been so well justified as it has been over the way in which it has treated the leaders of the forces who had opposed them for a decade and a half. Osman Digna was offered a temporary asylum from his foes and even complete independence of movement if he chose to avail himself of the opportunity. The sons of the Mahdi and the Khalifa were educated at the expense of the Government and given posts of honour in its ranks. One may fairly speculate as to what other steps less enlightened rulers might have taken against chieftains who had fought desperately against them and defied them for so many years. Yet was the policy justified beyond all possible doubt. In the Great War there were no more loyal supporters of the British and no more enthusiastic adherents than the children of the Khalifa, whose father the English had killed.

Osman Digna showed his appreciation of his British captors by asking for an English officer to accompany him on a pilgrimage to Mecca.

As one of the leaders of a revivalist movement Osman Digna paid strict attention to the written word of the Koran, giving effect to the legal organization laid down in it and only pronouncing judgment after consultation with his cadis. He was always very particular to say when sentencing a criminal that "in conformity with the religious law I pass upon you sentence of death by hanging," or "the loss of a leg and arm" as the case might be. Whether this meticulous regard for the

divine jurisprudence alleviated the distress of the wretched victim history does not relate.

He himself supplied the religious needs of the people who followed him, and every Friday morning he made an address to the assembled multitudes. The subject-matter of a typical sermon may be quoted on the authority of one who, often sorely against his will, listened for many years to the scarcely varying substance of the weekly harangue :

Warriors of God's expected, leave your huts and join the holy cause : fight the holy fight : set out upon the road of God Remove all gold ornaments from your womenfolk and dedicate them to the cause of the expected one : entrust them to his treasure house Be poor in the things of this world, for he who is poor in life will be rich and honoured on the day of Resurrection. These are the commands of the expected of God. " The marriage dowry for a virgin is ten dollars and for a widow no more than five dollars."[1]

Kill all those who do not fight on your behalf. Take their possessions from them, even their womenkind, for they are lawful prey of God's elected. These may legally take to wife the woman belonging to any who does not join the Mahdi's cause, even if she has not been divorced from her husband.

This is the law of the Madhi

If a wife deserts her husband, who is not of the followers of the Mahdi, then will I find her a husband and she shall be his lawful spouse.

Your habiliments shall be as follows :

A jibba of cheap cotton cloth, with drawers cut short at the knees your shirt shall likewise be cut short at the elbows. Ye shall not wear a vest nor long-sleeved shirt, neither shall ye be clothed in long pantaloons such as are worn by the Turk Your head-dress shall be an imma with a long tail to it [called " aziba "].

Each one of you should provide himself with a stout horse or a camel, a spear, a knife, and a sword. He should have a girdle round the middle to contain the knife. But if he cannot afford the equipment of a follower of the Mahdi it shall be provided for him from the Treasury.

Ye shall not pray upon a coloured or ornamented mat, only the plain, untanned skin of a sheep.

There are now no more diverse religious sects, no more Gadria, no more Mirghania, only the tariga of the Mahdi.

But although Osman Digna pretended to defer to his court of cadis none of them had any authority of any sort except O'Sheikh Wad el Tahir el Magdhub, who was allowed to do a little teaching. Such education as fell to the lot of the children

[1] About £1 os 6d and 10s 3d. respectively.

of his followers was imparted privately and surreptitiously by their parents. Instruction, except of a spiritual kind, was not welcomed by Osman Digna, who said that as there would be no temporal world after the conclusion of the holy war it was of no use wasting time over the preparation of the children to fit them for a state of affairs that would never come about.

Osman Digna was not only deeply versed in the Koran but he also had an intimate knowledge of religious law. It was seldom that he found it necessary to refer to Sheikh Tahir a doubtful point either of fact or of interpretation. He therefore felt quite capable of expounding the teachings of the holy book to his adherents, and it was perhaps for this reason that he did not encourage the exposition of the Koranic law by others.

Routine questions and simple cases of dispute were all heard in the first instance by the cadis, or religious judges, whom he appointed. They had to settle the incidence of blood-money, when a men had been killed, or to arrange for the arrest of a criminal. They united in their persons the offices of civil and criminal magistrates, as well as performing duties that would elsewhere have been brought before the Courts of Chancery. But all their decisions were subject to the approval of Osman Digna, who frequently investigated complaints himself or listened to the disputes of litigants.

The Dervish emirs, almost without exception, seem to have had powers of life and death over their followers. They were as tyrannical as any self-constituted dictator of ancient or modern times. They were subject to no limitation save that of their own caprice. So great was the fear in which even the most influential of the natives lived that his sleep was often broken by the thought of a possible execution upon the morrow, in which he would be called upon to play the leading part.

Sternness and cruelty supplied the keynote of the administration. But, whereas leaders such as Abu Anga, Zeki Tummal, and Yunis Dekein often did not bother themselves to listen to a complainant, Osman Digna was always ready to hear the most insignificant of his subjects.

No favour was shown to rich or poor, nor was there any system of precedence. And this readiness to investigate the grievances of the least among his people should be admitted in his favour when there is so much to weigh in the balance against him. The poor, too, were fed or clothed at the expense of the Treasury, provided they obtained written authority from Osman Digna

In spite of his cruel administration, which was typical of the country and the times in which he lived, it must be admitted that Osman Digna was imbued with a certain rudimentary sense of justice, even though it may have found somewhat theatrical expression. The appalling atrocities committed by the Khalifa must be borne in mind before one judges Osman Digna too harshly. He was severe in dealing with criminals, but he was never guilty of so barbarous an act of cruelty as that which will always be remembered against the Khalifa, when, on one day, he hanged or decapitated sixty-seven of the Batahin tribe and cut off the right hands and left legs of scores of others of that luckless people.

Where so much can be said against him it is only fair to put on record an instance of the consideration that Osman Digna was prepared to show towards a complainant. When Kassala was captured by the Dervishes the Halanga tribe—one of the most important in the district—was divided into two factions. One of these owned allegiance to a certain Sheikh Mohammed Gellal, whose chief supporter was a man named Mohammed el Haj Abdallah. He died, apparently of cholera, in the year 1885, leaving a small boy, Mohammed O'Nur [1] aged about eleven years of age. The same fell plague carried off all the boy's near relations except his mother. In the turmoil that followed on the sack of Kassala Mohammed O'Nur lost all his possessions except two cows, a she-ass, and a she-camel. The last was stolen by a man called Wad Alim, who was one of the chiefs of the Halawin tribe, while the two cows were carried off by some Taaisha and the she-ass by the Baggara. Small as he was Mohammed O'Nur went to Wad Alim and demanded his camel back. Wad Alim happened to have a shot-gun in his hand and, pointing to a bird on a tree, he brought it down, telling the boy not to come bothering him again or he would deal with him as he had done with the bird. Nothing daunted, Mohammed O'Nur then went off and complained to Osman Digna, who gave him a letter to Wad Alim ordering him to restore the camel. As Wad Alim lived over twenty miles away the boy was afraid to go again and present the letter. Osman Digna said that if Mohammed had not returned in two days he would come and look for him. The

[1] This boy later accompanied Osman Digna in 1891 when he went to attack the Beni Amir tribe in Eritrea. When the news of Colonel Holled-Smith's landing at Trinkitat reached them they hurried back to Tokar, but the boy arrived only to find that Tokar had fallen. He was taken prisoner by the British and sent to the University of El Azhar in Cairo to be educated. Later he joined the Egyptian army in which he has risen to the rank of major.

boy then went off to Wad Alim, but, after reaching his camp, was too frightened to approach him and returned with his mission unaccomplished. Osman Digna sent some men to obtain the camel and offered to buy it for a hundred Maria Theresa dollars (then worth about £8). Mohammed refused the offer and demanded four hundred dollars. Osman Digna summoned Wad Alim, rebuked him publicly, and told him to pay up four hundred dollars in exchange for the camel. Mohammed was terrified at the thought of owning so much money, knowing that almost anyone would be prepared to kill him for such a prize, and Osman Digna took care of the money for him. Part of the purchase price he expended over a riding camel, on which he and his mother obtained permission to go to Tokar. As Mohammed had been so successful in his first complaint he thought he might as well try to recover the two cows which had been stolen by the Taaishi. The boy told Osman Digna that he could point out these two cows when they came back at night from the grazing. He was given some men to help him and picked out the two cows from the herd in which they had been concealed. These were not only restored to him but he was also given the value of the milk of which he had been deprived by their theft.

These two little episodes throw an interesting little sidelight on the character of Osman Digna, while at the same time they help one to realize the type of follower with which he had to deal and the thieving propensities that were common to all of them, from the most important chieftain down to the most insignificant herdsman. Stern measures were necessary to keep under control these rascally creatures, and certainly Osman Digna did not wish to have a feeling of insecurity for property to be prevalent amongst his followers. He was under no delusions as to their character, and was shrewd enough to appreciate the fact that they stuck to him for what they could get out of him. On one occasion, in the year 1890, he went to visit a great friend of his at Rufaa, by name Tayib el Suakini, and said to him that he would like a very special meal to celebrate the event. Tayib produced some "fatira," a mess of ground wheat, sugar, and butter. To make his hospitality complete he also prepared the same meal for Osman Digna's numerous following. Osman Digna was delighted with the fatira, which also appeared on the next day. Tayib, however, saw no reason for providing so dainty a meal for all of Osman Digna's friends, and on the next day he gave them much simpler fare. They at once complained to Osman Digna,

who instructed Tayib to give them the same food as he had himself during his visit He told Tayib, as a great personal friend, that he could confide everything to him and he could tell him things that he would not like to impart to others. " For instance," he went on to say, " you probably think that all my adherents follow me out of devotion to me and enthusiasm for their holy cause. Nothing of the sort. They follow me because I feed them. If there was food in their own homes they would go back there at once ; they are not ' people of religion ' but ' *nas butniin*, people of the belly.' "

With such an undisciplined body of supporters stern measures were necessary if any sort of order was to be maintained in the camp. A fixed scale of punishments was, therefore, drawn up, based on the Mosaic principles of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. No licence was allowed to the rich and no prayers, whether from plutocrats or paupers, availed to mitigate the severity of the preordained sentence. While lacking that sporting element of chance which lends to English law the glamour of such fascination as it has, the code of Osman Digna, forbidding as the Brehon laws, unbending as those of the Medes and Persians, had the saving grace of certainty. A criminal, committing an offence, would know to within a stroke what punishment would be meted out to him in the event of his being found guilty. No court of appeal would intervene to save him from the predestined punishment ; there was no loophole through which, on a technical plea of irregular procedure, he could escape from the penalties he had incurred. And these, though on a harsher scale than those to which effect is given in a civilized community, were not more brutal or excessive than the character of the times would lead one to expect. Indeed, the behaviour of Osman Digna and his followers compares most favourably with that of the soldiery whom Queen Elizabeth dispatched to suppress the Irish banditti. Savages they were, who fought fiercely and unflinchingly, but they did not stoop to the treachery and bloodthirstiness that characterized the Irish in the days of King Henry II

The dread penalty of death was frequently inflicted, the chief executioner being a stalwart Sudanese slave named Abdallah Adam. Nor is this to be wondered at in a community where obedience to law and order had to be maintained by outward force rather than from the recognition on the part of its members that only by subservience to the constituted authorities could their State be preserved intact.

Murder and brigandage were the two offences for which the offenders were usually put to death. Sometimes if a party of highway robbers was captured as many as twenty-five would be executed together. Some of these would be hanged while the rest had their heads cut off, as happened in Tokar, Kassala, and Adarama. On one occasion eighteen brigands of the Showobinab section of the Hadendoa were caught and taken to Kassala, where five were hanged and thirteen met their death beneath the executioner's sword.

The method of hanging was somewhat crude, the condemned man standing on a bench or chair with the rope suspended from a crossbar. There were two hangmen, one of whom stood by the victim in order to remove the bench while the other held on to the rope and hauled at the critical moment. It is perhaps worthy of comment that this practice of hanging was not in accordance with the custom in other Mohammedan countries, though why the Dervishes should have made this departure is unknown.

For those taken in adulterous intercourse or who were proved before the cadis' court by four witnesses to have erred from the paths of morality a special punishment was reserved. The man, whether married or single, was hanged in the customary manner. If the woman had no husband she received eighty lashes, but if she were married she was buried up to her neck in the ground and then stoned to death[1]—a barbarous death, barbarously inflicted, yet typical of the atrocities committed under the Khalifa's regime when a narrow, bigoted religion was poured into a brain too narrow to contain it. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.*

For theft the punishment was that which is so commonly inflicted in African States—the loss of a limb. For the first offence the right hand was severed from the wrist. For the second offence the left foot was cut off at the ankle. There is no recorded case of a thief having been convicted a third time, either because the victims of his evil practices omitted, in the kindness of their hearts, to hand him over to justice, or, as is more probable, because the two previous punishments succeeded in their object of preventing a repetition of the offence.

Osman Digna had no conception of a reformative theory of punishment and had no desire to make a man, through punishment, a more useful and efficient member of the little

[1] This was seen by Mohammed Wad Beleil on more than one occasion at Kassala and elsewhere

community over which he ruled despotically. His methods and theories of punishment were frankly retributive and preventive, after the manner of the law which ordained burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. A thief with his right hand missing would find it much more difficult than formerly to steal; his disability, plain for all men to observe, would also warn the property holder against allowing such a man the sort of opportunity for thieving that so often presents itself to the free-and-easy, hospitable Arab. Crippled of his left foot the thief would not only find it exceedingly difficult to carry off the results of a raid, but, of far more consequence in a sandy country where from his youth every single man is taught to track a missing goat or sheep, it would be almost impossible for a one-legged thief to avoid being tracked to his doom. It is hard to realize to what a pitch of perfection the art of tracking is carried in Africa, though big-game hunters must all have seen it and wondered. And it is nearly as difficult to understand the exact knowledge that the average black man or Arab has of his flocks and herds. He cannot count them, but if one goat is missing from a herd he not only knows the fact but can remember which goat it is. The Dinka has a huge vocabulary of words descriptive of cattle, and in one or possibly two words he can describe a cow or bull so accurately that it can immediately be identified by another man a hundred miles away. A little Arab girl of four years of age, who cannot count up to five, will go into a herd of a thousand goats and unhesitatingly pick out the half dozen that are the property of her father. With such a detailed knowledge of the animals it is not at all surprising that the penalties laid down by Osman Digna succeeded for the most part in their object. A one-legged man could be tracked for a week from the scene of the theft. And in any case a description of the missing animal—and this is for all practical purposes the only thing that is likely to be stolen from a nomad Arab—could be circulated, so that an entire stranger could identify the stolen sheep, camel, or whatever it was.

When mutilation was to be practised the occasion was seized upon to afford an object-lesson to the rest of the populace. War-drums were beaten and the whole army was paraded Before the assembled multitude the wretched victim stretched out his hand; the executioner held it just above the wrist and proceeded to hew it off with a sword or a knife that in many cases could not be compared for sharpness with an ordinary

table-knife. To stop the bleeding the mutilated stump was afterwards thrust into some boiling dikhn, or fat. Even among a people inured to the cruelties of warfare, with sensibilities a thousand times less fine than those of a European and with a nature hardened by the roughnesses of a nomad desert life, such an exhibition cannot have been without its effect. And though the infliction of so dreadful a sentence did not stop completely the offence of stealing, any more than a hanging on Tyburn Hill caused cattle-lifting to cease, at any rate it diminished the practice. Nor should Western values be applied to the question when the punishment is passed in review. Practically the whole wealth of a nomad Arab lies in his flocks and herds ; to deprive him of part or all of these not only robs him of actual possessions but may even subject his family and himself to the immediate risk of a death from starvation. Milk is still the staple diet of most of the nomad Arabs, eked out with a little grain and an occasional meal of meat. Stern measures, it can easily be seen, were needed in order to prevent so ruthless a fate.

For other offences flogging was the usual penalty, as an army, often on the warpath, could not be bothered with the care of a score or so of prisoners.

For making or drinking merissa (native beer concocted from millet) or other strong liquor the punishment was twenty-seven lashes or seven days' imprisonment. If the latter sentence was inflicted the prisoner was heavily chained round the neck and his relatives were expected to feed him, as was the custom in other Mohammedan countries in recent days. If, however, it was definitely shown that the prisoner had no parents or relations of any kind he might in such exceptional circumstances be fed from the Beit el Mal, or Public Stores. The house in which the alcoholic liquors were brewed or distilled was burnt to the ground and the slaves and all other property of the owner were confiscated by the State.

The same sentence was passed on anyone who entered another's house, a much milder penalty than is now customary amongst the Bega tribes of the Red Sea Littoral, where it is always presumed that a man making his way into a house in the absence of the proprietor can only have done so for the purpose of committing adultery.

For abuse, such as calling a man " an ass " or " the son o a dog," twenty-seven lashes was also the punishment. If such a flogging is considered by some to have been excessive it must be remembered that with the quick-tempered people

of the Sudan, where each man carried a knife or other deadly weapon which he was only too prone to use on the smallest provocation, fatal quarrels would have been frequent. And these in their turn might lead to blood-feuds, with disastrous results to the forces that met with sufficient losses in battle without increasing them by internecine fights.

The prohibition of abuse applied equally to anyone who used foul language to a camel, horse, or an ass. Osman Digna's aim was to encourage the habit amongst his followers of always speaking with moderation and in a quiet voice. His system, in fact, was intended to promote peace and orderly behaviour in the camp.

For being absent from the midday prayers, for ridiculing or for making any unfavourable comment on the actions of the Dervish Government, the penalty was still twenty-seven lashes. For any actual support of the Turco-Egyptian administration the punishment was death.

In a community where the keynote was a total disregard for the goods of this world, in which no one was allowed to purchase new clothes, in which every one was taught to despise all luxury and to eschew all extravagance, and to prepare himself for strenuous fighting "along the way of God" simplicity was to be observed on every side. Osman Digna set the example, and at one period would not even allow coffee—at that time perhaps the sole and universal luxury of the Arab—to be made in his house, although he would accept it if offered by a host. At a council all had to sit upon the bare ground, not even a sheepskin being allowed. Nor were his followers supposed to make use of pillows when they went to sleep: a log of wood or a stone had to do duty for a head-rest. Such were the hardships which were imposed upon the true believers that it is no wonder if they were willing to exchange their present life of toil and trouble for one that, at any rate, could hardly be more unpleasant.

When a garment became dilapidated it was mended time and again with a piece of rag or cloth until the patchwork jibba of the Dervishes was famous throughout the length and breadth of the land. This tatterdemalion garment served the double purpose of a uniform and emblem of poverty. But, in close association with these two ideas, there was possibly at the back of the Mahdi's mind some undefined and unformulated desire to be distinguished from the common crowd and to show to the world that he and his followers did not accept the recognized state of affairs The jibba was merely the most

ordinary garb that anyone chose to wear, with its numerous rents and tears mended with patches of any plain or parti-coloured remnant that could be procured The measure of one's loyalty and length of service in the holy cause might be gauged by the number and variety of materials with which the garment was repaired. The Spencerian will note the same affinity between political discontent and a disregard for the conventions of dress and fashion that characterized a Chartist demonstration. He will recall, too, the different manner in which the early Moravian clothed himself in order to be distinguished from his fellow-Christians with whom he disagreed. The jibba was a garment that anyone could afford; the mere fact that it was an emblem of poverty would appeal to the imagination of the impecunious hordes that the Mahdi hoped to gather to his cause when he first raised the banner of insurrection. Like all reformers, or rather revolutionaries, the Mahdi realized that the downfall of the Government was to be effected through those who had suffered from it rather than those who had prospered under it.

In accordance with the Mahdi's precepts, Osman Digna was similarly clad. No differentiating badge or insignia of his high office marked him out from one of his followers. The jibba tied round the middle was alike the garb of master and of man.

He carried the ordinary native knife on his arm or tucked into his belt, a sword and spear, but not a rifle. He lived as did his men, on " belila "—a miserable but sustaining mess of porridge which consisted of unground millet grain soaked in water. When times were especially hard he was sometimes reduced to subsisting on the nuts of the heglig trees or even the scanty herbs of the field. If, however, meat was available Osman Digna proved a veritable glutton and would devour the portions of four men.

He could walk great distances, a characteristic that he shared with Zubeir, and seldom rode a horse or camel when on the march. According to Father Ohrwalder, Osman Digna said that the Mahdi had sanctified the earth by walking upon it and Osman Digna would follow his example. He only wore shoes or sandals on rare occasions.

In his domestic life he was somewhat less self-denying and, though keeping within the bounds set by the law of Islam, he had four wives and two concubines; one of these two was called Um el Nasr (" The Mother of Victory ") and the other was a half-caste Arab girl named Zeinab. By these various

women he had two daughters, of whom history, in accordance with the traditions of the lordly East, says nothing. Of his sons, Mohammed was a private soldier serving in the ranks of his father's army. He fought in many of the battles and met a not inglorious death at Tofrik. The second, named Ali, was too young to join the army and is now living near the Atbara River.

After a successful engagement with the enemy an insignificant share of the spoils fell to the lot of Osman Digna as commander-in-chief, a fifth of the booty being sent to the Beit el Mal at Omdurman, while the rest was divided amongst the army.

His troops and followers were usually paid in kind, and, as can readily be imagined amongst a community that was always more or less living from hand to mouth, there was often a deficiency in the Store House. On such occasions Osman Digna sent for the merchants and commandeered a proportion of each man's goods sufficient to provide all his adherents with what they required. A merchant was given a receipt for the goods that he had handed over, but he might have to wait indefinitely for their replacement, up to six months, two years or even longer. Nor was he then allowed any compensation for loss nor interest on the value of the merchandise he had supplied. If anyone tried to evade these demands Osman Digna seized all his possessions—even to the very clothes he wore.

In other ways, too, Osman Digna showed consideration to his followers. He was always the last, with his personal escort, to set out upon the march. If anyone became tired one of the escort had to dismount and let him ride his animal for a time. The escort also had to supply the thirsty with water from their own water-skins.

Any money brought on behalf of the Treasury had to be paid in the same day that it was received. Money was credited under various heads and for each there was a special receiver. Thus "Amin el Nagdia," "the treasurer of the petty cash," took over all small sums that were collected. "Amin el Budaa," "the treasurer of merchandise," received sugar, cloth goods, and so on. "Amin el mamnuat," "the treasurer of forbidden things," took over all contraband, such as opium or tobacco.

Up to the year 1892 Osman Digna found great difficulty in forwarding supplies to the Khalifa in Omdurman. For the previous nine years he had been busily employed in the siege

of Suakin and fights of varying importance. But after being driven from Tokar, Osman Digna began to make larger contributions to the central chest. Now that, as far as he was himself concerned, all serious fighting was over, at any rate for a time, Osman Digna had more time for organization of his command and better means for dispatching to the Khalifa such booty as he amassed. This consisted of taxes collected from any tribe within his reach and the proceeds of raids upon the natives of doubtful loyalty who were heartily tired of warfare and the interminable spirit of uncertainty that it diffused. The capture of Tokar by the Government drove Osman Digna away from the coast that he had for so long harassed. His departure was everywhere hailed as the augury of better days to come. The tribes evinced an ever-increasing disposition to throw off all allegiance to him. With their consequent friendliness to the Government trade with the interior once more recommenced.

But Osman Digna still had sufficient men to prove a constant menace to the inhabitants of the Eastern Sudan, and, to keep these troops loyal to him, he had to obtain supplies from any source available to him.

In accordance with Mohammedan custom he therefore demanded for the use of the Khalifa's Government one-tenth of the crops that were grown. Before the corn was ripe each emir of a district was responsible for going to Osman Digna and reporting to him where any grain was to be found. As soon as the corn was harvested the tax-collector of Osman Digna appeared on the scene and, in the presence of the emir, inspected the heap of threshed millet. He made a calculation by eye of the amount of the grain and demanded a tenth of the total yield for the Dervish Government. The grain was measured by the "mid" and the "weiba": eight "mid" equalled one "weiba" and four and a half "weiba" was equivalent to the Egyptian "ardeb" of 300 "rottles" (or pounds). Once a tax was assessed orders were given to the emirs to collect camels and bring the grain into the Government. There was no appeal against the assessment of Osman Digna's representatives. His tax-collectors accordingly had a golden opportunity of putting into practice the same principles that had brought about the fall of the Egyptian administration. It might have been thought that efforts would have been made by the cultivators either to bury the grain as soon as it was harvested or to hide it somewhere. But so heavy were the penalties for such an offence (involving the confiscation

of the whole of the crop) and so great the fear in which the emissaries of Osman Digna were held, that such attempts appear to have been of very rare occurrence The people also realized that the payment of the tenth, even when the proportion was liberally interpreted from the Dervish point of view, was preferable to the raids that they would otherwise have incurred. It was an insurance against the total loss of their hardly earned harvest.

Once the tax-collectors had disappeared, the grain was stored away underground in a hole called " matmura," a name to be met with almost all over the Sudan.

But if operations were to be undertaken, or if, for any reason, additional grain was required, Osman Digna would make further requisitions of one-fifth of all grain that had been deposited in these underground stores, whether the product of this or a previous year's harvest. And this corn, too, the natives had to transport to any place where it was required. Failure to do so meant the confiscation of all the grain that they possessed. Any surplus was sold and the price credited to the Treasury.

The other chief tax imposed was the cattle tribute, which was also one-tenth of all the animals owned by an individual or a section of a tribe.

Here again the emir was responsible for informing Osman Digna of all the animals in his district Osman Digna's representative appeared at the well where the camels, sheep, goats, and other animals were watering and carried off every tenth animal.

This was at once branded with a B (ب), signifying Beit el Mal, and sent back to Osman Digna's head-quarters. The animals were then divided amongst the people or sold to support the Dervish funds. Anyone purchasing a branded animal was given a deed of sale authorizing him to possess the beast in question. As a matter of precaution the brand itself was usually effaced by burning.

Any attempt either to avoid or to delay the payment of taxes was so severely dealt with that such efforts were very early abandoned. Within two months of the assessment of the tax there was scarcely ever a single millieme outstanding.

In addition to these taxes on grain and cattle, dues were also collected on caravans trading between Omdurman and Suakin. Osman Digna had a post at the Kokreib wells and took one-tenth of all camel loads. At Berber, El Zeki Osman collected

another tenth, and when the camels arrived at Omdurman a further tenth was taken by the Khalifa. As if these exactions were not enough, the chiefs of the natives through whose territories the caravans passed were each entitled to a quarter of a dollar (sixpence) for each camel-load. Thus the Bisharin at El Bag, the Hadendoa at Kokreib, and the Amarar at Ariab all took their quarter dollar on the grounds that they were responsible for keeping their districts free from brigands and ensuring the safety of the caravans. Many merchants must have longed for the good old days of the brigands, when, at any rate, they had a sporting chance of getting part of their merchandise safely through to Omdurman.

No ostrich feathers were allowed to be exported along the Berber to Suakin road unless a written permit from the Khalifa could be produced. The Khalifa also took a fifth of all gum and ivory brought into Omdurman. El Zeki Osman and Osman Digna received three dollars for each camel-load of ivory and one dollar for each load of gum. It seems impossible that trade of any description could have flourished under conditions so devastating. Yet a steady trickle found its way month after month to the sea and back from the sea to the heart of Africa. But another ten years were to elapse before this trickle became a stream soon to develop into a roaring torrent. If profits were uncertain and almost negligible, at any rate they supplied a small means of livelihood in a country where millions of wretched natives annually faced the prospect of a grim death from starvation.

Death and disease stalked the land in the days of the Dervish dominion—death in battle, death from famine. Between the years 1883 and 1898 the population of the Sudan fell from eight and a half million people to less than two millions. Much of this appalling loss was due to fighting, but still more to the famine that swept through the country and the disease that followed in its train.

Osman Digna seldom remained for long at a time in the same place but constantly made raids upon some unsuspecting tribesmen. The Arabs became fewer and fewer in numbers while their flocks and herds dwindled almost to nothing. In a country such as that of the Red Sea Littoral, where little grain is grown, where rainfall is slight and the cultivable area small, the loss of the milk that was formerly supplied by their goats and camels practically meant death for the whole population. The insufficiently nourished bodies of the people were a fruitful ground in which the seeds of disease might

to meet your death; for you are true believers, and if a bullet lays you low, then that shall be your great reward." The result was a fanatical disregard for death and wounds that carried the Dervish hordes to victory against the heaviest odds.

Sometimes, however, when the noise of battle no longer hurtled through the air, when night fell upon the stricken field and the wounded were left to die, the followers of the Mahdi questioned the omnipotence of their leaders and debated whether the cause was worth the suffering it entailed. The fruits of victory never seemed to be theirs, the golden promises for the future but ill supplied the needs of an aching, hunger-stricken belly. "Where is our victory?" they murmured, "seeing that we gain naught but wounds? What have we won but sorrow? What have we found but death?" They accused in awe-hushed whispers the tactics of Osman Digna, they complained that he had deceived them, that victory was long in coming, that they themselves were of no more account than the birds of heaven, to be slaughtered indiscriminately. As they lay sorely maimed on the darkening field of battle they would discuss the Paradise now drawing so near to them. "Oh, my brother," one would say to another as the light of day grew dimmer, "you who are upon the lips of death; can you see that heavenly bride whom Osman Digna promised you? Does she come to you in woman's guise, or is she but a spirit?" And as his last breath left him the dying man would make reply, "I see her not."

On the conclusion of the prayers a grand parade of troops was held, with gallops past and manœuvres that usually resulted in such complete chaos, owing to the contradictory orders issued in the enthusiasm of the moment, that they had to be abandoned. The whole turmoil ended with a grand charge and shouts of "*Ibshir bil kheir*"—"God prosper you on your way." A meal was then provided for the poor, at which Osman Digna was present, though hidden from the public view.

But though the women and children were not allowed to participate openly in the public prayers their spiritual welfare was not neglected. Organized under their particular "sheikhat," or chieftainnesses, they were collected for any duties that Osman Digna required them to perform. From time to time orders were given summoning them to attend in a pre-determined place for Osman Digna to harangue them. These women were screened off from Osman Digna's view and

only a small boy or two attended on the chief. From near at hand Osman Digna, unseeing and unseen, appealed to the old dames to entrust their ornaments of gold and silver or jewels of any value to the Treasury of the Mahdi. "In the world to come," he said, "your faded beauty will be renewed, your former loveliness restored to you. You will be the peris of Paradise, higher than the angels. Were not the wives of our Prophet Mohammed richer than you, yet they wore no jewels. They, too, carried skins of water upon their backs, or jars of water upon their heads and followed the hosts into battle. Visit not the tombs of the holy men, of them whose day is done, that they may get you children, for God will provide offspring for you should He see fit."

The women usually responded willingly to the appeals of Osman Digna, screaming in the fervour of their emotional exaltation. Offerings of gold and other ornaments were freely made, to the intense disgust of their sorrowing spouses, who realized quite well that they would have to replace them, at any rate until such time as Osman Digna should again feel called upon to address the women once more.

Some of the more enthusiastic of the women even adopted the jibba and head-dress of the men to show that they had entirely abandoned this world for the next.

As elsewhere in the countries of Islam the young marriageable women, and those still in the prime of life, were kept in seclusion. They were forbidden to wander about at their own sweet will—a very necessary precaution among so libidinous a people as the Hadendoa. Indeed, they only obtained any real measure of freedom once their physical charms had waned, and even this freedom of movement was largely curtailed by various onerous duties that were imposed upon them. It is an interesting commentary on the chivalry of the Arab, of the consideration in which he holds the weaker sex, that the older a woman gets the harder she has to work, until she is incapable of working any more.

Among the other burdens laid upon the women of Osman Digna's army was the duty of following the warriors into battle, carrying upon their backs a large skin of water. This was the only effort made in the commissariat line. Each fighting man might make private arrangements for taking a few dried dates with him or a handful of flour, but Osman Digna discountenanced any attempt to provide for the material needs of his army. Let his followers obtain food from their enemies. The infidel made elaborate plans for supplying the troops with food.

The Dervishes would be different. God would provide them in due course with nourishment.

These older women had to see that the warriors were duly supplied with water when they were thirsty. They helped the wounded to escape. Many of them were killed by the flying bullets, but one's sympathy for the victims is lessened when one remembers that one of the tasks of these women was to finish off the enemy's wounded. Whether this was a direct command of Osman Digna or whether it was a duty that was originally self-imposed but afterwards became a custom I have not been able to determine.

At the commencement of every engagement Osman Digna made a great pretence of wishing to take an active part in it. His special bodyguard, however, used to seize him and prevent him from viewing the battle at close range. As soon as the day had gone against him or success seemed doubtful he was hurried away by his faithful retainers into a safe retreat. For this reason Osman Digna has often been accused of cowardice, and perhaps somewhat unjustly. It may, I think, be fairly urged in his defence that it is not the office of a commander-in-chief to play the part of a common soldier, and that the task of directing a force cannot be combined with that of actual participation in the fight, that mental fatigue, following on physical, would unfit him for working out the details that would lead to a successful conclusion of the battle. But there is also a further reason for his abstention from the battle rout in the superstition common to the Beja-speaking people of the Red Sea hills, who believe that the death of the commander inevitably spells disaster to the cause. This belief is similarly held by the Abyssinians and was well illustrated at the battle of Metemma. Here an overwhelming victory was commuted into an equally disastrous defeat merely by the death of King John.

When the battle was over Osman Digna would summon those of his adherents whom he could collect and address them on the result of the fighting:

Do not be despondent at your losses. Did not our Prophet Mohammed himself suffer defeat upon occasion? It is laid down in the Koran that we cannot on every occasion be victorious. The great and final day of triumph is now close at hand. Egypt will soon be yours, and after Egypt it is a little way and then you will find yourselves masters of England and the English. Soon we will invade Egypt, and when you have conquered that country we will proceed to attack England. Some of us may fall by the way, but

some, at any rate, will win through. When Mohammed commenced his life he had few or no followers, yet did his kingdom at the latter end stretch to the uttermost parts of the earth So shall it be with the followers of the Mahdi; at present we are but few in numbers, yet shall these numbers expand until they cover the earth. The children of Egypt shall be your slaves and their womenfolk your concubines. From Egypt we will conquer Europe, if such is God's will, as did Sayyid Omar ibn el Khattab so many years ago.

Yet even such extravagant language as this passed for the normal embodiment of truth among a fanatical horde with no sense of proportion, whose credulity was only paralleled by their ignorance.

But when all due allowance is made for the custom of the country and the duties of a commander-in-chief, it must be admitted that Osman Digna himself took little or no part in any of the engagements in which he fought, wherein his conduct was so different from that of Zuber, who was ever to be found where the arrows were thickest or the bullets whistled most shrilly.

On rare occasions he was embroiled in the battle rout when an unexpected attack on the part of the enemy happened to find its way to the distant rear of Osman Digna's army. Yet only once was he wounded on active service, although he fought, spasmodically, for a period of sixteen years and took part, albeit unobtrusively, in the sanguinary conflicts of the Atbara and Omdurman. Nor were his self-preserving efforts lost upon his chief subordinates, for of those who fought at Handub, Tokar, and the Atbara only one was wounded, and that not seriously. There can be but one explanation of his immunity, and this is the one that is generally given by Arabs who fought at his command and in his defence. Once he saw that the day was going against him (and fewer more shrewd judges of such an occurrence could be found than he), Osman Digna took refuge in flight. For this reason it is perhaps not surprising that Osman Digna passed almost unscathed through the fiery ordeal of his numerous battles. At Sinkat he had been wounded in three places, but no serious injuries had resulted, so that he had no cause to complain of such trivial hurts gained in fights where so many thousands of his followers laid down their lives.

The impassioned and uncontrolled outbursts of oratory with which Osman Digna so frequently regaled his followers were typical of the wild, unbalanced character of the man.

Quick to anger and of a violent temper, Osman Digna was only too prone to rap out an order, or issue a sentence that reflection might have proved to be impolitic or unjust. But once an edict had gone forth it could not be recalled Whether it was just or unjust Osman Digna would not reconsider it. To this vehemence of temper was added a boorish demeanour that had distinguished him even as a boy. On one occasion, when he was but twelve years of age, he had slammed the door in the face of a very holy man named Sayyid Gaafer el Mirghani, who prophesied then that Osman Digna would some day cause much trouble to the established Government. When he attended a religious festival, such as the Mulid el Nebi, held in commemoration of the birthday of the Prophet, or a religious dance called Zikr, his fanatical enthusiasm carried him into the wildest extravagances. To weird contortions of the body were added ecstatic cries in a piercing, high-pitched voice that the people likened to the shrill screaming of a hawk as it circled round the tops of the date-palm.

An ill-conditioned, ill-disciplined youth, always ready to join in any disreputable disturbance that might be there, Osman Digna was a source of much anxiety to the more respectable members of his family. Of a restless disposition, he hated having nothing in particular to do. He could never keep for long any money of which he became possessed, and he was usually in a state of utter impecuniosity. When he had finally scraped together enough money to build a house in Suakin, before he was ejected from that place, he occasioned much comment by joining the manual labourers that he had employed and helping them himself. But the surprise and disgust with which this conduct was viewed by his delicately living relations was turned into amazement when Osman Digna, introducing a custom that he had learnt in Kordofan, loaded his cow with lumps of coral and used her to transport them from the quarry. And even here the enterprising character of this innovation did not appeal to the imagination of the people so much as did the quaintness, not to say the idiocy, of the proceeding. Osman Digna, instead of being regarded as a clever man, was looked upon as mad—a fate that has befallen other and greater reformers than he. If madness is merely a quantitative difference from the normal, Osman Digna might quite well have passed for mad amongst the easygoing inhabitants of Suakin from whom he was distinguished in so many ways. A peaceful trading community, that exchanged the products of India for those

extracted, painfully and with difficulty, from the heart of Africa had no wish for any disturbance of the public peace that might result in the diminution and possibly total cessation of its commercial activities.

This unrelenting sternness and quickness to anger naturally alienated the affections even of his most devoted followers, and Osman Digna always had the greatest difficulty in keeping a force together. He ruled by fear, not love; his adherents were only kept in check by self-interest. As his powers declined and his opportunities for rewarding his men grew less and less his army deserted him. There was no devotion to an ideal or love for him who cherished it to counteract the centrifugal impetus that was for ever trying to make itself felt.

Independence of thought, individuality of character was obnoxious to him. The orders of the Mahdi, through his mouthpiece Osman Digna, had to be unhesitatingly obeyed. There was to be only one chief, one brain, one voice. He would not even assist his friends and relations until ordered to do so by the Khalifa, so great was his fear that they might intrigue against him and compass his downfall.

Osman Digna was also endowed with a quick wit and was seldom at a loss for a ready reply. Frequently at the conclusion of an unsuccessful engagement the women, more outspoken than their men-folk, upbraided their leader for the losses he had incurred and asked for their husbands back again. "Why," they said to him, "have you taken our men to slay them? Why have you done them to death and returned yourself alive?" "I have not killed them," replied Osman Digna; "I have only helped them on their way to Paradise."

His powers of persuasiveness were often needed to remove the suspicions, or to appease the anger, of his outraged followers. Their cattle might be looted, their aged parents put to the sword. "But," an Arab once said to a British officer, "he tells a lie so beautifully that he wiles the very hearts out of our breasts, and if any of our people go to upbraid him for all they have lost they stay to praise him; for he persuades them against their own senses and makes them like wax in his hands when once he gets speech of them."

Just before the battle of Tofrik in 1886 the British employed a captive war balloon, and when the mystified Dervishes asked the meaning of this dread portent in the skies Osman Digna replied to them that it was the coffin of the Prophet Mohammed suspended twixt earth and heaven and foretold a glorious victory for the true believers.

This same cunning showed itself in other directions. Many of the prisoners captured in war (and particularly the Egyptians) were allowed to return to their own country. "What is the use of their bodies," argued Osman Digna, "if their hearts are not with me?" From time to time when he wished to gain the favour of the tribes friendly to Government or to win over a wavering section of the tribes hostile to him, he would go out of his way to perform some little act of kindness that might earn for him the gratitude of the natives. On one occasion the daughter of Colonel Abd el Qadir Bey of the Halanga, who had been Mamur of Aqiq, wished to go to her father in Suakin. Osman Digna gave her an escort of two of his followers, who took her to Trinkitat, from where she could easily find her way by sea to Suakin.

If Osman Digna was cruel and relentless it must be remembered that he had divine sanction in the Koran for all or most of what he did. There was authority even for the mutilation of a thief, which has been practised in the present century under Turkish rule.

He should be judged by the standard of his times and the primitive state of the peoples among whom he lived. It is not easy to realize even remotely how extraordinarily little the peoples of the Sudan have advanced within the last four thousand years, and how little changed are the conditions from those amid which their predecessors lived in the days when Moses brought down the law from the Mount. The law that ordained burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe, is one that is peculiarly fitted for nomad life, where the conception of a State has not yet begun to emerge into the people's lives, and where the family is still the basis of their social organization. Among the greater number of the nomad Arab tribes the principle of blood-money is nearly always acceptable to the relatives of the dead man. Thus an endless series of vendettas that have, in the past, made Corsican and Sicilian life one long nightmare have been partially avoided. A farseeing Government to-day in the Sudan, with its politic consideration for the customs and habits of the peoples over whom it has so vast an empire, sanctions, within limits, this arrangement, and is always ready to approve the agreement to which the parties come, provided no outrage is done to the rights or sensibilities of individuals. But quarrels are still frequent and serious wounds not uncommon, as is only to be expected amongst a quick-tempered people who always have a spear, sword, or knife ready to their hands. The sanctity of

human life (which, after all, is a very modern conception) is not appreciated among them. Moses directed that a thief who could not make restitution should be sold to pay for his theft: "If a servant were smitten by his master and he died under his hand the master would be surely punished; notwithstanding if he continues for a day or two he shall not be punished for he is his money." This idea that a servant is merely a living instrument, something on a par with a man's ox or his bed, still persists to-day and forms a most fruitful source of trouble for the Government official. It is a matter of the greatest difficulty to make the Arab realize that a slave is a human being, with certain rights and privileges, and not to be bartered in the market-place as if he were a sheep, a bullock, or a goat. As an example the writer recalls a case he was trying in which one of the witnesses quite casually remarked that when he left for a journey his furniture consisted of a mat, three goats, and a slave. The slave was regarded in exactly the same light as a bed or a goat, except that in all probability the slave had cost rather more in the first instance. Now, too, if a man is charged with the care of an animal while put out to graze and it dies, and there are no witnesses to prove the manner of its death, an oath taken on the tomb of a holy man that the beast died a natural death is accepted as binding just as Moses ordained in similar circumstances that "there shall be an oath of the Lord between them both that he hath not put his hand upon his neighbour's goods: and the owner of it shall accept thereof and he shall not make it good." Still shall the District Commissioner spend his time over exactly the same questions that puzzled the wiseacres of old; a quarrel over a well like that between Abraham and the servants of Abimelech; or a strife between the herdsmen of Abraham's cattle and the herdsmen of Lot's cattle, while Rebekah still veils her face and the daughters of Midian go down to the well to draw the water for their father's flocks. The ox, unmuzzled, still treadeth out the corn as he did two thousand years ago.

Some may wish that other of the Mosaic injunctions had descended to the people of the Sudan. If any particular piece of evidence in a court of law is likely to lead to some personal advantage or to the undoing of one's opponent, it is given as a matter of course with an appearance of outraged innocence that would bring a blush to the cheek of the most hardened peasant of western Ireland. Not the slightest odium attaches to the average man, or even one respected for the

sanctity of his life, when he puts out his hand "with the wicked to be an unrighteous witness."

Nor have their customs changed in any appreciable degree; in almost any dwelling you shall find a small burma, or ewer, for the religious lustration of the feet, just as the servant of Joseph provided water for his brethren that they might wash their feet after their journey.

For such people, and among such conditions of life, the laws laid down by Osman Digna, stern though they may have been, were not altogether unsuitable: simple laws for a primitive race easily comprehended and appreciated. Perhaps these laws were somewhat more harsh than would find favour with the misguided humanitarianism of the modern socialist, who, in defiance of the Solomanic teaching, denies the right of the schoolmaster to beat the Board School pupil. Yet many of these sentences were insignificant in comparison with the punishment meted out in the British army at the beginning of the eighteenth century, when hundreds of lashes were frequently inflicted, and the man charged with the beating, if the lashes were not sufficiently rigorous, was given twice as many himself.

A guardsman in the Duke of Marlborough's army was sentenced to no less than 12,600 lashes for killing his colonel's horse in order to obtain its hide. And it was only when he had been nearly killed by the first eighteen hundred lashes that Queen Anne graciously remitted the remainder. Soldiers who picked peas or beans in Flanders might be hanged without trial as marauders. For blasphemy a man, or even an officer, might have his tongue bored with a red-hot iron. Osman Digna's punishments were only a few degrees more cruel than the "running of the gauntlet," so common a feature in the soldier's life two hundred years ago, or the "tying of neck and heels" until the blood gushed from the victim's nose, mouth and ears.[1] Nor were they so relentless as the laws of a century ago in England where exile to Australia, under conditions almost as deplorable as those of a slave-raiding expedition in the heart of Africa, was the penalty for even a small offence, when interminable imprisonment was the punishment for bankruptcy.

The year before Zubeir was born a boy of seventeen was hanged in Bedford Jail for setting fire to a stack of corn. After Osman Digna was a grown man slavery was still to be found in "God's own country."

[1] See "The Life of the Duke of Marlborough," by Edward Thomas.

If anyone had remonstrated with him for his starving to death of the Emirhassaiab (Omar Hassayab), Osman Digna might quite well have retaliated by referring to the action of the Egyptian Governor of Suakin, Ali Riza Pasha. Only a few years before, this man had seized a party of Bedouins from Jedda, put them in chains, and left the supply of their food to the casual care of the charitable, with the result that many of them died of starvation.

Osman Digna was typical of the particular surroundings amid which he lived, fanatical, bigoted, soured by real or fancied wrongs. It cannot be positively asserted that his motives were or were not purely religious or even mainly so. But, like others of his race and kind, he was imbued with hatred of the Government, and he was personally aggrieved at the curtailing of the slave trade. So on private just as on public grounds he saw in the great tribal upheaval against the Egyptian Government an opportunity of wreaking private vengeance and gaining personal ends under the less selfish and nobler pretext of cleansing the country of the sores by which it was being consumed.

In him the stolid piety of the Boer was wedded to the inflammable asceticism of an Eastern fanatic. The world that he had despised in the heydey of his triumph (though it must be admitted he was by no means anxious to exchange it for the better on which he had set his hopes) receded farther and farther from him in his later years. His peaceful self-communion was not ruffled by the waves of political changes or social revolutions. A war among the nations? Indeed! Is that so? God only knows.

When the waves of Mahdiism had expended their fury on the rock of the invading army and receded from the land that they had for so many years mercilessly overwhelmed, Osman Digna was one of the pieces of flotsam and jetsam stranded by the storm. Yet his old age—if lacking in the adventure that crowned his former days—was not devoid of dignity. He might have returned to those of his kith and kin who were still alive and been welcomed by some of those with whom he had formerly spent his life. He was offered the opportunity of living out the remainder of his days as he chose. He could have enjoyed the liberty that was accorded to the relatives of the Mahdi and the Khalifa, to whom a liberal-minded and farseeing Government has not only allowed complete freedom and independence of action but even given employment in its own service. But Osman Digna refused to

recant or to deny the leader in whom, for his own undoing and those of countless others, he had formerly put his trust.

Next to the head-quarters of the Wadi Halfa district there used to be a little compound containing a clean, whitewashed room and an angareeb, or native bedstead, of interwoven rope where Osman Digna was doomed to spend the remnant of his days. An armed guard did duty night and day outside, not perhaps so much to prevent the old man from escaping as to prevent the importunities of those who would wish to trespass on his privacy or the inquisitive tourist who would speedily make his life a burden by untimely and unwelcome inquiries. Nor is it only the tourist from whom he had to be secluded. Many there are who not unnaturally would like to see him, who are prompted by more than mere idle curiosity, but a paternal Government which has been at such pains since the reoccupation to safeguard the interests of the people of the Sudan, and to listen to the smallest of the complaints of the humblest inhabitant, is none the less mindful of those who fought against it and, from a humanitarian point of view, would not seem to deserve much consideration. The sons and some of the relations of the Khalifa, whose father the British Empire slew and whose kingdom it destroyed, have now positions of responsibility and trust under the very Government which they opposed and against which to the bitter end they pitted their armed forces. And carp at the policy though some may, it has been abundantly justified by the recent events in the Sudan when an appeal was made to them to join in a holy war and oust the Christians from the Sudan So far were the natives from doing so, however, that they vied with one another in expressions of loyalty to their Government. Though they had but recently emerged with the greatest difficulty from a succession of lean years they gave of their little humble store willingly and bountifully to the relief of the soldiers and sailors of the country that was so far away that they had not the least idea of its power or nature. And among these offerings not the least welcome—perhaps even the most appreciated—was the sum contributed by the family of the Mahdi and of the Khalifa.

His proud spirit neither exile nor defeat sufficed to break. With a peaceful mind and indifferent to restraint Osman Digna refused to give the pledges to the orthodox religion though by doing so he might have gained his freedom. Possibly a fear that the relations of the hundreds whose violent death he had encompassed might be avenged upon him was not without its influence, but it is more charitable (and probably

more true to fact) to say that, even though his master was dead and his body scattered to the four winds of heaven, he still believed that the divine spark breathed in him and to that belief he was resolved to adhere—an honourable euthanasia if somewhat lacking in excitement.

The modern history of the Sudan and of the campaigns which ended in its reconquest is intimately connected with the name of Osman Digna. In many families of England to-day his name is still a household word, whereas the names of the Mahdi and the Khalifa—but for whom he might never have been heard of—are almost, if not entirely, forgotten. The reason is a simple one. For fifteen years Osman Digna defied the Imperial Government, but only for a brief portion of this period was the Mahdi or the Khalifa actually in touch with the British Army. In fact, it was probably only at the battle of Omdurman that the Khalifa Abdallahi saw a British soldier.

It is because Osman Digna's fortunes were dependent for so many years on his relationship with Great Britain and her Colonies that his name is so well known and that he has obtained a reputation out of all proportion to his merits. At the same time it is only just to admit that Osman Digna, with ignorant, ill-armed, and undisciplined troops, waged, and not altogether unsuccessfully, a war with the trained battalions from England, India, and Australia. His defects and errors may be acknowledged, but such qualities of artfulness, tenacity, and shrewdness as he possessed must be admitted.

With the exception of Zubeir, Cetawayo, and Tchaka, he is, perhaps, the most famous savage that has arisen in recent times out of the African continent.

If he was a strict and cruel disciplinarian, if his administrative methods were not particularly generous or far-sighted they were at any rate effective so long as they were in force. That they contained in themselves the germs of their own decay was not appreciated by their creator. But after due credit has been given for the manner in which Osman Digna forged an army and moulded it to his will, it must be admitted that he excelled neither in tactics nor in strategy, nor did he elaborate any intricate campaign. He simply allowed, or commanded, his followers, in the flush of their religious enthusiasm, and inspired thereby with the hope of winning through to the mansions of the blest, to charge a well-armed force. The usual attack formation was that adopted by the Zulu impis, a half-moon encircling movement. That it was often successful was due to the wonderful bravery of his

fighting men. And seldom can a commander have been so well served by his subordinates as was he whose tale is now drawing to its close. No braver troops ever took the field than those who fought in the Eastern Sudan. Death in the Mahdi's cause opened to them the gates of Paradise, and it is literally true to say of them that most of the Dervishes actually welcomed death if only they could kill an enemy first. Fanatical, mad, incomprehensible, call their behaviour what you will, it was bravery of the most wonderful and unselfish description. Young men, old men, old women, and boys all shared the dangers of the battle-field At the attack on McNeill's zariba a Dervish rushed at the zariba " holding by the hand a boy armed with a knife. Throwing the boy over the defensive works, he jumped in after him, and immediately both were killed. At another point there stood between the opposing forces a boy, apparently not more than twelve years old, actually throwing stones at the British troops in one of the zaribas." [1]

Osman Digna, after the victory of General Graham at El Teb, wrote to the Mahdi: " In this battle we lost Magdhub; [2] he was a true and brave man and had no fear of death when fighting the enemies of God. Before the battle he said to his friend, ' If I am wounded before I get close to the infidels, then drag me by the leg until you are upon the field of battle; perchance I may be able to satisfy the desire of my heart and plunge my spear into the enemies of God, even as I die, and at the last moment of my life, ere I leave the world to enter Paradise.' "

However sorely wounded the one hope of the Dervishes was to kill an enemy, and time after time, at Teb, Tamai, Omdurman—wherever they were engaged—the Dervishes never asked for or expected quarter. A British soldier offering a drink of his scanty water to a wounded Dervish would receive for his self-sacrifice a spear or knife wound from the very man he was trying to succour. At the battle of El Teb a woman was overtaken by the cavalry and rescued from the rout; she at once loosed off a rifle at the man who had saved her.

Their complete scorn of death carried them, often terribly wounded, through a storm of bullets Their first wild rush frequently led to initial successes against some of the best regiments in the British Army. At Tamai they succeeded in capturing the guns of the Naval Brigade, broke the British square, and drove General Graham's force back half a mile

[1] Royle 424. [2] Taher Ibn el Haj Omar Kamar el Din el Magzub.

before the latter rallied and recaptured the guns ten minutes later. At Tofrik they gained a zariba, defended though it was by Indian troops, and only the grim relentless discipline of the British soldier prevented them from repeating their successes of El Teb or Abent. Admiration for the gallantry of the Imperial troops is mingled with the profoundest sense of pity for those fearless and faithful followers of so cruel a leader.

It is sad to reflect that so much suffering should have had so little influence for good upon the history of the times. Suffering is softened by success, wounds may be welcomed if the cause in which they are earned wins through in the end. Yet why pity those who, in the glad self-sacrifice for their ideal, freely gave their lives for their ideal? The cause as events went to prove was a bad one; the excesses of the Khalifa outdid all the brutalities of the Egyptian Government and led finally to the decrease of the population from eight and a half million people to less than two millions. Yet, but for this, the present administration of the Sudan might never have been installed. To-day the natives can live their simple lives with no fear for the exactions of the tax-gatherer or the wild raid of the slave-dealer During the past twenty-five years the native in the Sudan has known a peace and security that, at any rate, for three generations previously was a stranger to him. Possibly in all his history no such spirit of restfulness has ever entered into the life of the inhabitant of the Sudan. And if his lot now lies in pleasant ways he has largely to thank the gallant self-sacrifice of those Dervishes of forty years ago who swept out the old, and made room for the new, administration.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

FROM MOHAMMED EL MAHDI TO ALL HIS BELOVED, THE BELIEVERS IN GOD AND HIS BOOK

Beloved, bear in mind that real wealth consists in obeying God, and following in the footsteps of those whom God has guided into the right path. The happy man is he who is guided by others, and the foolish man is he who follows after his own ideas. God has distinguished this holy faith by holy war. Any man who takes part in this holy war will be considered a true believer; but any man who refuses to join will be considered as one of those at enmity with the Prophet. [Here follow many verses from the Koran and Ahadith.] Why, therefore, do you disobey the Almighty God? Have you not seen how I have gained victories over the Turks and infidels, whose bodies have been burnt wherever they have been pierced with spears?

Do you see a greater miracle than this? It is just as the miracles of the Prophet. They [the Turks] were well armed with rifles and held strong positions, but not only were they defeated, they were utterly destroyed. The cause of their destruction is, that I am a light from God, and the Prophet has confirmed me as Mahdi, and has made me sit several times on his own seat in the presence of all the khalifas and prophets, and Elias was present too with all the angels, and every believer from Adam up to the present time. In battle, the Prophet and those above mentioned are with me; he has given me the sword of victory and has promised that not even the Thakalain [i.e. half man half jinn] can defeat me. The Prophet also informed me that God has placed a mole on my right cheek, as a mark that I am the Mahdi. He has also given me another sign, which is a banner of light carried by Izrail [the angel of death], who walks before me in time of battle. In this manner I have been enabled to capture Kordofan and all the surrounding countries, and God will also open your country for me, and by His will the whole world will submit to me, accepting me as the true Mahdi. Woe therefore to those who do not believe in me, for they will all be destroyed. Why did you not set forth as soon as you heard of me, in order to help in the holy war? Are you afraid of the Turks and their strength? Are you not aware that all their armies must fall into my hands? Do you not know that all the infidels will be destroyed by us? Do you not believe that I am the expected

Mahdi? Do you not believe in the holy writings that speak of me? [Here follow several verses of the Koran, etc.]

Remember that I have come by order of the Prophet. He has sent me to be your saviour, and you should therefore believe in me. The Prophet has told me that anyone who disbelieves in me disbelieves in God and in His Prophet I have quoted his own words, and he repeated them three times to me. You are aware that I am descended from the family of the Prophet I am begotten of the forehead of his father and mother, and the father and mother of my mother are descended from the Abbassides. I am lineally descended from El Hussein [the Prophet's grandson].

I made my hejira [flight] to Masat, in the mountain of Gedir, by order of the Prophet, and by his order I came into Kordofan. From there I sent my several proclamations, and I now send this one to you. On receiving it leave the Turks at once; do not hesitate to leave your property and children behind you; leave them and come even to the nearest village, and fight against the Turks with all your strength. [Here follow several verses from the Koran.]

I send you Sheik Osman Digna, of Suakin, as your emir, in order to revive the true religion. On his arrival, join him and obey his orders to advance against the Turks, and drive them out of your country All God's people before you have quitted their country and children, in order to conquer the land of the infidels. They did not mind death nor fatigue. The present time will now prove whether you are truly God's people. This you will be if you obey the orders of the Mahdi, but if you disobey, then you must expect nothing but the sword, and your fate will be that of all those who have disobeyed us.

APPENDIX B

ORDER OF BATTLE OF THE BRITISH TROOPS ENGAGED AT THE BATTLE OF EL TEB, FEBRUARY 29, 1884 [1]

Commander of Expeditionary Force—Major-General Sir G. Graham, V.C , K.C.B.

Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General—Lieut.-Colonel Clery

FIRST INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Colonel Sir R Buller, V.C , K C.M.G , C B., A.D.C.

Brigade Major—Captain Kelly, Royal Sussex Regiment.
31d Bn. King's Royal Rifles—Colonel Sir C. Ashburnham, K C.B., A.D.C.
1st Bn Gordon Highlanders—Lieut.-Colonel Hammill, C.B.
2nd Bn. Royal Irish Fusiliers—Lieut -Colonel B. S. Robinson

SECOND INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Major-General J. Davis.

Brigade Major—Captain Hitchcock, Shropshire Light Infantry
1st Bn. Royal Highlanders—Lieut.-Colonel W. Green.
Royal Marine Artillery and Light Infantry—Colonel Tuson, C B., A.D.C.
1st Bn. York and Lancaster Regiment—Lieut -Colonel W. Byam.

CAVALRY BRIGADE

Colonel Herbert Stewart, C.B., A.D.C.

Brigade Major—Lieut.-Colonel A M. Taylor, 19th Hussars.
10th Hussars—Lieut -Colonel E. A Wood.
19th Hussars—Lieut.-Colonel A. G. Webster.
Mounted Infantry—Lieutenant and Local Captain Humphreys, the Welsh Regiment.

ARTILLERY.

Major F. T. Lloyd, R A.

Adjutant—Lieutenant Sir G. Thomas, Bart, R H.A.
One 7-pounder Battery (four guns)—Captain Wodehouse, R.A.
One 7-pounder Battery (four guns)—Captain Kellie, R.A.

ENGINEERS.

Commanding Royal Engineer—Lieut -Colonel Ardagh, C.B., R E.
26th Company Royal Engineers—Major Todd, R.E.

[1] See Colvile . " History of the Sudan Campaign "

NAVAL BRIGADE

Commander E. Rolfe, R.N. Adjutant-Lieutenant Montresor, R.N.

Right Half Battery (three machine-guns)—Lieutenant Houston Stewart, R.N.
Left Half Battery (three machine-guns)—Lieutenant Almack, R N.

State of Troops engaged at the Battle of El Teb, February 29, 1884 :

Corps	Officers	N.-C. Officers and Men	Horses	Mules	Camels	Guns	Native Drivers	Remarks.
Headquarter Staff	18	61	50	1	12	—	3	
Cavalry Brigade Staff	6	9	12	—	—	—	—	
10th Hussars	19	237	251	—	—	—	—	
19th Hussars	19	354	374	—	—	—	—	
Mounted Infantry	5	115	115	—	—	—	—	
1st Brigade Staff	3	3	5	—	—	—	—	
3rd Bn. King's Royal Rifles	11	327	7	31	—	—	—	
1st Bn. Gordon Highlanders	25	707	8	35	—	—	—	
2nd Bn. *Royal Irish Fusiliers*	18	311	12[1]	13[1]	—	—	—	[1] Attached from Royal Highlanders.
Details attached to Royal Irish Fusiliers	1	23	—	—	—	—	—	
2nd Brigade Staff	3	5	4	—	—	—	—	
1st Bn Royal Highlanders	20	720	—	—	—	—	—	
Royal Marines	13	37[1]	5	17[1]	—	—	—	Ditto, ditto.
1st Bn York & Lancaster Regt.	14	460	—	17[2]	—	—	—	[2] Attached from G'd'n Highlanders.
Royal Artillery	11	100	24	2	11	8	16	
Royal Engineers	4	75	15	10	—	—	—	
Naval Brigade	13	150	—	16	—	6	11	
Commissariat and Trans. Corps	3	12	—	—	—	—	—	
Military Police	1	12	—	—	—	—	—	
Army Medical Department	14	—	—	—	—	—	—	
Army Hospital Corps	—	28	—	—	—	—	—	
Egyptian Army	8	13	—	—	—	—	—	
TOTAL	229	4,093	882	142	23	14	30	
	4,322		1,047					

DETAILS OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

13th Feb.—In accordance with the instructions from the Adjutant-General to the Forces, received at Cairo at 10 p m on the 12th, Lieut -General Stephenson immediately proceeded to organize an Expeditionary Field Force, as detailed in the following statement:

Corps	Strength			Horses			Camels	Mules	Remarks
	Officers	Men	Total	Officers	Troop	Total			
19th Hussars	16	390	406	10	339	349[1]	—	87	[1] 2 officers, 60 men, 40 horses embarked at Alexandria.
No. 6 Bat., 1st Brigade, R A.	7[2]	115[3]	122	—	25	25	80	10	
26th Company, Royal Eng'rs	5	93	98	1	19	20	—	40	
Mounted Infantry	5	122	127	3	112	115	—	8	
1st Bn. Royal Highlanders	21	745	766	9	—	9	—	76	
3rd Bn. King's Royal Rifles	19	577	596	8	2	10	—	74	[2] And 2 natives.
1st Bn. Gordon Highlanders	22	725	747	7	2	9	—	74	
Commissariat and Trans. Corps	—	50	50	5	—	5	—	250	[3] And 106 natives (From Cairo, embarked at Suez).
Ordnance Store Corps	2	19	21	—	—	—	—	—	
Army Hospital Corps	—	65	65	—	—	—	—	—	
Military Police	—	15	15	—	—	—	—	—	
10th Hussars	—	280	280	—	180	180	—	—	Probable number to join at Suakin, exact number not known
Royal Artillery	—	80	80	—	—	—	—	—	
2nd Bn. Royal Irish Fusiliers	—	340	340	—	—	—	—	—	
Royal Marines	6	363	363	—	—	—	—	—	
1st Bn. York and Lancaster Regt.	—	—	not known			—	—	—	
TOTAL	103	3,979	4,082	43	688	731	80	619	

The details concerning the composition of the various forces that took the field are compiled from information supplied by the Intelligence Department, War Office: "The Insurrection of the False Prophet"

LIST OF STAFF AND DEPARTMENTAL OFFICERS ACCOMPANYING THE FIELD FORCE TO SUAKIN

General Officer in Command—Major-General Sir G Graham, V.C., K.C.B.

Assistant Military Secretary—Captain Baynes, Cameron Highlanders.

Aides-de-Camp—Lieutenant Romilly, Scots Guards; Lieutenant Scott, Cameron Highlanders.

Assistant Adjutant Quartermaster-General—Lieut.-Colonel Clery, Assistant Adjutant-General

Deputy Assistant Adjutants-General—Lieut.-Colonel Gordon, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; Captain Wauchope, C.M.G., Royal Highlanders.

Assistant Provost-Marshal—Captain Williams-Freeman, Royal Sussex Regiment

Senior Commissariat Officer—Assistant Commissary-General Nugent, Commissariat and Transport Staff.

Senior Ordnance Store Officer—Assistant Commissary-General Mills, Ordnance Store Corps.

District Paymaster—Major Thornhill.

Principal Medical Officer—Brigade-Surgeon McDowell, Army Medical Department.

Commanding Cavalry and Mounted Corps—Colonel H. Stewart, C.B., A.D.C., 3rd Dragoon Guards.

Brigade Major—Lieut.-Colonel Taylor, 19th Hussars.

Aide-de-Camp—Lieutenant F. W. Rhodes, 1st Royal Dragoons.

Commanding 1st Brigade—Major-General Davis.

Brigade Major—Captain Hitchcock, Shropshire Light Infantry.

Aide-de-Camp—Lieutenant Douglas, Cameronians.

Commanding Infantry Corps (Second in Command)—Colonel Sir R. Buller, V.C., K.C.M.G., C.B., A.D C.

Brigade Major—Captain Kelly, Royal Sussex Regiment.

Aide-de-Camp—Lieutenant St Aubyn. Grenadier Guards.

Head of Intelligence Department and Commanding Royal Engineer—Lieutenant-Colonel Ardagh, C.B., Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General.

Intelligence Department—Captain Green, Brigade Major, Royal Engineers; Captain Slade, Royal Artillery; Major Schaffer, Egyptian Constabulary.

Chaplains' Department—Rev. G. Smith (Church of England); Rev. R. Brindle (Roman Catholic), Rev. J. Mactaggart (Presbyterian); Rev. J. Webster (Wesleyan).

Commissariat and Transport Staff—Deputy Assistant Commissary-General Jessop, 1st Brigade, Deputy Assistant Commissary-General Rogers, 2nd Brigade; Deputy Assistant Commissary-General Ramsford, Cavalry; Deputy Assistant Commissary-General Hamilton, Senior Commissariat Officer, Base; Deputy Assistant Commissary-General Wilson, Transport; Deputy Assistant Commissary-General Leonard, Transport; Quartermaster Robinson, Suez; Captain Quirk, Welsh Regiment, in charge of camels (attached); Lieutenant Turner, Shropshire Light Infantry (attached); Major Forster, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry (attached).

Army Medical Department—Surgeon-Majors Catherwood, Wilson, Connolly; Surgeons Prendergast, Turner, Lucas, Rose, A. M. Davies, W. H. Lewis, Jencken, Stuart, Treherne, Lane; Quartermaster Enright, Army Hospital Corps.

Army Pay Department—Captain Kneller, District Office.

Veterinary Department—Veterinary Surgeons Clayton, Thompson, and Beech.

LIST OF CASUALTIES IN THE ACTION AT EL TEB ON FEBRUARY 29, 1884.

	Killed or Died of Wounds		Wounded	
	Officers	N.-C. Officers and Men	Officers	N.-C. Officers and Men
Naval Brigade	1	2	2	9
Staff	—	—	5	—
10th Hussars	2	4	1	5
19th Hussars	1	5	1	22
Royal Artillery	—	1	1	3
Royal Marine Artillery	—	1	—	2
Royal Engineers	—	1	—	4
Mounted Infantry	—	—	—	2
1st Bn Royal Highlanders	—	4	2	22
Royal Marine Light Infantry	—	3	2	11
3rd Bn. King's Royal Rifles	1	1	—	6
1st Bn. York and Lancaster Regiment	—	7	2	33
1st Bn. Gordon Highlanders	—	—	—	10
2nd Bn. Royal Irish Fusiliers	—	—	1	6[1]
Army Hospital Corps	—	—	—	1
Army Medical Department	—	—	1	—
Veterinary Department	—	—	1	—
	5	29	19	136
	34		155	
TOTAL CASUALTIES	189			

[1] Including one private of the 2nd Battalion Royal Fusiliers

OFFICERS KILLED

The undermentioned officers were killed:

Major Slade, 10th Hussars.
Lieut Probyn, 9th Bengal Cavalry (attached to 10th Hussars).
Lieut. Freeman, 19th Hussars.
Quartermaster Wilkins, 3rd Bn King's Royal Rifles.

DIED OF WOUNDS

The undermentioned officer died of wounds received in action:

Lieut. Royds, R.N., H.M.S. "Carysfort."

APPENDIX C

MARCHING OUT STRENGTH FOR BATTLE OF TAMAI, MARCH 13, 1884.

The strength of this force, including the Cavalry Brigade and Mounted Infantry, was as follows:

Regiment or Corps	Officers	N.-C. Officers and Men	Remarks
CAVALRY.			
10th Hussars	16	235	
19th Hussars	19	343	
Mounted Infantry	6	118	[1] Camel Battery, eight 7-pounder guns, with 66 camels, carrying 90 rounds per gun.
ARTILLERY.			
6th Batt. 1st Brigade, Scottish Division	7	100[1]	
M. Batt, 1st Brigade	3	66[2]	
Naval Brigade	13 (?)	150 (?)	
FIRST INFANTRY BRIGADE.			
26th Company Royal Engineers	5	57	[2] Four 9-pounder guns, with 52 mules, carrying 86 rounds per gun, 6 machine guns.
3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifles	19	546	
1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders	23	689	
2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers	17	326	
SECOND INFANTRY BRIGADE.			
1st Battalion Royal Highlanders	19	604[3]	
Royal Marine Light Infantry and Artillery	14	464	[3] Already in zariba
1st Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment	14	421	
	175	4,119	
TOTAL	4,294		

LIST OF KILLED AND WOUNDED.

The following is a list of the casualties among the British troops engaged on March 13, 1884.

Regiment or Corps	Killed		Wounded		Remarks
	Officers	Men	Officers	Men	
LOSSES IN ZARIBA FROM DROPPING SHOTS BETWEEN 1 A.M. AND 6 A.M.					
Royal Marine Light Infantry	—	—	—	2	
3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifles	—	—	—	1	
1st Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment	—	1	—	—	
1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders	—	—	1	1	
	1		5		
TOTAL CASUALTIES	6				
BATTLE OF TAMAI					
Staff	—	—	1	—	
Naval Brigade	3	7	1[1]	7	[1] Surgeon Cross.
10th Hussars	—	—	—	2	
19th Hussars	—	1	—	3	
Mounted Infantry	—	—	—	3	
Royal Marine Artillery	—	1	—	2	
Egyptian Artillery	—	—	—	1	
Royal Engineers	—	1	—	1	
1st Battalion Royal Sussex Regiment	—	1	—	—	
1st Battalion Royal Highlanders	1	59	4[2]	29	[2] Including 1 officer, 2nd Battn. Highland Light Infantry.
Royal Marine Light Infantry	—	2	—	12	
3rd Battalion King's Royal Rifles	—	—	—	3	
1st Battalion York and Lancaster Regiment	1	30	1	23	
1st Battalion Gordon Highlanders	—	2	—	8	
2nd Battalion Royal Irish Fusiliers	—	—	—	5[3]	[3] Including 1 private, 2nd Battn Royal Fusiliers.
Army Medical Department	—	—	1	—	
Army Hospital Corps	—	—	—	1	
Abyssinian Scouts	—	—	—	4	
	5	104	8	104	
	109		112		
TOTAL CASUALTIES	221				

The officers killed were Lieutenants Almack, R.N., H.M.S. "Briton"; Montresor, R.N., H.M.S. "Euryalus", Houston Stewart, R.N., H.M.S. "Dryad." Captains Aitken, 1st Bn. Royal Highlanders, H. G. W. Ford, 1st Bn. York and Lancaster Regt

APPENDIX D

STAFF OF THE SUAKIN FIELD FORCE, 1885 [1]

Commanding Suakin Field Force—Lieut.-General Sir G. Graham, V.C., K.C.B , R.E

Assistant Military Secretary—Major E. H. H Collen, Ben S C.

A.D.C 's—Lieutenants Hon. J. M Stopford, Grenadier Guards; W. C. Anderson, R.A.; C. G Lindsay, R.N

Chief of Staff—Major-General Sir G. Greaves, K.C M.G., C.B.

A.D.C.—Captain A. N. Rochfort, R.A.; Colonel D S. Warren, Half-pay.

A.A. and Q.M.G.—Colonels G F. Gildea, A D.C., Half-pay; J. M. Leith, C.B., Cameron Highlanders.

D A.A. and Q.M.G—Majors R. H. L. Anstruther, Half-pay, W. Cooke-Collis, R.I R.; G. E. Grover, R.E.

D.A.A. and Q.M G (Intelligence Department)—Captains W. H. Sawyer, The King's Own Royal Lancaster Regiment; P. H. N. Lake, East Lancashire Regiment; G. H. More-Molyneux, Ben. S. C.

Provost Marshal (A.A. and Q.M.G.)—Brevet-Lieut.-Colonel R. W. F. Gordon, Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

Assistant Provost Marshal (D.A.A. and Q.M.G.)—Major J Morris, R.M.L.I.

C R.A.—Lieut.-Colonel S. J Nicholson, R.A.

Adjutant—Captain R. A Bannatine, R.A.

C.R.E.—Colonel J B. Edwards, C.B., R E.

In Charge of Signalling—Major E T. Browell, R.A.

Brigade Major R.E.—Brevet-Major H. W. Smith, R.E.

S.C.O.—A. C. General J. L Robertson, Com and Trans Corps.

S.O.S.O.—A. C General of Ord., E. G. Skinner, Ord. S. Corps.

District Paymaster—Staff-Paymaster R. G Craig, A.P. Dept.

P.M.O.—Deputy Surg.-General O. Barnett, C I.E., M.S Corps.

Principal Veterinary Surgeon in Egypt—Insp. Veterinary Surgeon W. B. Walters, Veterinary Dept.

[1] See Colvile, op. cit.

APPENDIX E

SPECIAL SERVICE OFFICERS

D.A.A. and Q.M.G.—Captain and Brevet-Colonel R. H. Murray, Seaforth Highlanders; Major J. H. Barnard, C.M.G., R.M.F; Captain and Brevet-Major C. W. H. Douglas, Gordon Highlanders; Major R. C. D'E. Spottiswoode, 10th Hussars, Major H. Hare, R.M.F.; Captain G. S. Clarke, R.E.; Lieutenant J. M. Grierson, R.A.; Captain and Brevet-Major W. C. James, 2nd Dragoons.

BRIGADE OF GUARDS.

Major-General—A. J. Lyon-Fremantle.
A.D.C.—Captain Hon. F. W. Stopford, Grenadier Guards.
Brigade Major—Hon. N. de C. Dalrymple, Scotch Guards.

INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier-General—Major-General Sir J. C. McNeill, V.C., K.C.B., K.C.M.G.
A.D.C.—Lieutenant Hon. A. D. Charteris, Coldstream Guards.
Brigade Major—Brevet-Lieut.-Colonel W. F. Kelly, Royal Sussex Regiment.

CAVALRY BRIGADE.

Colonel on the Staff—Colonel H. P. Ewart, C.B., Half-pay.
Brigade Major—Captain C. F. Thomson, 7th Hussars.

INDIAN CONTINGENT.

Brigadier-General—Brigadier-General J. Hudson, C.B., Ben. S.C.
A.A. and Q.M.G.—Major R. McG. Stewart, R.A., N.R.
D.A.A. and Q.M.G.—Brevet-Major Stewart, Ben. S.C. Major A. J. Pearson, R.A.
Brigade Major—Major J. Cook, Ben. S.C.
Provost-Marshal—Captain H. R. L. Holmes, Ben. S.C.

BASE AND LINE OF COMMUNICATION.

Brigadier-General—Major-General C. B. Ewart, C.B., R.E.
A.D.C.—Lieutenant C. R. McGrigor, K.R.R. Corps.
Commandant Base (*D.A. and Q.M.G.*)—Colonel W. Arbuthnot, Half-pay.
A.A and Q.M G—Brevet-Lieut-Colonel H. G. MacGregor, Half-pay.
D.A.A. and Q.M.G.—Major A. Garstin, Middlesex Regiment.

NAVAL BRIGADE.

Commanding—Commander Domville, R.N.

APPENDIX F

COMPOSITION OF THE EASTERN SUDAN FIELD FORCE, FEBRUARY, 1891.

Commanding—Colonel Holled-Smith, King's Royal Rifles.
Chief of Staff—Lieut.-Colonel Settle, R.E
A.A G. for Intelligence—Major Wingate, D.S O., R.A.
Staff Officers—Captain Barrow, South Lancashire Regiment; Lieutenant Curtis, R.E
Senior Medical Officer—Surgeon Myles (Medical Staff).
D.A.A.G Line of Communications—Captain Machell, Essex Regt.
D.G. Base of Communications—Major Mukhtar Effendi.
Commissariat Officer—Lieutenant Fuad Effendi.
Senior Naval Officer—Commander Dudding, R.N., H.M.S. "Dolphin."
Naval A.D.C.—Lieutenant Craddock, R.N., H.M.S. "Dolphin."
Arabic Secretary—Milhem Shakur Bey.

TROOPS.

Cavalry—Two Troops under Captain Beech, C.M.G., 20th Hussars.
Artillery—59 Men, 2 Field and 2 Mountain Guns under Lieut. Pullen, R.A.
Infantry—4th Egyptian Battalion, under Captain Hacket Pain, R.W. Surrey Regt.; Second in Command: Captain Sidney, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry. 11th Sudanese Battalion, under Captain Macdonald, D.S.O., Gordon Highlanders. Second in Command: Lieutenant Jackson, Gordon Highlanders; Lieutenant Cotton, Shropshire Light Infantry, and Lieutenant Duplat Taylor, Grenadier Guards. 12th Sudanese Battalion, under Captain Besant, Norfolk Regiment; Second in Command: Captain Martyr, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry.
Medical Corps—Surgeon Graham, Medical Staff.

Also details of Engineer, Commissariat, Ordnance, and Veterinary Departments. In all, 18 English officers, 57 native officers, 6 English non-commissioned officers, 1,855 non-commissioned officers and men, 55 civilians (including interpreters), 12 Arab horsemen of the Suakin Police, 40 footmen, 150 camel drivers, 150 horses, 45 mules, 50 donkeys, 200 camels, and 5 guns (including 1 Maxim gun).

The following officers subsequently joined the force at El Teb on 17th inst.:

A.A.G.—Lieut.-Colonel Rundle, D S O , R.A.
Assistant to O.C. Lines of Communication—Captain Palmer, Somerset Light Infantry
Veterinary—Surgeon Griffith and Major Ramzi Effendi.

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