

# **ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS: SUDAN**

---

Various authors



# **GORDON**

---

The Sudan and Slavery

Pierre Crabitès

ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:  
SUDAN



ROUTLEDGE LIBRARY EDITIONS:  
SUDAN

---

Volume 1

GORDON

---



# Taylor & Francis

Taylor & Francis Group

<http://taylorandfrancis.com>

**GORDON**  
The Sudan and Slavery

PIERRE CRABITÈS

First published in 1933 by George Routledge and Sons, Ltd.

This edition first published in 2017

by Routledge

2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge

52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 1933 Pierre Crabitès

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-1-138-20168-2 (Set)

ISBN: 978-1-315-43940-2 (Set) (ebk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-21648-8 (Volume 1) (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-138-21655-6 (Volume 1) (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-44220-4 (Volume 1) (ebk)

#### **Publisher's Note**

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.

#### **Disclaimer**

The publisher has made every effort to trace copyright holders and would welcome correspondence from those they have been unable to trace.

# GORDON

## THE SUDAN AND SLAVERY

By  
PIERRE CRABITÈS

*With an engraved portrait of General Gordon*



LONDON :  
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, LTD.,  
BROADWAY HOUSE, 68-74 CARTER LANE, E.C.

1933

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY  
STEPHEN AUSTIN AND SONS, LTD., HERTFORD



TO MY WIFE

WHO HAS PLAYED AN ACTIVE AND IMPORTANT  
PART IN THE WRITING OF THIS BOOK

## CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	I
II. ISMAIL, KHEDIVE OF EGYPT . . . . .	7
III. GORDON CALLED TO CENTRAL AFRICA . . . . .	17
IV. ANTI-SLAVERY "PROHIBITION" AND "REGULATION" . . . . .	26
V. GORDON LEAVES FOR GONDOKORO . . . . .	36
VI. EVER ON THE TREK . . . . .	45
VII. DEPARTS FOR LAKE ALBERT . . . . .	55
VIII. SURVEYS THE VICTORIA NILE . . . . .	66
IX. RETURNS TO THE SUDAN . . . . .	78
X. INSPECTS DARFUR . . . . .	91
XI. FINISHES HIS INSPECTION . . . . .	103
XII. SUMMONED TO CAIRO . . . . .	114
XIII. THE DEBT INQUIRY . . . . .	127
XIV. THE AFTERMATH OF THE INQUIRY . . . . .	136
XV. THE END OF GORDON'S FIRST MISSION TO THE SUDAN . . . . .	148
XVI. THE SUDAN ABANDONED . . . . .	161
XVII. GLADSTONE DRAFTS GORDON . . . . .	173
XVIII. GORDON'S INSTRUCTIONS . . . . .	188

CHAP.		PAGE
XIX.	AT CAIRO . . . . .	197
XX.	<i>EN ROUTE</i> TO KHARTOUM . . . . .	207
XXI.	ARRIVAL AT KHARTOUM . . . . .	219
XXII.	FIRST DAYS AT KHARTOUM . . . . .	229
XXIII.	THE BERBER EXPEDITION . . . . .	241
XXIV.	THE MAHDI'S LETTER . . . . .	252
XXV.	THE VEIL OF SILENCE . . . . .	262
XXVI.	DEMOTED . . . . .	274
XXVII.	ALONE . . . . .	287
XXVIII.	THE DASH TO KHARTOUM . . . . .	299
XXIX.	TOO LATE . . . . .	316
	INDEX . . . . .	331

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THE critics of Charles George Gordon accuse him of vacillation and of instability of character. While admitting his sincerity, they say that he blew hot one day and cold the next. His partizans refuse to admit that he was inconstant. They take the position that it was the Gladstone Cabinet which manifested a spirit of indecision that was fraught with terrible consequences.

General Gordon was a prolific letter-writer. He also kept a journal which covers the fateful weeks when his life hung in the balance. Many official notes and dispatches deal with his final mission to Khartoum. Lord Cromer has written at some length upon his relations with Gordon during this period.

It has struck me that the best possible way to get at the truth in regard to Gordon's proper place in history is to let these letters, this journal, these notes and despatches, and also the comments of contemporaries high in authority, like Lord Cromer, tell their own story.

I have, it is true, drawn my own deductions from this mass of evidence. I have not waited to sum up until all this proof had been put into my pages. I have, on the contrary, punctuated it, as it were, with my own views. I feel, however, that quotation marks make it easy for my reader to distinguish between the testimony and exhibits which are presented, and the remarks and the arguments which deal with them. I trust that my observations may help to bring out the truth. This is all that really interests me. The case upon which Gordon must be judged depends, nevertheless, not upon what I may have had to say or

may desire to establish, but upon the record as composed by himself, by Downing Street, and by Lord Cromer.

I feel deeply indebted to all of those who have permitted me to make up this transcript. First and foremost, my thanks are due to King Fuad of Egypt for having given me unrestrained access to the Royal archives of Abdine Palace, Cairo. His Majesty's kindness to me is but another evidence of that love for historical truth which is so characteristic of him.

I desire also to express my appreciation of the courtesy shown me by Messrs. Blackie and Son, Ltd., Chatto and Windus, Thomas de la Rue and Co., Ltd., Hutchinson and Co., Ltd., and Macmillan and Co., Ltd., in permitting me to quote from published works which are their copyright, as indicated in the footnotes to this book.

PIERRE CRABITÈS.

CAIRO, EGYPT.

*October, 1932.*

# GORDON, THE SUDAN AND SLAVERY

## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTORY

WHEN the nineteenth century dawned the Sudan was closed to Egypt. The Ptolemies had been dead for nearly two thousand years. Their successors had long since lost control of the Black Country. But when, after the wars of Napoleon, Europe readjusted her maps, Africa found in Muhammad Aly a born leader of men. He took in his own hand the sceptre of the Land of the Pharaohs. He lost no time in widening the frontiers which he had taken over from the Mamelukes.

He believed in law and order. He had his own idea of law and his individual conception of order ; but they were sufficiently orthodox to fit into their Levantine setting. He had a sharp sword, a ready wit, a stout son, Ibrahim Pasha, and a doughty son-in-law, the Defterdar. These helped him to carry out his policy of expansion and his theories of statecraft. This Muslim trinity created Modern Egypt. Muhammad Aly was its overshadowing genius. He delegated none of his authority. His rule was personal. His children were efficient instruments wielded by a master mind.

He made his power felt while he was still under the tutelage of Turkey. If Europe had not interfered he would in all probability have occupied Constantinople, and possibly have made Stamboul tributary to Cairo. But at that time the maintenance of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was deemed essential to the

welfare of the Occident. The Powers, therefore, decreed that the militant vassal should remain under the suzerainty of the effete Sultan.

Before the astute Albanian meditated defiance of his liege lord he made sure that his own Egyptian bailiwick was in order. The inland commerce of Egypt had, during the earlier years of his overlordship, suffered great interruptions from the confusion and discord to which the lands south of the first cataract were a prey. The chiefs of certain zones in that vast expanse had formed themselves into what has been described as "a singular aristocracy of brigands".<sup>1</sup> They pillaged all the provinces and caravans within their reach, without mercy and without restraint. Civil wars rent asunder the once powerful country of Sennaar. Anarchy prevailed in the Sudan.

Muhammad Aly resolved to put an end to this intolerable condition of affairs. He was no reformer who sought to constrain his neighbours to conform to his tenets. He was a practical statesman, determined to abate a nuisance in a territory which abutted upon his demesnes because he considered that the disorder there prevailing interfered with the commercial expansion of his subjects. Two other motives likewise impelled him to act.

The officers of the Sudan Government responsible for the official publication known as *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan* say that "gold was doubtless his main object, for he had heard rumours of mines of vast wealth; but we must also give him credit for an honest intention to introduce commerce and civilization into the midst of Negro tribes".<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Sabry, an Egyptian who recently published an

<sup>1</sup> *A Narrative of the Expedition to Dongola and the Sennaar under the Command of His Excellency Ismail Pasha undertaken by Order of His Highness Mehemmed Ali Pasha, Viceroy of Egypt*, by an American in the service of the Viceroy; London, John Murray, 1822, p. ix.

<sup>2</sup> *The Anglo-Egyptian Sudan*, a compendium prepared by Officers of the Sudan Government, edited by Lieut.-Colonel Count Gleichen; London, printed for His Majesty's Stationery Office by Harrison & Sons, 1905, vol. i, p. 231.

authoritative history of the reign of Muhammad Aly, is not quite so complimentary to the founder of the Forty-fifth Egyptian Dynasty. He writes that Muhammad Aly undertook the conquest of the Sudan in order to find "in that vast country of slaves the man-power necessary for the formation of his new armies".<sup>1</sup> Colonel Elgood, in his *Transit of Egypt*, takes the same point of view as the Egyptian writer. This author sums up the situation most happily by saying that: "Early in the course of his reign he (Muhammad Aly) perceived the necessity of raising a national army. His Albanian militia was costly to recruit, their loyalty to his person doubtful. He went methodically to work. From France he imported a number of officers, from the Mameluke families he enlisted cadets, and from the Sudan he recruited rank and file."<sup>2</sup>

The meaning of all this is that whether the quest for gold and "an honest intention to introduce commerce and civilization into the midst of Negro tribes" played a part in turning Muhammad Aly's eyes towards the Sudan or not, a desire to tap the slave preserves of the Black Country was at least one of the great incentives which led his armies into those parts. He needed recruits for his wars. The population of Egypt at that time numbered less than three million souls.<sup>3</sup> His ambition knew no bounds. Without *kanonenfudder* he was powerless. With blacks to stop enemy bullets the key to success was within his grasp.

It thus came about that the slavery question dominated Egypt's relations with the Sudan from the day when Muhammad Aly sent his sons to chastise the recalcitrant tribes of the southern stretches of the

<sup>1</sup> *L'Empire Egyptien sous Mohammed-Ali et la question d'Orient (1811-1849)*. Paris, Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, p. 68; see also pp. 70 and 72.

<sup>2</sup> *The Transit of Egypt*, by Lieut.-Colonel P. G. Elgood; London, Edward Arnold, 1928, p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Nile. That problem never once ceased to be in the ascendant during the whole time that the Sudan was Egyptian territory. It was the rock upon which Gordon perished. England did not understand the problem with which her heroic son had to deal.

And to accentuate, as it were, the strange fatality which hovered over Egypt's attempt to harness the Sudan to her chariot, Muhammad Aly soon found that the black troops of Central Africa could not endure the Egyptian climate.<sup>1</sup> He therefore deemed it useless to count upon them as the military backbone of the Viceregal armies. If the negroes, as a whole, were unable to resist the mild temperature of the Nile Delta, it was obvious that they could not survive the hardships of the regions towards which the Pasha's ambition called him. He did not, therefore, scour the Black Country in search of slaves for any great length of time. As soon as the earlier supplies had been tested and found inefficient, his agents were no longer urged to impress men of fighting age and drive them to Cairo.

It is quite likely, however, that Muhammad Aly's agents in the Sudan, most probably acting largely on their own account, found that it paid to import into Egypt negro boys, girls, and young women. During the earlier days of the last century both Europe and America looked upon slavery as a more or less beneficent institution. Islam did likewise. There was, therefore, an admirable general market in Egypt for imported black human flesh. But as long as the creator of Modern Egypt was alive, the exportation of slaves from the Sudan was kept within reasonable limits. The practice was perhaps allowed to continue, but it was not encouraged by those in authority in Cairo. On the other hand, they fostered what may be called legitimate trade, more particularly the shipment of ivory.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 51.

When Muhammad Aly passed away in 1849 his successor, Abbas, inherited neither his brain nor his energy. "My grandfather," he was accustomed to say, "thought himself an autocrat. He was one to his subjects and to his children : but to the consuls of Europe he was no more than a shoe. If I, too, must submit to someone, let me be then the servant of the Khalif, and not of the Christians whom I hate."<sup>1</sup> The grandson, who thus sought to emancipate himself from the traditions of the past decades, found himself not only the puppet of the Sultan, but soft clay in the hands of commercial adventurers. They saw the opportunity of making money by importing not white but black ivory.

During the years when old age weakened Muhammad Aly's hold upon affairs Khartoum had become a central market for a huge slave trade. When Abbas came into power his satellites were not satisfied with handling the slave business that flowed into that metropolis. They organized armed bands which went out to capture slaves. They led *razzias*, as these marauding expeditions against surrounding tribes were called. They introduced system into slave-driving. They took the local government men into partnership with them. They ran things with a high hand, and made slave-raiding pay. They became rich and respected, and their corrupt official friends wealthy and esteemed.

Abbas had but a short reign. His brother, Muhammad Said, succeeded him in 1854. The new Viceroy posed as a constitutional ruler "deferring publicly to the counsel of his advisers, when their opinion did not conflict with his own".<sup>1</sup> He was one of those well-meaning men who sow good intentions and reap disappointments because they are carried away by the glamour of the word "reform". He forbade the slave trade, but had not the energy to

<sup>1</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

translate his decrees into results. Had not death called him in 1863 he might possibly have ceased anathematizing and got down to action. But it is useless to theorize. All that can be recorded is that, when Ismail became Viceroy of Egypt, he found the slave-traders enthroned in Khartoum, the civil service of the Sudan thoroughly corrupt, and the slave aristocrats so powerful in Cairo that their fiat made mock of the law. The new ruler also discovered that Egypt was heavily indebted to Europe, his predecessor having borrowed extravagantly in 1858, 1861, and 1862.<sup>1</sup>

Ibid., p. 56.

## CHAPTER II

### ISMAIL, KHEDEVE OF EGYPT

THOUGH Ismail had faded from the political scene before Gordon returned to Egypt on his fateful mission, he played so large a part in the Scotsman's life that it may not be amiss to seek to understand what kind of a man he really was. So many fables revolve around his memory that we cannot always separate truth from legend. What is certain is that when he abdicated in 1879 Egypt was insolvent. This bankruptcy, and the disorder born of it, brought England to Egypt. But the fact that the imperious laws of economics required that Ismail should go does not necessarily mean that Gordon gave his friendship to a megalomaniac. To be brief, in order to understand the working of Gordon's mind we should endeavour to visualize the first Khedive in his proper perspective.

Ismail was not an Adonis. When Gordon came into touch with him he had long since lost his waist-line. He had a peculiar roll in his walk, which developed into a waddle. So great was his dignity, however, that after a few seconds the dominant impression made by him was not that of a fat man but one of strikingly gentlemanly bearing. His left eye drooped more than the other, and when he was listening seemed closed, while the right wandered all over his *vis-à-vis* as if looking for weak points. When he began to speak his head was jerked aside, the right eye half closed, while the left gleamed with intelligence. People said that he heard with one eye and spoke with the other. Moberly Bell, for many years the Cairo correspondent of *The Times*, from whom this description has been

borrowed, once repeated this to Ismail. "Yes," said the Khedive, "and I think with both."<sup>1</sup>

This ready repartee shows that Ismail had a quick wit, a sense of humour, and enough confidence in himself to permit his visitors to speak their minds to him frankly. He was an excellent judge of human nature. To one man he would be all suavity and mannerism. One would praise him for his polished manners and his tact; another because he was business-like and went straight to the point.

When he was carrying out his plans for the establishment of sugar refineries in Egypt he had to deal with two different groups of negotiators, one French, the other English. With the former the business took days. They were charmed with his complete knowledge of details and the care with which he had examined the minutest particulars of their proposals. With the latter all was arranged in a few hours. The Manchester men went away saying that he was the sharpest business man to be found away from the banks of the Irwell. When this story was told to the Khedive, his speaking eye lit up with a keen smile. "One man rides a horse," he said, "another a donkey, another a camel. Each of these animals has a different stride. The best rider is he who can ride all three equally well."<sup>2</sup>

Another time, when he was talking of dispatching a special mission to Europe, he lamented that he had no one to send to Paris. "Nubar would do for Constantinople, because he can *tell stories*; Cherif for England, for he likes shooting; but neither would do down in France. We want lighter material for Paris wear."

Ismail's most extraordinary gift was his power of fascination. No man was ever known to resist him

<sup>1</sup> *Khedives and Pashas, Sketches of Contemporary Egyptian Rulers and Statesmen by One who Knows them Well*; London, Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1884, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

when in his presence. All sorts and conditions of visitors, from Ministers downwards, were repeatedly seen to enter his reception-room bursting with indignation at some real or supposed insult or injury only to come out within a few minutes cooing reconciliation and purring contentment.

Speaking once to Moberly Bell of an amiable but rather weak Consul-General, the Khedive remarked : " I cannot understand that diplomat. He comes here, agrees with all I say, and then goes away and abuses me to his Government. Why should he say one thing to my face and another behind my back ? " " Has Your Highness ever asked him ? " inquired *The Times* correspondent. Ismail laughed. " *Mon Dieu*, twenty times ! But he said that he was wrong in his dispatch, and that he will explain it in the next. Then he makes it worse again. What can I do ? I can't sit over the man while he writes his dispatches." And at this he half closed his eyes, as he did whenever he said anything that pleased him.<sup>1</sup>

Need we say that the reports and accounts which have pilloried Ismail before the bar of history were written away from his presence, and generally by men who either did not know him at all or had but a superficial acquaintance with him ? This is not the moment to analyse the evidence upon which these indictments have been drawn up. Suffice it to say, for the present, that such damning charges have been levelled against a man of winning personality, alert intelligence, and resourceful mind. But such attributes, decorative and endearing though they may be, have nought to do with the tragic fate of Charles George Gordon. The personality of the greatest of the Khedives dovetails into that of the heroic Scotsman because Ismail's first important encounter with European thumb-screws was brought about by his stout opposition to slavery. Napoleon III caught

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

him in his toils because Ismail abolished the Egyptian *corvée* or unpaid labour. The staggering blow given the Khedive at that time played no small part in his eventual ruin.

Those who are acquainted with the history of the building of the Suez Canal will recall that Muhammad Said Pasha permitted his childhood friend, Ferdinand de Lesseps, to dictate the terms of the Viceregal decree under which the latter carried out one of the greatest engineering triumphs of the nineteenth century. The provisions of the grant contemplated that Egypt should furnish a certain sum in cash and *corvée* labour. Translated into practical economics, this meant that it was "nominated in the bond" that slave labour should be furnished by the Viceroy to the Company.

When, in January, 1863, Ismail succeeded the indulgent Muhammad Said, President Lincoln's proclamation had but recently decreed the abolition of slavery in the United States. The ports of the States of the Southern Confederacy were then blockaded. Cotton was worth its weight in gold in the international markets. Egypt had in those days the world's best and perhaps largest available supply of that commodity. The Khedive was in 1863 by far the greatest cotton planter known to history. He thus became fabulously wealthy at the very time when the public conscience of mankind was aroused by the burning words of the American statesman. Rolling in money though he was, Ismail caught the significance of Lincoln's message and ordered the abolition of the *corvée*.

This resolute stand for freedom was met by the century-old cry of vested rights. The Suez Canal Company in time brought diplomatic pressure to bear upon the Khedive to force him to sacrifice his people upon the altar of wax and parchment. He was obdurate. He would not yield. Arbitration was proposed. The French Emperor undertook the task.

He dared not fly in the face of the aroused conscience of mankind and ordain the continuance of slave labour. But he gave a decision which amply safeguarded what were then predominantly French interests. He ruled on 6th July, 1864, that the *corvée* should remain abolished, but that Ismail should pay the Suez Canal Company damages amounting to 84,000,000 French francs, or, in round figures, £3,400,000.<sup>1</sup>

While Ismail was "long" on cotton in those "bullish" days, he did not have the ready cash wherewith to disburse this sum. Doubtless the Imperial arbitrator knew this. He perhaps preferred that the award should not be settled at once. The Viceroy's credit was such that, had he so decided, he could have raised the cash and paid off the amount of the award then and there. At all events, Napoleon III stipulated that the liquidated damages should be wiped out in annual instalments. Ismail did not meet these payments as they matured.

In 1869, when the great waterway was opened, the Khedive was heavily in debt to the *Compagnie Universelle*. An agreement was entered into between Ismail and the Canal authorities by which the former ceded to the latter any and all dividends that might be earned by his stock for the next twenty-five years. This implied that while his portfolio held 177,642 shares out of the total of 400,000 issued by the Company, his holdings were destined to bring him in no cash for the rest of his life expectancy. This disposed him to get rid of such a non-productive asset. Disraeli was alive to the opportunity thus presented. It was therefore decreed by *Kismet* that England should profit by a condition brought about largely by France, but primarily due to the Khedive's war on the *corvée*.

<sup>1</sup> *Ferdinand de Lesseps, Sa Vie, Son Œuvre*, by Alph. Bertrand et Emile Ferrier ; Paris, Charpentier, 1887, p. 257.

The moral courage shown by Ismail in refusing to countenance forced labour in the construction of the Suez waterway is emphasized by his attitude in regard to slavery in the Sudan. It has already been said that, on his accession, he found the slave-traders ensconced in power. They ruled Khartoum with a rod of iron. Their influence in Cairo was so all-pervading that the Viceroy recognized that heroic measures were necessary if these pariahs were to be dominated. He felt that he needed an Englishman's sense of duty, fearlessness, and driving force to cleanse the Augean stable, and at the same time to extend Egypt's frontiers to the Equator. Luckily, the then Prince of Wales, who afterwards won lasting fame as Edward VII, was able to put the Egyptian ruler in touch with the right man. He suggested that this double task be entrusted to Sir Samuel Baker, a well-known traveller and sportsman, the discoverer of one of the sources of the Nile.<sup>1</sup> The Khedive did not hesitate. He engaged the Briton at a salary of £10,000 a year, and conferred upon him plenary authority.

At the time that Sir Samuel Baker returned from his tour of exploration, and therefore before there was any suggestion of his taking over his new billet, Ismail had already made known his dual intention of extending his territories and of suppressing the slave trade. Not only had he issued orders to this joint effect, but he had begun their execution by establishing an Egyptian camp of 1,000 men at Fashoda in the Shilluk country, where Marchand and Kitchener crossed paths some three decades later.<sup>2</sup> It was because the Khedive soon saw that his efforts to act through Egyptian agencies were thwarted by subterranean methods that he welcomed the opportunity

<sup>1</sup> *Gordon and the Sudan*, by Bernard M. Allen; London, Macmillan & Co., 1931, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *The War in Egypt and the Sudan*, by Thomas Archer; London, Blackie & Son, 1886, vol. i, p. 121.

of retaining the services of a man whose ability, resourcefulness and character were above reproach. Accordingly a decree was issued in April, 1869, giving the explorer absolute power over all the country south of Gondokoro,<sup>1</sup> so that he might extend the annexations as far as the equator and completely suppress slave-hunting and the slave traffic in this, its very centre.<sup>2</sup>

The detailed story of Baker's achievements, his battles with native tribes in league with the slave-hunters, his explorations, his sporting and hunting adventures by which he provided his followers with the meat of elephants, hippopotamuses, antelopes, crocodiles, and all kinds of birds, beasts, and fishes, have nothing to do with this narrative. Baker enters into the story for one reason alone ; namely that the mandate given him by Ismail brings out that monarch's opposition to slavery, and thus throws light upon Gordon's attitude towards the sovereign who called him to Egypt.

Sir Samuel Baker caught the true significance of Ismail's conduct. He thus summed up the situation, when he was still under the spell of the Khedive's magnetic personality.

"The employment of an European to overthrow the slave-trade, in deference to the opinion of the civilized world, was a direct challenge and attack upon the assumed rights and necessities of his own subjects. The magnificence of the operation could not be understood by the general public in Europe. Every household in Upper Egypt and in the Delta was dependent upon slave service ; the fields in the Sudan were cultivated by slaves ; the women in the harems of both rich and middle class were attended by slaves ;

<sup>1</sup> Gondokoro is on the Nile at 5 degrees N.

<sup>2</sup> *Ismailia, a Narrative of the Expedition to Central Africa for the Suppression of the Slave Trade organized by Ismail, Khedive of Egypt*, by Sir Samuel Baker, Pacha ; London, Macmillan & Co., 1874, vol. i, p. 7.

in fact, Egyptian society without slaves would be like a carriage devoid of wheels—it could not proceed.”<sup>1</sup>

Two letters written by Sir Samuel Baker, long after he had left the Khedivial service, are even more emphatic. Their dates show that Ismail was then an exile and Gordon hemmed in at Khartoum. The first, dated 19th August, 1884, reads as follows:—

“I am glad that I was not present at the Jubilee, as I should have felt the want of warmth which the speeches exhibited, and I am quite sure that General Gordon will share my views that the ex-Khedive Ismail would be much hurt by the absence of all allusion to his name as the first Oriental Ruler who ever dared to lift a finger towards the forcible suppression of slave-hunting. Unless we make some acknowledgment of the great sacrifice which such a ruler makes in the endeavours to meet our wishes upon such an important question we cannot expect Orientals to exhibit an interest in the work.

“When you consider that our cruisers obtain head-money £2 for every slave captured we can hardly term our action disinterested, and it compares unfavourably with the liberation of the White Nile Slaves, where the Khedive’s troops received neither bonus nor regular pay, although they were suppressing slavery in its own nest.

“Neither Gordon nor myself ever received the slightest recognition from the English Government nor were even cold thanks conveyed to the Khedive Ismail. The reward for him was deposition and the great slave-hunting field has been restored to the slave-hunters of the Soudan.”<sup>2</sup>

The second letter, written on 20th August, 1884, makes it clear that it was no passing irritation that had dictated the former one. It said:—

“I regret also that in the Report of the various

<sup>1</sup> Archer, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 123.

<sup>2</sup> Royal Egyptian Archives, Abdine Palace, Cairo.

endeavours to suppress the slave trade there is no mention whatever of His Highness Ismail Pacha the ex-Khedive. He was the first Oriental ruler who ever struck a decisive blow, and it should be remembered that although I led the first expedition, both General Gordon and myself were the Khedive's officers, and the credit of our work was due entirely to the Khedive.

"I hope you will include this note in the Anti-Slavery Reports in justice to the Khedive, His Highness Ismail."<sup>1</sup>

Baker returned to Cairo in August, 1874. He had, technically speaking, achieved as far as possible the objects for which the expedition had been organized. He had closed the Nile waterway to the slave-traders, and had thus made their calling more expensive and more hazardous. In the last analysis, however, all that he did was to cause the slave-hunters to trek, with their black ivory, across the burning sands of the desert, instead of taking advantage of the less trying river route. Such practically negative results meant nothing to Ismail's sense of the realities of life. The slave menace in 1874 was, to all intents and purposes, as great as in 1869. The Khedive was faced with a condition and not with a theory. He did not lose heart. He determined to find another Englishman to complete the unfinished task.

Now a new difficulty crossed his path. His creditors were up in arms at the money expended in fighting the slave trade. Baker's expedition had been carried out on an extensive scale. It took money, in those days, to penetrate into the unknown recesses of Darkest Africa. Everything had to be organized, immense distances traversed, and means of communication located, established, and maintained at incalculable cost. The bill brokers resolutely opposed an outlay which had no revenue-producing value. Coupons, not humanity,

<sup>1</sup> Royal Egyptian Archives, Abdine Palace, Cairo.

interested them. They issued their veto against the grant of any further large credits to Baker's successor.<sup>1</sup> All this shows us that Europe had made Ismail's task doubly difficult when he transferred to Colonel Gordon of the Royal Engineers the mandate which Sir Samuel Baker surrendered.

<sup>1</sup> Archer, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 135.

## CHAPTER III

### GORDON CALLED TO CENTRAL AFRICA

ISMAIL and Baker were "Prohibitionists". They were committed to the task of stamping out the slave trade. It was their policy to strike at the base of supply and to prevent the importation of slaves. Baker appears to have recognized, as early as September, 1872, that the unwillingness of the bondholders to permit the Khedive to spend money on "Prohibition" enforcement was bound to result in the failure of this programme. He therefore let Cairo know, some time about that date, that he did not care to remain in his impossible position after the expiration of his four-year contract.

The Khedive accepted the inevitable with a good grace. He was not discouraged. He determined to attack the evil from another angle. He made up his mind to face realities and to do all that he could within the limits imposed upon him by his importunate creditors. But his primary need was not to work out a feasible plan. His crying necessity was to find a man who possessed Baker's courage, driving power, and personality. He wanted an Englishman, not only because such a choice was a guarantee against the possibility of corruption, but also because the terms of the expiring agreement stipulated that Baker's successor should be a Briton.<sup>1</sup>

The delicate mission of finding this dynamic personality was entrusted to Nubar Pasha, to whom, as Moberly Bell put it, "is due the execution of nearly

<sup>1</sup> *Gordon and the Sudan*, by Bernard M. Allen ; London, Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1931, p. 1.

every good project that emanated either from the fertile brain of Ismail or from his own.”<sup>1</sup> That statesman had gone to Constantinople with his sovereign in order to secure from the Sultan a firman giving Egypt a large measure of financial independence. The Khedive, having obtained his coveted charter, went back to Cairo. His Minister remained on the Bosphorus in order to adjust certain details and to take up with the British Embassy the question of the choice of Baker’s successor.

Lieutenant-Colonel Charles George Gordon, R.E., was passing at this time through Constantinople. The contrast between this officer’s reputation for romantic bravery and his unmilitary appearance was so great that the Egyptian was taken aback when a short, unprepossessing, timid-looking man was introduced to him as the Commanding-General of “the Ever-Victorious Army”. The hesitation, however, was but momentary. There was something in Gordon’s winsome, laughing, sympathetic eyes, “which sparkled like blue diamonds,” that told Nubar Pasha that he was in the presence of an idealist of dauntless courage to whom impossibility was but an incentive. It took the Christian Minister of a Muslim Sovereign but an instant, therefore, to know that he had found the very man who would be able to work in double harness with Ismail, and whose appointment would be accepted by Europe as a pledge of the sincerity of the Khedive’s new anti-slavery campaign.

The holders of Egyptian bonds had tabooed Baker’s “Prohibition” enforcement policy. The Khedive, therefore, needed not only a soldier and an administrator, but a leader of Christian thought to carry out his programme of “Regulation” as opposed to “Prohibition”. It was this happy combination of an international reputation, a stout sword and evangelistic

<sup>1</sup> *Khedives and Pashas by One who Knows them Well*, p. 149.

zeal that made Gordon the one man in all the world whose connection with slavery "Regulation", in contradiction to "Prohibition", would be a guarantee that Ismail intended to fight slavery with all the means that the money-brokers of Europe and Egyptian public opinion would permit him to employ.

We do not, of course, suggest that Nubar was such a superman that he read all these facts in Gordon's features. The interview at the British Embassy in Constantinople took place in September, 1872. It was not until October, 1873, that Gordon received a telegram offering him the appointment.<sup>1</sup> It is reasonable to assume that during these thirteen months the Egyptian Foreign Office took the trouble to obtain a full report upon the officer whose reputation had called him to Nubar's notice and whose personality had impressed itself upon that reader of men.

Information thus obtainable disclosed that Charles George Gordon was the fourth son of a family of eleven children. He was born at 1 Kemp Terrace, Woolwich Common, on 28th January, 1833. His father was of Highland and military descent, and was himself a Lieutenant-General. His mother came of a family of merchants, distinguished for their sea voyages into remote regions of the globe. As a boy Charlie, as his intimates called him, was remarkable for his high spirits, pluck, and love of mischief. Destined for the artillery, he was sent to the Academy at Woolwich, where some other characteristics made their appearance. On one occasion, when the cadets had been forbidden to leave the dining-room and the senior corporal stood with outstretched arms in the doorway to prevent their exit, young Gordon put his head down and, butting the petty officer in the pit of the stomach, projected him down a flight of stairs and through a glass door at the bottom. For

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

this act of insubordination the high-spirited youth was nearly dismissed.<sup>1</sup>

But though originally destined for the Royal Artillery, Gordon entered the Royal Engineers. When he obtained his commission he was sent to Pembroke to work at the erection of fortifications. It was there that religion gripped his soul. His sister, Augusta, and "a very religious Captain of the name of Drew", led him into this path. He began to reflect upon his sins, to look up texts and to pray with the ardour of a neophyte. Though he was not confirmed—he was never confirmed—he received the Sacrament every Sunday. Books of piety were the dominant element in his reading. He became, in a word, a religious zealot.

He was in this frame of mind when the Crimean War called him to Balaclava. He was then twenty-one years of age. During the siege of Sebastopol he conducted himself with conspicuous gallantry. Not long after his return home in 1860 England declared war on China. Captain Gordon was despatched to the scene of operations. The fighting was over before he arrived. He nevertheless remained in China for four years, and there absorbed that knowledge of local conditions and formed those contacts which were destined to lay the foundations of his unusually brilliant career. He drew his sword on behalf of the maintenance of law and order in China. An article which appeared in *The Times* upon his return to England in 1864 thus summarizes his work:—

"Never did soldier of fortune deport himself with a nicer sense of military honour, with more gallantry against the resisting, and with more mercy towards the vanquished, with more disinterested neglect of opportunities of personal advantage, or with more entire devotion to the objects and desires of his own government than this officer, who, after all his victories,

<sup>1</sup> *Eminent Victorians*—"The End of General Gordon," by Lytton Strachey; London, Chatto & Windus, p. 210.

has just laid down his sword. A history of operations among cities of uncouth names, and in provinces the geography of which is unknown except to special students, would be tedious and uninteresting. The result of Colonel Gordon's operations, however, is this : he found the richest and most fertile districts in China in the hands of the most savage brigands. The silk districts were the scenes of their cruelty and riot, and the great historical cities of Hang Chow and Soochow were rapidly following the fate of Nan King, and were becoming desolate ruins in their possession. Gordon has cut the rebellion in half, has recovered the great cities, has isolated and utterly discouraged the fragments of brigand power, and has left the marauders nothing but a few tracts of a devastated country and their stronghold of Nan King. All this he has effected first by the power of his arms, and afterwards still more rapidly by the terror of his name." <sup>1</sup>

For these services as Commander of "the Ever-Victorious Army" the Chinese Government conferred on Gordon the yellow jacket and the peacock's feather. He thus became a mandarin of high rank. He likewise received the title of Ti Tu, the most distinguished grade in the Chinese Army. English public opinion affectionately nicknamed him "Chinese Gordon". His Queen made him a Lieutenant-Colonel of Royal Engineers and a Companion of the Bath. He was then barely 31 years of age ; and was thus a world-renowned figure when upon the threshold of the thirties.

On his return to England from China he was appointed to a command at Gravesend to superintend the erection of forts on the Thames. During the five years that he held this post his life was dominated by his religious fervour. He specialized in what would now be called "social work". His activity during that period is, perhaps, best described in *Events*

<sup>1</sup> Archer, op. cit., vol. i, p. 136.

*in the Life of Charles George Gordon*, by Henry William Gordon. There we read :—

“ It has been fully represented how, during his stay at New Tavern Fort, he devoted his spare time in endeavouring to help and befriend the poor, young and old, how he attended the ragged schools, and how he put boys out in life, and sent lads to sea, and watched for their return ; for when the vessels returned that had his boys on board a boat would be sent off to show how the lads had prospered. Of course, there were disappointments, but if the boy was on board he was brought to Gordon’s house, his friends were asked to meet him and an enjoyable evening was spent.”<sup>1</sup>

So anxious was Gordon to do his “ social work ” to his own satisfaction that he was always on duty. His frugal meals were so arranged that no one was ever prevented from seeing him because he was at table. He had his food placed in a deep drawer which was opened and from which he ate. If anyone called it was closed, and the visitor told him his tale of woe without knowing that he had disturbed his benefactor.<sup>2</sup>

Such self-sacrificing altruism would not of itself have made “ Chinese ” Gordon the well-known champion of militant philanthropy that the Khedive needed as the protagonist of his policy to “ regulate ” slavery. The Scotsman’s proselytizing zeal was, however, so well known that he stood out among his fellows as a lay evangelist clothed in the uniform of a soldier. He was looked upon as being a nineteenth century mystic. And such, indeed, he was, although he kept himself in intimate touch with the world, throwing himself into the midstream of humanity and seeking to make known to others the great truths he had discovered.

During his residence at Gravesend he drew up

<sup>1</sup> *Events in the Life of Charles George Gordon from its Beginning to its End*, by Henry William Gordon ; London, Kegan Paul, Trench & Co., 1886, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 103.

a tract from his own pen. He went about distributing it. "What hundreds," he wrote to his sister in after years, "I did give away : how I used to run miles if I saw a 'scuttler' watching crows in a field."<sup>1</sup>

His subalterns could not understand such practices. They would turn their telescopes on their commanding officer as he went on his missionary rounds. Their tongues wagged. They called him a fanatic. They thought that he had religion on the brain. They told tales that surrounded his proselytizing zeal with just the kind of gossip which was bound to drift into the Cairo Foreign Office when Nubar was collecting his data before Ismail definitely chose Sir Samuel Baker's successor.

When Gordon received the cablegram offering him the appointment he accepted, subject to the assent of the British War Office. A letter which he wrote to his sister on 9th November, while awaiting an answer from his superiors, shows that the question of slavery was then uppermost in his mind. It is not to be inferred from this that he then had any intimation of the change of policy which had been forced upon Ismail. No information upon this score appears to be available. All that we know is that in unbosoming himself to his beloved Augusta he wrote :—

"God has allowed slavery to go on for so many years ; born in the people, it needs more than an expedition to eradicate it ; open out the country, and it will fall of itself. I am averse to the loss of a single life and will endeavour to prevent any happening, *if I go*. I have a Bank, and on that I can draw ; He is richer than the Khedive, and knows more of the country than anyone ; I will trust Him to help me out of money or any other difficulties."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of General Gordon to his Sister, M. A. Gordon* ; London, Macmillan and Co., 1888, p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

There is far more in this letter than appears upon the surface. It contains the key to a proper understanding of Gordon's somewhat complicated mentality. It shows him as an idealist who reasoned like a realist. It demonstrates that he had hit upon the true idea that slavery is primarily not a moral but an economic issue. He grasped the fundamental fact that slavery was bound to fall by the wayside when Central Africa was made accessible to civilization. He saw that expeditions to eradicate slavery were pin-pricks that irritate, not the surgeon's knife that cures. He was bent upon doing his practical work of evangelization by opening up the land and thus letting economics solve the problem.

The charge of instability of character has so often been made against Gordon that it may be well to quote a second letter which shows how convinced he was that the best way to fight slavery was to open up Darkest Africa. "I believe, if the Sudan was settled," he wrote to his sister a few days later, "the Khedive would prevent the slave trade ; but he does not see his way to do so till he can move about the country. My ideas are to open it out by getting the steamers on to the lakes, by which time I should know the promoters of the slave trade and could ask the Khedive to seize them."<sup>1</sup>

It was in this spirit that Gordon accepted the Khedive's call. Like St. Ignatius of Loyola and St. Teresa of Avila, two of the great constructive idealists of Roman Catholicism, this Protestant Crusader in Her Majesty's livery lifted up his soul to heaven with the ardour of a mystic, and at the same time kept his feet on earth with the practical common sense of a man of affairs. But the world appears to have failed to grasp the far-sighted statesmanship which was transfused into this devotional exuberance.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

It heard only of Gordon's citations of chapter and verse. It failed to comprehend that he was Adam Smith as well as William Wilberforce. And he himself in his public utterances so emphasized his abhorrence of slavery and its spiritual abomination that it is not surprising that England saw in him only the idealist and forgot that he was also a realist.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANTI-SLAVERY "PROHIBITION" AND "REGULATION"

THE War Office gave its consent to Gordon's acceptance of the post offered him. He arrived in Cairo on 6th February, 1874. Ismail made a favourable impression upon him. "The Khedive is an honest fellow," he observed in a letter to a friend, "and I like him very much, but I will not give it to the others."<sup>1</sup> He threw a bomb into the midst of "the others" by fixing his salary at £2,000 a year, and refusing to accept the £10,000 *per annum* which his predecessor had received.

No sudden impulse prompted this refusal. It was counselled by mature deliberation. Few men are more consistent than Gordon in adhering to a line of conduct he had once traced. The world has refused to see this, and has always insisted that he was continually being swept off of his feet by a passing whim. However, as early as 17th November, 1873, he wrote to his sister :—

"My object is to show the Khedive and his people that gold and silver are not worshipped by all the world. They are very powerful gods, but not as powerful as our God ; so, if I refuse a large sum, you—and I am responsible to you alone—will not be angry at my doing so. From whom does the money come? From poor miserable creatures who are ground down to produce it. Of course, these ideas are outrageous. 'Pillage the Egyptians' is still the cry."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Letter to the Rev. Horace Waller, 14th February, 1874, quoted in *Gordon and the Sudan*, by Bernard M. Allen, p. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of General C. G. Gordon to his Sister*, p. 91.

By this deliberate act, born of careful thought and constantly adhered to, he at once established his position in Egypt as an exceptional man to whom the ordinary rules of conduct were not applicable. But the Khedive was one of the few persons who understood Gordon's disinterestedness in its proper light. A reciprocal confidence thus sprang up between them from this very first audience. There was therefore no disposition on the part of the Khedive to lay down hard and fast rules for the new Governor-General of the Egyptian equatorial provinces. The title given him emphasizes the elasticity of his mandate. He was designated as "His Excellency General Colonel Gordon, the Governor-General of the Equator".<sup>1</sup> No attempt was made to define the boundaries of "the Equator", or, more accurately, the Equatorial Provinces of Egypt. Everything was purposely left delightfully vague. Ismail went so far as to tell Gordon that he could give him no detailed instructions, and would be bound to leave much to his agent's discretion, but that he desired that Gordon should correspond with him direct and regard himself as independent of the Governor of Khartoum.<sup>2</sup>

Yet when the two men were together they threshed out matters as thoroughly as possible. They spoke French. Ismail had been educated in France, and used the language of that country with idiomatic ease. The numerous letters and reports in Gordon's own handwriting now filed in the archives of the Abdine Palace, Cairo, show that he had a facile knowledge of French. The Sovereign and his Governor-General thus had no need of an interpreter when conversing with one another, and were able to talk confidentially with no third party present to insulate the one from the other.

But while they trusted one another implicitly, it

<sup>1</sup> *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa, 1874-9, from Original Letters and Documents*, edited by George Birkbeck Hill; London, Thos. de la Rue, 1881, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Letter to the Rev. Horace Waller, quoted in Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

was deemed best that before Gordon left for the South a letter should be drawn up by the Khedive incorporating, as far as practicable, the broad outlines of their understanding. We find, therefore, that on 16th February, 1874, the eve of Gordon's departure for Central Africa, the Khedive submitted to him a memorandum in the shape of a letter putting their conception of policy in black and white. It reads as follows :—

“ The province which Colonel Gordon has undertaken to organize and to govern is but little known. Up to the last few years it has been in the hands of adventurers who thought of nothing but their own lawless gains, and traded in ivory and slaves. They established factories and governed them with armed men. The neighbouring tribes were forced to traffic with them whether they liked it or not. The Egyptian Government, in the hope of putting an end to this inhuman trade, has taken the factories into its own hands, paying the owners an indemnity. Some of these men, nevertheless, have been still allowed to carry on trade in the district, under a promise that they would not deal in slaves. They have been placed under the control of the Governor of the Sudan. His authority, however, has scarcely been able to make itself felt in these remote countries. The Khedive, therefore, has resolved to form them into a separate government, and to claim the whole of the trade with the outside world as a monopoly of the State. There is no other way of putting an end to the slave trade, which at present is carried on by force of arms in defiance of the law. When once brigandage has become a thing of the past, and a breach has been made in the lawless customs of long ages, then trade may be made free to all.

“ If the men who have been in the pay of these adventurers are willing to enter the service of the Government, Colonel Gordon is to make all the use

of them he can ; if, on the other hand, they attempt to follow their old way of life, whether openly or secretly, he is to put in force against them the utmost rigour of martial law. Such men as these must find from the new Governor neither indulgence nor mercy. The lesson must be clearly taught that, even in those remote parts, a mere difference of colour does not turn men into chattels and that life and liberty are sacred things.

“ One great error into which others have fallen must be avoided. The armament must be so well supplied with provisions that there is no need, as heretofore, to take from the tribes their stores of corn. By proceedings such as this distrust has been sown where the Khedive hoped to establish a feeling of confidence. The lands must be tilled by the troops, and crops raised. If, as seems to be the case, Gondokoro is an ill-chosen position, situated as it is on a thankless soil, the seat of government must be moved to a more favoured spot. Among the natives rescued from the slave-dealers will be found many who have been carried away from countries so far off that it would be impossible to restore them to their homes. They can be employed about the stations in tilling the ground.

“ Another object of the new Governor should be to establish a line of posts throughout all his provinces, so that from one end to the other they may be brought into direct communication with Khartoum. These posts should follow, as far as possible, the line of the Nile ; but for a distance of seventy miles the navigation of that river is hindered by rapids. He is to search out the best way of overcoming this hindrance, and to make a report thereon to the Khedive.

“ In dealing with the chieftains of the tribes which dwell on the shores of the lakes, the Governor is above all to try to win their confidence. He must

respect their territory, and conciliate them by presents. Whatever influence he gains over them he must use in an endeavour to persuade them to put an end to the wars which they so often make on each other in the hope of carrying off slaves. Much tact will be needed, for should he succeed in stopping the slave-trade while wars are still waged among the chiefs it may well come to pass that, for want of a market, the prisoners would be slaughtered. Should he find it needful to exercise actual control over any one of these tribes, it will be better to leave the direct government to the chieftains. Their obedience must be secured by making them dread his power.”<sup>1</sup>

Both Ismail and Gordon thoroughly understood the essence of this memorandum. It meant that the latter was to use practical common sense in discharging his duties. They both knew that Anti-Slavery “Prohibition”, as conceived by Sir Samuel Baker, had been a failure. It might possibly have succeeded had the money-brokers not applied pressure to the Khedive. But to have tested the feasibility of “Prohibition” would have impoverished the Vice-regal treasury, and that Europe would not countenance. The two parties therefore evolved a policy of “Regulation” which they both felt would eradicate the basic curse of slavery. In a word, pending the complete opening-up of the Equatorial provinces, they resolved to fight slave *razzias* and the slave trade and to permit domestic slavery to die a natural death.

A letter addressed by Gordon to his sister on 25th June, 1875, gives us an idea of his mental approach to this programme of “Regulation”. He wrote : “Egypt cannot exist without slaves, and yet the slave is his master’s master in Egypt. We, after the flesh, are the masters of our appetites, but they in reality rule us, for we cannot well control them. Other nations would have Egypt (the flesh) give up those

<sup>1</sup> Royal Egyptian Archives, Abdine Palace, Cairo, provisional file No. 8047.

who minister to her wants ; but she cannot do without them ; they are essential to her existence.”<sup>1</sup>

And, looking at Egypt's problems from the angle of practical common sense, he again wrote to his sister :—

“When in 1834 His Majesty's Government abolished slavery, they had an irresistible force, with fleets, troops, etc., at their disposal ; also a machinery of magistrates to carry out the emancipation. In my case I have nothing of the sort. . . . I read the Parliamentary papers on the Gold Coast. They make me smile, for His Majesty gives a proclamation, and it is over. Needless to say, that is not the case in these lands ; the state of affairs is not parallel, and I think though *razzias* may cease, the holding of slaves will *never* under any government, let it be as strong and as incorruptible as you like. . . . I dare say also that when the stations are broken up, their inmates who have a lot of merchandise on hand will be sending down larger allotments than ever ; so let the Anti-Slavery Society get the types ready for ‘*Increase of Slave Trade*’ and for ‘atrocious’, ‘disgraceful,’ and ‘Colonel Gordon’ . . . I do not wish to be hard on individuals, but on the class who are bigots, whether it be on the churchyard, or temperance, or any other question, who do not consider the other side. Men who travel much are seldom bigots (Paul was not ; he let that badly behaved Corinthian off very easily).”<sup>2</sup>

But while Gordon thus wrote in perfect frankness to his sister and ridiculed the Anti-Slavery Society in this confidential manner, the realist in him knew that he could not proclaim any such principles from the house-tops. The rank and file of the militant anti-slavery groups would not have recognized any such concessions to the exigencies of the hour. We

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of Gordon to his Sister*, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 148 et seq.

have no difficulty, therefore, in understanding why Europe failed to grasp the cardinal fact that it was Gordon the man of action, and not Gordon the dreamer, who dominated the situation.

The West assumed that the zealot who had distributed tracts in Gravesend was an intransigent slavery "Prohibitionist". No one brought out the fact that because he was the most irreconcilable of anti-slavery champions he committed himself to slavery "Regulation" as a rational means to a laudable end. And it is because of this mastery of the realist over the idealist, or, to be more accurate, because of the sanity of the idealist in Gordon, that it is so difficult to gauge in their proper perspective the manifold phases in the life of this truly Christian gentleman who is destined perhaps never to be understood.

Gordon spent a fortnight in Cairo discussing his plans and getting his staff together. Two American officers were his chief military aides. These were Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Chaillé-Long and Major William Campbell. The former, a native of Maryland, had served in the Union Army during the Civil War in the States. The latter, a Tennessean, had fought in the Confederate Navy. Both of them had enlisted in the Khedivial forces, and were in Egypt when Gordon arrived. They were seconded to the Equatorial expedition.

The civilian members of the staff were headed by Romolo Gessi, an Italian, who had been connected with the British forces during the Crimean war. He subsequently went into business in Rumania, at Tulcha, near the mouth of the Danube. Gordon came across him there when acting as British representative on the International Danube Commission. Their friendship of Crimean days was renewed. When Gordon was offered the Equatorial appointment, he at once invited Gessi to go with him and take charge

of organizing the supplies and of making the detailed arrangements for the expedition.

Two Englishmen—a nephew, Willy Anson, and Frederick J. Russell—were assigned to assist the Italian in his task. A Frenchman, Auguste Linant de Bellefonds, long a resident of Cairo, who spoke Arabic, was engaged as secretary and interpreter. A German botanist named Witt and two German naturalists, Josef Menges and Friedrich Bohndorff, were added to the contingent. There were thus nine foreigners all told, representing five different nationalities, in Gordon's original official family.<sup>1</sup> He appears to have desired in this way to emphasize the fact that the work on which he was engaged was undertaken in the general interest of civilization.

Gordon also remembered the black man. One was appointed his deputy on the western bank of the Nile, the other on the eastern. For the latter post he selected Abu Saoud, a man whom Sir Samuel Baker had denounced as a slave-trader and a traitor, and who was at this time in prison awaiting trial for his misdeeds. Gordon asked for the slaver's release, as he wished to have him as one of the chief members of his staff, and the Khedive complied with the request.

Sir Samuel Baker was dumbfounded when he heard that Abu Saoud "had been appointed assistant to his successor". The manuscript of the explorer's book, *Ismailia, a Narrative of the Expedition to Central Africa for the Suppression of the Slave Trade*, was almost complete when knowledge of this choice reached London. Baker added an appendix in which he wrote that: "It is useless to shut the eyes to the support thus openly given to the greatest slave-hunter of the White Nile"; and, growing sarcastic, the author continued: "It is not improbable that Abu Saoud may succeed Colonel Gordon in command of the

<sup>1</sup> Allen, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

expedition to *suppress the slave trade*. The government may require black troops for the army. The new territory has added some millions of subjects to the Khedive. They will be liable to the law of conscription. Abu Saoud would be an excellent recruiting officer in Central Africa, as the kidnapping of slaves has been a useful apprenticeship."

Martin Hansal, the Austrian Consul at Khartoum, who knew the Sudan from end to end, looked at the matter from another angle. He applauded the new Governor-General's bold stroke. "He has a European head on an African foot," wrote Hansal. "Unlike Baker, he uses the slave-holders for his own purposes; a bold step and one that is inexplicable to those who do not appreciate his energy and resolution."<sup>1</sup>

It is all very well for the Austrian Consul to speak of Gordon having "a European head on an African foot" and to laud the Briton's energy and resolution. What the Governor-General really did, though Sir Samuel Baker failed to grasp it, was to adapt to the problem with which he had to deal the unflinching laws of economics. Like the American anti-saloon leaders of the twentieth century, who quote the Bible and play at practical politics, Gordon applied business methods to a commercial proposition.

He knew that Abu Saoud had become a slave-trader because he had found that it paid to defy the law. He determined to make it financially attractive to the prisoner to help the Government break up the "bootleg" slave trade. He acted as Porfirio Diaz did some twenty years later in Mexico when he formed his *Rurales* or Rural Constabulary of bandits by persuading the brigands that they could earn more money as policemen than as desperadoes. In a word, from the very first hours of his African mission the British idealist, like his American anti-saloon emulators of the present day, was a keen psychologist. He knew

<sup>1</sup> *Austrian Geographical Journal*, 1874, p. 380, quoted in Allen, op. cit., p. 16.

how to steer the ship of State while chanting a hymn. He was no more a hypocrite than they are. Men of this type know what they want, and know how to get it. Their sincerity enlarges their bump of economics.

But whether this theorizing is well founded or not, the fact stands out that the policy traced by Gordon, while he was still in Cairo, meant that he took into his service a man who knew every trick of the slave-running trade. One hesitates to say that, with bland and childlike eyes, he set a thief to catch a thief. It would perhaps be better to affirm that he retained an expert in order to thwart fellow experts.

Such tactics had as their logical consequence the beginning of an intelligent warfare on promiscuous slave-raiding and the inauguration of civilization's rational campaign of peaceful penetration. Gordon did not have a "poker face", but he knew how to defeat the "bootleg" slave-runners at their own game. His countenance was that of the mystic who, through long hours spent in self-contemplation, learns not only to know himself but also how to impose his will upon others.

## CHAPTER V

### GORDON LEAVES FOR GONDOKORO

GORDON left Cairo for Suez on his way to his post on the morning of 21st February, 1874. With him were his Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel Chaillé-Long, and Lieutenant Hassan Wassif. Major Campbell, Gessi, the two Englishmen, and the others remained at the Egyptian capital in order to finish their task.<sup>1</sup> At Suez ship was taken for Suakin. From the latter harbour the little party started across the desert for Berber on the Nile. Two hundred and fifty miles of sand lay before Gordon. It was his first experience of camel riding, but he covered the distance in record time. A four-day river journey brought him from this point to Khartoum, the capital of the Sudan. He had then crossed more than a frontier. He had entered a land of which he said :—

“ Egypt in her greatest days never seems to have extended permanently farther south than Wadi Halfa. There are certainly near Khartoum some ancient ruins of the time of the Pharaohs, and at Merowa there are some pyramids ; but the occupation of these large regions was only ephemeral. To what was due this apparent indifference to conquest on the part of Ancient Egypt ? The explanation is to be found in the difficulty of access to the Soudan—the Country of the Blacks, as the word means. From Wadi Halfa southwards to Hanneck—a distance of 180 miles—an utter desert extends, spreading also for miles and miles eastwards on both sides of the Nile. For the same length the river also is encumbered with ridges

<sup>1</sup> *My Life in Four Continents*, by Colonel Charles Chaillé-Long ; London, Hutchinson & Co., 1912, vol. i, p. 69.

of rock. Any invader who should have succeeded in passing the waste tract would have found deployed against him the warlike tribes of the Soudan. Ancient Egypt might certainly have penetrated from Suakin on the Red Sea to Berber on the Nile. But her forces coming by this route would have had to cross a desert of 280 miles, and would equally have had to face the enemy at the end of their wearisome march. It was therefore this boundary of the desert that kept the warlike and independent tribes of the Soudan quite apart from the inhabitants of Egypt proper, and has made the Soudanese and the Egyptians two distinct peoples, that have not the least sympathy one with the other.”<sup>1</sup>

Khartoum was reached on 9th March, 1874, at daybreak. In a letter to his sister Gordon wrote :—

“The Governor-General met your brother in full uniform, and he landed amid a salute of artillery, and a battalion of troops with a band. It was a fine sight. The day before your brother had his trousers off, and was pulling the boat in the Nile in spite of crocodiles, who never touch you when you move. . . . The Governor had news the day before I arrived that the dense mass of vegetation—the sudd—in the Bahr Gazelle had been removed by the soldiers, so that Gondokoro is only three weeks from this.”<sup>2</sup>

Another letter, dated 17th March, gives some interesting information about this “sudd”. “I have spoken of the opening of the sudd,” he wrote. “You know that the Nile comes out of Albert Nyanza Lake. Below Gondokoro it spreads out into lakes ; on the edge of these lakes an aquatic plant, with roots extending five feet into the water, flourishes. The natives burn the top parts when dry ; the ashes form mould and fresh grasses grow, till it becomes like

<sup>1</sup> *Gordon in Central Africa*, 1874-9, George Birkbeck Hill, p. xxxv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5 ; all other citations in this chapter are taken from the same work unless otherwise stated.

*terra firma*. The Nile rises and floats out the masses ; they come down to a curve and there stop. More of these islands float down, and at last the river is blocked. Though under them the water flows, no communication can take place, for they bridge the river for several miles. Last year the Governor went up, and with three companies and two steamers he cut large blocks of the vegetation away. At last one night the water burst the remaining part and swept down on the vessels, dragged the steamers down some four miles, and cleared the passage. The Governor says the scene was terrible. The hippopotamuses were carried down, screaming and snorting ; crocodiles were whirled round and round, and the river was covered with dead and dying hippopotamuses, crocodiles, and fish who had been crushed by the mass. . . . You can scarcely imagine the advantage of this opening to me."

It thus looked as if the fates favoured Gordon's expedition. If they did the storks of the neighbourhood did not voice their approval. On 26th March, when the Nile boat was carrying the party southward,

"We were going along slowly in the moonlight," he wrote, "and I was thinking of you all and Nubar, etc., when all of a sudden from a large bush came peals of laughter. I felt put out ; but it turned out to be birds, who laughed at us from the bushes for some time in a very rude way. They are a species of stork, and seemed in capital spirits and highly amused at anybody thinking of going up to Gondokoro with the hope of doing anything."

While the birds were thus poking fun at Gordon and warning him, in their own way, to turn back, "crocodiles were lying interlaced on the few rocks, with their mouths, garnished with teeth, wide open. Hippopotamuses were also active. Troops of monkeys were not far distant. They came down to drink, with very long tails stuck up straight like swords over their

backs." And two days later he ran into "a huge troop of wild buffaloes, looking as black as coals. They are most ferocious animals, and by far the most dangerous to shoot of any wild animals".

Gondokoro was finally reached on 16th April, "much to the surprise of the people who never expected one's arrival at all" and who did not even know of Gordon's nomination. He decided almost at once to return to Khartoum, but before doing so sent his American aide, Lieut.-Colonel Chaillé-Long, with presents to King M'tesa of Uganda.

Chaillé-Long's expedition was replete with hardships. After accomplishing his primary mission he discovered Lake Kioga, or, as he called it, Lake Ibrahim, which forms an important link in establishing the head waters of the Nile. This discovery was made by Chaillé-Long while he was under Gordon's orders, and is rightly credited to the Gordon expedition. The latter, however, with the chivalry of a gentleman to the manner born, always gave his American Chief of Staff full credit for this contribution to the clearing up of the mystery of the Nile. It is, therefore, most regrettable that upon Chaillé-Long's shoulders must largely be placed the blame for the idea prevalent in some minds that Gordon was a periodical and secret drinker.

It will be remembered that the late Lytton Strachey, after speaking of the consolation which Gordon found in religion, added :—

"But the Holy Bible was not his only solace. For now, under the parching African sun, we catch glimpses for the first time of Gordon's hand stretching out towards stimulants of a more material quality. For months together, we are told, he would drink nothing but pure water ; and then . . . water that was not so pure. In his fits of melancholy he would shut himself up in his tent for days at a time, with a hatchet and a flag placed at the door to indicate

that he was not to be disturbed for any reason whatever ; until at last the cloud would lift, the signals would be removed, and the Governor would reappear, brisk and cheerful. During one of these retirements there was a grave danger of a native attack upon the camp. Colonel Long, the chief of staff, ventured, after some hesitation, to ignore the flag and hatchet, and to enter the forbidden tent. He found Gordon seated at a table, upon which were an open Bible and an open bottle of brandy. Long explained the circumstances, but could obtain no answer beyond the abrupt words ' You are commander of the camp ', and was obliged to retire, nonplussed, to deal with the situation as best he could. On the following morning Gordon, cleanly shaven, and in the full dress uniform of the Royal Engineers, entered Long's hut with his usual tripping step, exclaiming : ' Old fellow, now don't be angry with me. I was very low last night. Let's have a good breakfast—a little b. and s. Do you feel up to it ? ' And, with these veering moods and dangerous restoratives, there came an intensification of the queer and violent elements in the temper of the man."<sup>1</sup>

The sting in this word-picture lies in its opening sentences. It is concentrated in the charge that " for months together, we are told, he (Gordon) would drink nothing but pure water ; and then . . . water that was not so pure." Dr. Allen, in *Gordon and the Sudan*, says that " there are two writers from whom the material for Mr. Lytton Strachey's paragraph has been taken—Sir Richard Burton and Colonel Chaillé-Long ".<sup>2</sup>

It appears that the incomparable translator of the *Arabian Nights*, in a review of Gordon's Khartoum journals, attributes what he calls the curious changes of policy and conduct which perplexed the Governor-General's best friends to " constant reliance on direct

<sup>1</sup> Strachey, op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>2</sup> Allen, op. cit., p. 83.

Divine guidance", in which he was "acting under a 'control' as peculiar as the dæmon of Socrates". The Burton article cites what its author takes to be instances of change of policy, and adds: "And so in minor matters, for months he would drink nothing but water, and then prefer, very decidedly, water with whisky".

Dr. Allen, after thus recording Burton's language, adds:—

"It has sometimes been supposed that Burton and Gordon were intimate friends and met frequently. But a scrutiny of the records of the lives of the two men shows that although they exchanged a good many letters, they cannot have met on more than two occasions, and in all probability only met on one occasion."<sup>1</sup> Gordon's great panegyrist thus very properly brushes aside Sir Richard Burton's evidence. He then proceeds to belabour Lieutenant-Colonel Chaillé-Long for various and sundry shortcomings. He even charges the American with a "tendency deliberately to distort facts to suit his own ends".<sup>2</sup>

When, however, we re-read Lytton Strachey's reference to Gordon's melancholy and to his hand "stretching out towards stimulants", and compare such word-painting with Chaillé-Long's narrative, we note that the American Chief of Staff says nothing about melancholy, and does not accuse his superior officer of inebriation. Here are his words:—

"A few days after my return to Lado the camp was attacked in force one night. I had great difficulty in repelling the savage hordes, who, with lighted torches, were endeavouring to drive me out. Gordon was in his hut and gave no sign of coming out. It was during one of the oft-recurring periods when he shut himself up and placed a hatchet and a flag at the door as a sign that he was not to be disturbed, a seclusion which sometimes lasted from three to

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

five days. I sent an officer to warn him of our danger, but, receiving no reply, went myself. I entered abruptly and found him seated very calmly at a table, on which were an open Bible and a bottle of cognac and sherry. I told him of the situation, to which he made abrupt answer : ‘ You are commander of the camp.’ Whereupon I hastily turned and left him, but not before I had posted an officer with a half dozen men specially charged with Gordon’s safety. The savages were driven away by a vigorous sortie. The next day Gordon entered my hut in the full dress uniform of the Royal Engineers, and cleanly shaven. He came forward with a quick, tripping step, as was his habit, and said : ‘ Old fellow, now don’t be angry with me. I was very low last night. Come and dine with me. We will have a glorious dinner.’ This was a meat-offering of peace.”<sup>1</sup>

It will be observed that Chaillé-Long makes the categorical statements : (1) that he found Gordon “ seated very calmly at a table, on which were an open Bible and a bottle of cognac and sherry ” ; (2) that he said “ You are Commander of the camp ” ; and (3) that the next day he was clean-shaven, walked with a quick, tripping step, and invited his junior officer to “ have a glorious dinner ”.

Not only are we not told whether the bottle was empty, full, or half-full, or even opened, but it is clearly brought out that the Bible *was* open. The statement : “ You are Commander of the camp,” was consonant with the facts, for when Gordon and Chaillé-Long first met at Cairo on the night of 19th February, 1874, the former said to the latter : “ The Khedive spoke to me about you to-day. You are to go with me as Chief of Staff. You will command the soldiery. I don’t want the bother.”<sup>2</sup>

It is perfectly obvious that an intensely religious man who had perfect confidence in his Chief of Staff

<sup>1</sup> Chaillé-Long, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 122.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. 66.

would not permit his spiritual communion with his Maker to be interrupted by so mundane an affair as an attack by natives, and this all the more as Gordon appears to have believed in the doctrine of Predestination. Had he been imbibing freely for several days he would have shown ill effects on "the morning after", and would have court-martialled anyone who spoke in his presence of "a glorious meal". He would never have referred to food.

In another book, *The Three Prophets*, published as early as 1884, Colonel Chaillé-Long writes :—

"I had occasion to remark the singular habit which Gordon had of retiring to his hut, where he would remain for days at a time, engaged in the perusal and meditation of his ever present Bible and prayer book. When in this retirement his orders were that he should not be disturbed for any reason of service whatsoever ; a hatchet and a flag were placed at his door as a sign that he was unapproachable."

Nothing is said here about a bottle. The reference to Gordon's shutting himself up for days at a time, however, is repeated. Dr. Allen belittles the practice which Chaillé-Long thus imputed to his Chief. Yet the allegation bears all the internal evidence of veracity. It is just such seclusion that an emotionally religious man would be most likely to seek. The story rings true. It is not an indictment ; it is not a disparagement ; it is not even a criticism. It is praise, for it shows us the detachment of Gordon's mind, and enables us to visualize the intensity of his piety.

Even if Gordon felt the need of brandy, it should not be forgotten that he made no claim to be a teetotaler. He did not pose as an impeccable "dry", like those superior beings who either implicitly criticize Christ for having changed water into wine at the wedding feast or blame Him for having tricked wine-drinking Jews by palming off on them unfermented

grape juice for the beverage they supposed He was giving them. Baker's successor was, in a word, a Scottish gentleman who drank moderately and who did not hold the twentieth century American theory that adultery and alcohol are interchangeable words.

The "hatchet and flag at the door" incident, far from casting aspersions upon Gordon's sobriety, throws light upon an important phase of his mentality. The story brings out the unity of his mission. Sir Richard Burton's reference to "curious changes of policy and conduct which perplexed his (Gordon's) best friends" is explained by the fact that the great Orientalist failed to grasp the true inward character of the author of the Khartoum journals. No man was ever more consistent in adhering to the line he had marked out for himself. Gordon was convinced that by carrying the flame of civilization into Darkest Africa he would burn away the curse of slavery. He looked upon the native slave-traders as instruments to be used for a righteous end; and he adhered unswervingly to this course largely because frequent spiritual contact with the Almighty, as exemplified by the "hatchet and flag at the door", steeled his nerves against deviation from his self-appointed task. His safety meant nothing to him. The interruption of his meditations was gall to his emotionally sensitive nature.

## CHAPTER VI

### EVER ON THE TREK

“ I STAID six days at Gondokoro, and then finding I could do nothing till my baggage came, I have come back in eleven days to bring it up. I got here in the evening, and found that my baggage is at Berber.”<sup>1</sup> Thus Gordon wrote at Khartoum on 4th May, 1874. He at once hurried north to Berber, “ to whip up the end of his baggage,” and was there met by those members of his staff who had not left Cairo with him. Indefatigable, he lost no time in returning to Khartoum.

Such restless energy completely nonplussed the Egyptian officials. Gordon’s ubiquitousness flabbergasted them. They did not know what to make of it. While they were ruminating about the matter he hauled the Governor-General of Khartoum over the coals. “ Your brother wrote to him and told him that he told *stories*. It was very undiplomatic of me, but it did the Governor-General good.”

But Khartoum could not hold Gordon. His Equatorial Provinces called him. On his way south he established a station at the mouth of the Sobat River and “ made great friends with the Shilluk natives, who came over in great numbers from the other side of the river. A man, his wife, and two children came over, the first colonists, and settled close to the station.”

There was a reason why “ the first colonist ” was willing to lead the vanguard of civilization. “ It

<sup>1</sup> *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa, 1874-9*, p. 15. Unless otherwise stated, all quotations used in this chapter are taken from this work.

appears that the man had some time ago stolen a cow from one of his neighbours, and had run away. The man from whom he had stolen the cow found him, and claimed the cow—which, however, had been eaten. I happened to go round,” continued Gordon, “and passing the hut saw only one child. ‘Where was the other?’ I asked of the mother. ‘Oh, it has been given to the man from whom the cow had been stolen.’ This was said with a cheerful smile by the mother. ‘But,’ I said, ‘are you not sorry?’ ‘Oh, no; we would rather have the cow.’ ‘But,’ said I, ‘you have eaten the cow, and the pleasure is over.’ ‘Oh, but all the same we would sooner have had the cow.’ This is perfectly true. The other child of twelve years old, like her parents, did not care a bit. A lamb taken from a flock would bleat, while here you see not the slightest vestige of feeling. Is it not very odd? If the mother had expressed the slightest wish, I would have rescued the child again; but it was evidently a matter of rejoicing, and she did not care as much as if she had lost a handful of dhura.”

This first contact with an African colonist undoubtedly impressed Gordon greatly. It taught him that he was absolutely right in holding that the solution of the slavery question was entirely dependent upon opening up Central Africa to civilization. What was the use of attacking such an institution as slavery when mothers themselves looked upon their children as being worth less than “a handful of d’hurra”? The thing to be done, as he had already worked out in London, was to bring the light of the Occident to the Dark Continent and not to concern oneself, except incidentally, with the necessary concomitants of an essentially perverted view of life.

As he revolved these facts in his mind, Gordon’s calm, benevolent blue eyes flashed fire. His righteous indignation was aroused by such inhumanity. When he had sufficiently adjusted himself to personal contact

with such heartlessness to put his ideas into black and white he wrote :—

“Sobat, 3rd August, 1874. In spite of what Livingstone says, I do not myself, about here, find that any affection exists between the parents and children ; there is mutual pleasure in parting from one another. I think that the slaver’s wars, made for the purpose of taking slaves, are detestable ; but if a father or mother, of their own free will, and with the will of the child, sells that child, I do not see the objection to it. It was and is the wholesale depopulation of districts which makes slavery a curse, and the numbers killed or who perish in the collection of slaves. A fair and properly conducted emigration would be the best for these parts, and I think the blacks would gladly respond to such a scheme. It will be a very long time before much can be done to civilize them ; the climate is against it, and there can be no trade, for they have nothing to exchange for goods. Poor creatures. They would like to be left alone.”

While Gordon was philosophizing in this strain he caught sight of “a wretched sister struggling up the road. She was such a wisp of bones that the wind threatened to overthrow her ; so she halted, preferring the rain to being cast down.” The next day he wrote :

“I am bound to give you the sequel of the lady whom I helped yesterday in the gale of wind. I had told my man to see her into one of the huts, and thought he had done so. The night was stormy and rainy, and when I awoke I heard often a crying of a child near my hut within the enclosure. When I got up I went out to see what it was, and passing through the gateway I saw your and my sister lying dead in a pool of mud ; her black brothers had been passing and passing and had taken no notice of her. So I went and ordered her to be buried and went on. In the midst of the high grass was a baby about a year or so old

left by its mother. Children are always a nuisance. The baby is taken care of by another family for a consideration of maize per diem."

Undeterred by such callousness on the part of those whom he was determined to protect, Gordon remained on guard at the mouth of the Sobat River. He knew that the slave-hunters would sooner or later attempt to pass that strategic point. At last they did so. On 20th August, 1874, he captured one hundred and five slaves "stowed away in wood". A day later, twenty-one fell into his hands. None of them expressed any desire to return home—they had no idea of home. All of them wanted to remain where they were, so the Governor-General, after confiscating them, gave them clothes and allowed them to join his agricultural colony. Assured that no more "black ivory" was then coming down the Sobat, he pushed on to Gondokoro, reaching his capital on 4th September, 1873.

He had been led into error. No sooner had he departed from his Sobat River station than two days later his *Mudir*<sup>1</sup> connived at the passing of a convoy of slaves, receiving £75 for doing so. The convoy went right into the lion's mouth: namely to Fashoda. There Rattaz and Kutchuk Ali were waiting for them. There were 1,600 slaves and 200 cows, and the whole lot were arrested. "Kutchuk Ali and Rattaz will get five years and be ruined. I told them," recorded Gordon, "that if they brought the slaves to me I would let them off. I told them that the *Mudir* of Fashoda would not dare to let the slaves pass, as I had written to the Khedive that they were *en route*. Yet they persisted in saying that there were none; so it is their own fault. I have sent for my *Mudir* and he will catch it."

While the unsophisticated-looking soldier showed that he understood human nature by not taking the

<sup>1</sup> *Mudir*, Arabic equivalent for Governor.

slave-traders' word that they had no caravans on the march, he was somewhat precipitate in saying that "Kutchuk Ali and Rattaz will get five years and be ruined". It took more than a psychologist to read the mind of an Egyptian official of the 'seventies. Besides, no one who knows the Near East ever indulges in prophecy. It is obvious, therefore, that Gordon went wrong when he recorded on 5th October what was going to happen to the slave-hunters. He was forced to write on 23rd November :—

"You know all about the slave convoy at Sobat, how they were intercepted by the *Mudir* of Fashoda. It appears that Kutchuk Ali and Rattaz were not arrested but went down free. The Khedive writes to me quite harshly to stop this slave-trade, and you see his *Mudirs* help it on. So I answer : 'I ask His Excellency, if under these circumstances (as above) His Highness would think me justified in hanging the little men I find in charge of slaves. I do not think he would.' I then go on to say that I am reasonable in my actions, but that I should take extreme measures when the real culprits are his local authorities and the Khartoum merchants who are entirely in his power is more than he can expect."

But these were not Gordon's only worries. His immediate subordinates gave him trouble. The ex-slave-trader, Abu Saoud, whom he had taken from prison and converted into a government official, became obstreperous. The brigand of yesterday could not stand prosperity. His head swelled to inordinate proportions. Gordon wrote to his sister :—

"I have had to turn Abu Saoud out, I am sorry to say ; he got so bumptious and bullying to everyone that I could not stand it. He was very presumptuous with your brother, coming into his cabin on the boat without 'with your leave' or 'by your leave', even after he had hints given him that he had better look out. He bullied a poor *Mudir* of mine, Isib Aga,

nearly to death ; and usurped all my functions till the cup was full.”

While this letter emphasizes Abu Saoud's bumptiousness, it was not his conceit and his bad manners which cost him his position. Gordon knew human nature too well not to understand that a black could not be transferred overnight from a prison cell to a government billet without megalomania playing its part. He was bent on opening up Central Africa and teaching the natives that honesty is the best policy. So he would have closed his eyes to Abu Saoud's indiscipline if the latter had not had an itching palm.

“ Abu Saoud has been tricking your brother,” he told his sister, “ and taking elephant tusks from the *sheikhs* or chiefs of the tribes who come to see me. Unfortunately one chief brought me a tusk and I saw it, and afterwards it disappeared. This made me suspicious. Now, whenever a tusk is brought me, I put it into the Government lot of ivory.”

Abu Saoud's appointment was accordingly cancelled and he was instructed to await further orders. But his chief's forgiving nature gained the upper hand and the Sudanese was given another chance. He repaid this kindness by instigating a *sheikh* to make an attempt upon Gordon's life. No trace of bitterness creeps into Gordon's account of this dastardly act. He writes of it with a calm detachment which throws further light upon his character. He almost ignores Abu Saoud's existence, and getting down to the attack itself, says :—

“ Coming to Rageef<sup>1</sup> I met the hostile *sheikh* on the road. He asked me to come to his house ; but I declined, as it was dusk. The next day I had a visit from him. He had a large number of armed men with him, and after some friendly intercourse he left me for a time, but soon came back and began to surround my tent with about one hundred of his men.

<sup>1</sup> Gordon had moved his headquarters to that spot.

I watched his movements, and then got up, took up my two guns, and put them down ready. I then told him to walk off—which he did. I feel sure he meditated hitting me on the head with one of his knob sticks.”

The utter unreliability of his Egyptian troops added to Gordon's trials and tribulations. He summed up his opinion of them by recording that the Khedive's "officers and men are so wretched that they are not a match for the natives. There is no discipline at all. One of the men slept at his post on the night of 25th–26th August; he was caught and then he beat both sergeant and corporal; yet he was not made a prisoner of”.

The only chance Gordon had of facing with success a situation thus beset with recurring difficulties lay in placing his sole reliance upon his European and American military and civil staff. Of the gallant nine who had enlisted under his banner in Cairo one, Lieutenant-Colonel Chaillé-Long, had already departed on his mission to the Equatorial Lakes. The health statistics of the remaining eight, or nine if we include Gordon himself, made up as early as 11th September, 1874, tell their own story. They read:—

“Your brother: well, but a shadow.

“Kemp, Engineer: well (subsequently fell ill and invalided home).

“Gessi: well, has had a severe fever.

“Berndorff, German, my servant: ill.

“Mengines, German servant: sent back ill.

“Anson: dead.

“Russell: ill, cannot be moved, invalided.

“De Witt: dead.

“Campbell: ill (did not recover, died).

“Linant: very ill, cannot be moved (did not recover, died).”

Not only was death thus stalking about in the shape of fever, but scorpions, too, were doing their bit to

make Gordon's life unsafe. He describes in this wise one of his earlier adventures with these poisonous insects :—

“ Last night, after going to sleep, I awoke and felt a sharp burn on the calf of my leg ; I felt something coming upwards, and got another burn above my knee. Jumped up and shook myself and then got a light. You know I have sewn a waterproof sheet on the bottom of my mosquito-net, leaving a hole to go in, so anything that gets in certainly can't get out. Looking about I pulled at the sheet and got another bite on the finger. At last I had him, got a tumbler with some water and put him in. He floated : so I tapped his back and sank him—a scorpion about two inches long. The sting is an odd one ; it burns for some time, and seems to palpitate as if the scorpion was at it again.”

While Gordon was kept too busy and had too many responsibilities to break under the strain, his fatalism helped to steel his nerves. “ The intense comfort of no fear, no uneasiness about being ill is very great and more than half the cause of good health. No comfort is equal to that which he has who has God for his stay ; who believes not in words but in fact, that *all* things are ordained to happen and must happen.”

These are the thoughts of a man who believes in Predestination. Other passages from Gordon's writings could be cited to show that he was, in this respect, a Presbyterian. But while his critics accuse him of being the victim of caprices and of half-baked ideas, there was something so eminently practical about him that he coupled his acceptance of the dogma of Predestination with the maintenance of a medicine-chest. He made use of it, and went so far as to say:—

“ I have been studying medicine a good deal, and found out a great thing, i.e. that  $\frac{1}{2}$  gr. of ginger,

$\frac{1}{2}$  gr. of ipecacuanha, and 3 grs. of rhubarb make a splendid daily pill, and can be taken without hurt for a lifetime. They keep me in perfect health ; they are taken either at breakfast or dinner ; not to be taken fasting." And Chaillé-Long quotes Gordon as saying : " Now do take some cognac and don't forget quinine." <sup>1</sup>

Not only did he thus emphasize the fact that his theories, and even his principles, were attuned to a realization of the stern realities of life, but he also took the precaution of moving his headquarters from Gondokoro to a point further south, to Rageef, which he describes as " such a nice climate and country "—but where scorpions abound, and hippopotamuses, " their fat sides gleaming from the water they have come out of in the moonlight, make such a fat, grunting noise, as if they did like it so much." In this atmosphere, where the grunting of contented hippopotamuses lulled him to sleep, and scorpions menaced his slumbers, Gordon began his work of initiating the black man into the mysteries of civilization. The first thing that he taught was the use of money.

" I have had great work with the native chiefs in teaching them the use of money," he wrote. " Up to the present time the habit has been to give the chief of a tribe some beads or calico, and he makes his men bring wood, or do any work. Now I want to break through the feudal system of chiefs ; the only way to do this is to let their subjects see that they can stand on their own feet. Before I began the system which I hope to establish, the chief would keep the mass of the things given to him, and give only a few to his subjects. I began by paying each man who worked some beads. Next day I gave each man who worked half-a-piastre (one penny) in copper and offered to sell him beads to that amount. They soon saw it

<sup>1</sup> Chaillé-Long, *op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 145.

and would not buy. They said : ' We will keep the money till we get more, and can buy more expensive things.' I have fixed certain prices for certain things, and made out little lots of beads and wire to sell for certain prices—in fact, made a regular shop, much to the discontent of all the old hands, who are dead against these new-fangled ideas, though I say they will eventually gain, for they will be able to keep shops."

Gordon was so pleased with this first step towards opening up Central Africa to civilization that he lets his pen tell more of the same pioneer work. He adds :—

" To-day I made a first-rate affair. A chief brought a tusk, and wanted two bells for cows to wear around their necks in exchange. I said ' No, I will give you two dollars for the tusk '. He said ' Yes ', so I gave him two dollars. ' Now,' I said, ' I will give you two bells for a dollar each,' which he agreed to and bought them. This was a great step to make ; he has brought some more tusks since, for which I gave him money, and he has bought from me copper wire."

## CHAPTER VII

### DEPARTS FOR LAKE ALBERT

THOUGH teaching the native chiefs the use of money may have been the first step towards initiating them into the mysteries of civilization, Gordon's intelligent and aggressive fight against slavery required that he should open up the country as well as the minds of its inhabitants. It has already been said that Lieutenant-Colonel Chaillé-Long had been sent on a mission to King M'tesa. That officer returned to headquarters on 18th October, 1874. His chief characterized his subordinate's discovery of the water-passage between Urundogani and Foweira as an accomplishment of great importance. Later, Gordon wrote :—

“ Those who care to study the successive steps which built up the map of the course of the Nile will know that to Speke is due the discovery of one portion, to Baker that of another, and to Colonel Chaillé-Long that of another portion and of the lake referred to ” (Lake Ibrahim).<sup>1</sup>

This important exploration filled in a link in what is known as the “ Victoria Nile ”. Speke and Grant had discovered Lake Victoria and had correctly conjectured that the Victoria Nile, which flows out of that lake, joins up with the White Nile and thus forms one of the head-waters of the Nile. Gordon's Chief of Staff definitely demonstrated the accuracy of the Speke and Grant surmise. He showed that the missing link was, in large part, that body of water now known as Lake Kioga, but which he called Lake Ibrahim.

<sup>1</sup> Chaillé-Long, *op. cit.*, vol. ii, p. 555.

All this was very interesting from the scientific point of view, but it did not get Gordon very far on the road to those practical results which the man whom the world took to be a visionary had always in view. His primary concern was not the making of maps or adding to scientific knowledge. What he had at the back of his mind was to open up water communication between Gondokoro and Albert Nyanza. Baker had discovered that lake, but had not followed the White Nile from the Nyanza at the point where it flows out of Lake Albert. No white man—most probably no man—had ever traversed that distance, although geographers at that time unhesitatingly agreed that one of the head-waters of the White Nile was Lake Albert.

Gordon realized that he could not hope to eradicate slavery until this Nile passageway had been explored, and not merely traced on maps. He felt that until this water-channel was opened he was groping in the dark. His practical mind called for bald facts, not deductions. He therefore resolved to have these intervening miles, however great their length, not as the crow flies but as the stream winds, not merely opened up but kept open. He committed the preliminary path-finding mission to two Englishmen, Lieutenants Watson and Chippendall.

These officers had barely started on their expedition when illness overtook them. Gordon wrote from Lado on 11th January, 1875 :—

“Received a letter from Chippendall and Watson to say both are ill. I have sent a steamer for them, and will make a hospital here for all the maimed and sick. Of course, I have to give up, for the moment, the Lake Expedition. The fact is that no man under thirty years of age, unless he is more or less acclimatized, ought to come out here. Age is a benefit, for it has brought more or less experience with it, and you do not get so dismally down as young men do.”

Watson and Chippendall, however, with true British grit returned to the charge and followed the White Nile to Lake Albert. They did not navigate the stream, as cataracts made this impossible for the craft at their disposal. When Watson, on his way back to England, reported to Gordon, "his (Watson's) clothes hung on him like a pole." Chippendall, his constitution shattered, had also to be invalided home. Broken health was the price they paid for helping Gordon to fulfil his mission.

With Watson and Chippendall's report in hand, Gordon felt that it was incumbent upon him to devise ways and means for establishing communication by boat between Gondokoro and Lake Albert. He was determined to police the lower stretches of the White Nile so as to cut off the slave trade at its fountain head. He therefore assumed personal charge of the expedition which undertook to go by water from Gondokoro to Albert Nyanza.

Writing at Rageef on 7th April, 1875, Gordon thus describes how he began this important work undertaken in the interests of the suppression of the slave trade :—

"I have just come back from a short tour. You must know that the great difficulty I have to contend with is how to get the heavy portion of the steamers to the point where the Nile is navigable above the generally accepted cataracts—a distance of a hundred miles from Gondokoro. . . . I am bound in honour to get the steamer on the Lake, and I saw months and months of work before me. . . . Continued thinking made me first give up all idea of taking up the heavy portions of the steamer with me this trip ; I would put off that difficulty until November. Next I gave up all thoughts of taking up the two life-boats in sections ; next I gave up all idea of taking up the timber I had prepared, with which to construct

*nuggers*<sup>1</sup> above the cataracts, and next I gave up all idea of taking up a cart to try the road. All this was pain and wormwood to me, for eventually these things must come up, and I was only, I thought, putting off the evil day. I therefore determined to go up and place a station on the Nile a day's march from here ; then to bring up the *impedimenta* there, and then to make another station a day's march further, and take the things up there, and so on to the head of the Falls."<sup>2</sup>

Gordon's official correspondence with Khairy Pasha, hidden away for years in the Royal Archives of the Abdine Palace, but now, through King Fuad's wise initiative, made accessible to students, teems with evidence of his burning desire to get these *nuggers* on the upper stretches of the Nile and on the Great Lakes. The postscript of Gordon's letter to Khairy Pasha, dated Foweira, 16th January, 1876, brings out what was in the back of his mind. He wrote in French. Here is a literal translation of his words :—

“ Even if we should take possession of these lakes by raising the (Egyptian) flag and by establishing troops on their shores, I think that after some little time, if we made no use of our possession, our rights may lapse. It is for this reason that I so strongly press for the construction of the *nuggers*. We have all the nails that we need.”<sup>3</sup>

The Nile hippopotamuses objected to Gordon's effort to navigate the waters which were their home. They “ were in large numbers in the river, and the

<sup>1</sup> “ The boats which are used upon the upper waters of the Nile are called *nuggers* ; their construction, I believe, is unlike what can be seen in any other country of the world. They are as strong as they are massive, being built so as to withstand the violent pushings of the hippopotamuses, as well as the collisions with the mussel-banks which are scattered in various directions.” Schweinfurth, *Heart of Africa*, vol. i, p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa 1874-9*, p. 74. All subsequent quotations in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are from this work.

<sup>3</sup> Royal Egyptian Archives, Abdine Palace, Provisional File No. 8180.

way they rushed in herds through the water was astounding ; they made quite a roar like that of a cataract. They look like such queer creatures when by chance they get cut off from deep water and stand like mountains in shoal water." The presence of the *nuggers* in their midst infuriated the water horses. " We hit several on the back," wrote Gordon, " which they resented by heaving up the boat, really sometimes making one quite afraid of them. I never heard such a noise, nor could I have believed there were so many in the river. . . . After seven p.m. we had a serious time, for we were in an open boat, and the hippopotamuses were in force. We were afraid every minute of being swamped by them. Sometimes they are very fierce, and bite the boats in two. Their jaws are immense, and go back to their ears. A son of Muhammad Ali was killed by the bite of one in 1843. Their strength is terrible."

But since he had said that " I am in honour bound to get the steamer on the Lake ", the creation of a line of army posts, even were it extended right through to Albert Nyanza, did not satisfy him. He studied the Nile and became convinced that his steamer the *Khediye* could safely pass through the Nile cataracts when the river was at its height. He accordingly ordered that the *Khediye* and the *Ismailia* be sent to him.

They were then at Khartoum—at all events Gordon thought they were. He cherished the hope that they would reach him before the Nile subsided. But on 25th June he exclaimed : " No steamer as yet ; very trying for the flesh as the river is so very high." On 29th June he wrote : " It is now 129 days since the steamers arrived at Khartoum ; and through some mishap or mistake they appear to have stayed." 2nd July brought the pathetic note : " No steamers : You will be sick of these two words." How ominous they sound now when we recall how nine years later

he scanned the horizon and called out with courageous resignation : " No steamers."

Time for a while hung heavily on Gordon's hands while waiting for the boats. But on 12th August the natives " meant mischief. They came down close to the camp, creeping along the grass, but long range rifles made them think differently." A few days later an attack was made on another camp by " the natives of three tribes who combined their forces ". The situation was becoming more and more tense, when on 20th August word reached Gordon that the *Khedive* was approaching.

Four days passed, and the steamer failed to arrive. Gordon became uneasy, He feared that the unfriendly tribes might have attacked the boat. That evening Linant, a brother of the interpreter who had died in Gordon's service, suggested that if his chief had no objection he should cross the river and burn the houses of the hostile natives. " As I feared they might attack the steamer, and that, if worried, they would let it alone, I assented," wrote Gordon, " and sent thirty-six soldiers, two officers, and three irregular soldiers, with two boxes of ammunition. Each man had thirty rounds in his pouch. About noon they were on the hills ; and I saw Linant, in a red shirt which I had given him, on the hill. The men and he seemed quite at home." In a few moments they disappeared. Only one man of the entire detachment lived to tell what had happened. Every other member of the expedition had been killed outright, including the gallant Linant.

But the attack saved the *Khedive*. By 13th September all was ready for the dash to the lake. Fate, however, interposed her veto. As the steamer was passing through the rapids two *nuggers* got adrift, and the current caught the *Khedive* and sent her broadside on two rocks. It took three days to float her. Finally Gordon was able to write :—

" Certainly it does not seem very long from

1st August to 23rd September to be engaged in taking the steamer from Rageef to Moogie, in establishing my posts, and in bringing up all the necessary stores ; but it was years in time to me and has worn me very much. I shall never be fit for anything again, and shall try to retire if I live to the end of the work. *Bananas* in the upper country may make me feel better, but I doubt it. I am not fastidious, but cockroach nests in your sugar, rice, etc., do not tempt one to eat. I can talk to no one, so I write a great deal."

On 9th October Gordon left for Duffi, and eight days later he recorded :—

"It is all over ! I started from Duffi this morning, and keeping on a higher level to avoid the wet edges of the river, came on it about five miles from here. I fancied for some time I heard a noise like thunder, which increased as we approached the river. At last we stood above it on a rock bank covered with vegetation, which descended abruptly to the stream, and there it was appalling to look at, far less to think of getting anything up or down except in splinters. It was more a rush down a slope of one-in-six than a fall. Above it the water was smooth, and 80 to 150 yards wide ; and here it was suddenly contracted to two passages of 15 to 20 yards wide—for a rock isle stood in the centre. . . . It was a difficult path enough to get there, and few eyes have seen these falls. They are generally known as Fola, but by us by the name of Makadé. Below is clear, so that we have two miles of bad country over which to carry all the things. Of course, the idea is all over of taking up the screw steamer or the *nuggers*, or, indeed, anything."

It must have been most distressing for Gordon to have had the certainty that his steamer could not reach Albert Nyanza driven home to him. Open communication with the head-waters of the Nile was what

he wanted in order to attack the slave-traders at their base of supply. He was convinced that if he could have put boats on the Lake it would have been of incalculable benefit to him in that work of civilization upon which his heart was set. But, allowing no difficulties to thwart and no obstacles to discourage him, he kept on hammering at his goal until success crowned his efforts.

He was not able to accomplish this result in person. Several months were to elapse before his deputies, Romolo Gessi, the Italian, and Alexander McComb Mason, an American, acting under his orders, were in a position to do so. Gordon's attention was riveted upon other work when Gessi, in 1876, dismantled a boat specially built for the purpose, carried it by land along the banks of the cataracts of Duffi, and was the first man—at all events the first white man—to circumnavigate Albert Nyanza.<sup>1</sup> In August, 1877, Mason gave scientific accuracy to Gessi's explorations, and also discovered the Semliki River, which connects Lake Albert with Lake Albert Edward, thus bringing to light what are now known as the Albertine head-waters of the Nile.<sup>2</sup> But Gordon is entitled to full credit for having inspired these two explorations. They formed part of his campaign against slavery and were directed by him while he was attending to other equally important aspects of the same problem.

His official letter announcing Gessi's circumnavigation of Lake Albert was addressed to Khairy Pasha. It is dated Kerri, May, 1876, and says :—

“ The Egyptian flag was raised on Albert Nyanza on 10th April, 1876, and henceforth the navigation of that lake is vested in the Government. As soon as

<sup>1</sup> *Bulletin de la Société Khédiviale de Géographie du Caire*, ii série, A 7, Juin, 1885, Le Caire, Imprimerie Nationale, 1885, p. 348.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, A 5, Mai, 1877, et Février, 1878, p. 5.

I receive the proof that the flag has been raised on Lake Victoria I shall advise you.”<sup>1</sup>

However keenly Gordon may have regretted the fact that he personally did not get through with his steamer to Albert Nyanza, his letters fail to reveal the slightest sense of irritation. He did not even adopt the safety-valve so often resorted to of blaming someone else for the shattering of his hopes. On the contrary, in the very letter, dated 17th October, 1875, which began with the words: “All is over,” he wrote:—

“To undertake what I am doing, were I under our Government, I should surely have some good men, instead of these poor, helpless, ignorant black officers. . . . One feels inclined to be vexed with the Khedive for this state of affairs, but it would be unjust to do so, for he has given, and gives all I ask for. If I asked for twenty European officers he would give me them, but if I had twenty how would I feed them; how carry their tremendous amount of baggage; and how many would sicken and die, or else force me to devote my transport to their removal to Khartoum?”

Such self-control and fairness did Gordon show when the climate alone would have blunted an ordinary man's sense of justice. He wrote at this very time:—

“What a climate it is! The only thing (except God's keeping, which is all) to keep well is to keep employed at anything; never be idle or you will mope and succumb.” And while thus depending upon his own will-power to keep well, harassing letters further taxed, though they could not break down, his self-control. His Journal records on 10th November:—

“The post came in last night. Its principal contents are: letters from Latooka, which say it is half-blockaded by the hostile natives. It is evident that the Mudir has been doing something to irritate them or they would not have attacked him. I have sent orders

<sup>1</sup> Royal Egyptian Archives, Abdine Palace, Cairo, Provisional File No. 8196.

to Bohr Station to help him. Next, letters from two captains, one lieutenant, and a corporal, stating that the different stations they are quartered in do not suit them, and they wish to change. Answered that their likes and dislikes are a matter of supreme indifference to me. Next a cry out for more troops ; 120 with Remingtons, three hours from another station with 90, are not enough ; 60 at another station are not enough. It happens that the Mudir of this last unfortunately states in another letter that he issued out and separated two tribes who were fighting one another ; so he got for reply : ‘ If you can meddle with the internecine wars of the natives, you have enough troops for your station ’ ; and generally as an answer to the Major, ‘ if you and your officers and soldiers are afraid, tell me, and I will send you all down to Khartoum.’ ”

Yet Gordon could not give these officers more men, not because the Khedive would not have paid them, but because as he said in another letter :—

“ I have garrisons small on purpose to make them keep awake ; and it has its effect, for they are in a frightful fright along the line. I cannot help feeling somewhat of a malicious enjoyment at their sufferings. If I personally am at any station, even if there are thirty or forty men there, the sentries all go to sleep in comfort. Not so in my absence ; everyone is awake, I expect. Having nothing to do—or, rather, not doing anything, though there is plenty to be done—they sit and talk over the terrors of their position, until they tremble again. I never in the course of my life saw such wretched creatures dignified by the name of soldiers.”<sup>1</sup>

But even Gordon’s sense of humour and force of character could not for ever resist both the climate and the trials that were his daily lot. He was forced to record on 14th November that he “ got to this

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of General C. G. Gordon to his Sister*, p. 115.

place (Duffi) yesterday. Nearly dead with an attack of liver. The heat was terrible. I was obliged to go for I had given notice that I should come. The suffering human nature undergoes in these parts is terrible”.

A month later he wrote from Moogie : “ I had to sit up all night with my sergeant who had the fever, and who died at 1.30 a.m., while I started at 4 p.m.”

This death affected Gordon, for in another letter he said :—

“ I am very low. I feel my servant’s death. I did not know he was ill till twelve hours before he left this world ; not that it is not better for him, in all the miseries of this wretched land. God will make it up for him. I am so angry with the Cairo people : they have no idea of the difficulties up here. However, it is all God’s will, and I hope I shall be able to bear it.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### SURVEYS THE VICTORIA NILE

As 1875 disappeared beyond the horizon Gordon determined to press on to Victoria Nyanza. He had been unable to reach Lake Albert by steamer. He set his teeth and made up his mind that Lake Victoria should not escape him. He felt that until the country adjacent to it was properly recorded by map-makers, peaceful penetration, so essential to civilization's warfare on slavery, could not begin. He had but recently read a paper by Dr. Schweinfurth in which that eminent explorer had said: "It may be that Lake Albert belongs to the Nile basin; but it is not a settled fact, for there are seventy miles between Foweira and Lake Albert that have never been explored, and we are not authorized in making the Nile leave Lake Albert. The question is very doubtful." This statement caused Gordon to write: "It was contended that the Nile did not flow out of Lake Victoria, and thence through Lake Albert, and so southward, but that one river flowed out of Lake Victoria and another out of Lake Albert; that these two rivers united and formed the Nile. This statement could not be positively denied, inasmuch as no one had actually gone along the river from Foweira to Magungo."<sup>1</sup>

Gordon reached Fatiko on his trek to Foweira on 3rd January, 1876. He had marched forty-eight miles in three days. "I have great pains in the back," he wrote, "and though I can walk my fourteen miles it makes me feel much fatigued, and I feel sure I ought to get out of the country as soon as I can."

<sup>1</sup> *Colonel Gordon in Central Africa 1874-9*, p. 177. All statements of fact made in this chapter are based upon this work.

The best proof that Gordon was an extremely temperate man and no secret drinker is to be found in the way in which, day after day, he stood up against the ordeal both of the climate and of the monotony of his daily existence. His own pen describes, without a word of ill-humour, the hardships that were part of his life. Referring to his journey from Fatiko to Foweira he said :—

“ A more dreary, weary, set of marches you cannot conceive. The country is quite uninhabited—a vast, undulating prairie of jungle grass and scrub-trees ; after the first day the water is from swamps, and resembles muddy beer ; it is strongly impregnated with iron, and, in fact, the whole country’s soil is as red as blood. . . . The halting places were terribly infested with earwigs and ants. The river is 250 yards wide with no current. South bank very marshy. This is the programme (D.V.) : in three days to surprise Mrooli, which is thirty miles south on the river ; to establish a post there ; to march to Urundogani and place a post there, and another on Ripon Falls ; to come down to Foweira, and thence to go to Magungo, where I mean, if I can, to place a station ; then to go down from there to Duffli by steamer.”

There were, of course, no roads which Gordon could follow. He was in rags from the thorn bushes, bruised by stumbling over trees uprooted by elephants and by falling into the pitfalls, quite a foot deep, made in the soft soil by their heavy feet. One day he picked a fig. “ I asked the black if it was good,” records Gordon ; “ he said ‘ Yes ’, and I bit it and just tasted it. It had an astringent, disagreeable taste, so I spat it out. Soon after that came on a violent sore throat, which nearly prevented my breathing, and this continued all night. Everything in this land is bitter or astringent or thorny or prickly. The nice green waving grass has silicious delicate hairs on it like spun glass, and quite as sharp. Nice looking

turf has a seed like a crow's foot in it. You walk along and think to pluck a tuft of grass, and you get your finger cut to the bone. Everything is tough and strong, and as for plucking a switch, you never can."

After enduring all these hardships Gordon reached Mrooli on 22nd January, only to find that what he had thought was a capital was in reality the name of a district, and that its chief, Kaba Rega, had fled, carrying his "magic stool" with him. It appears that this sovereign had ideas about his "magic stool" somewhat like those that King James II of England had in regard to his great seal. The emblem of authority, of which Gordon spoke with scant reverence, was a throne composed partly of copper and partly of wood. It was an exceedingly small and ancient piece of furniture that had been handed down from generation to generation, and was considered to be a *coojoor* or talisman. The legend ran that should the throne be lost or stolen the king's authority would disappear together with the talisman, and disorder would reign throughout the country until the precious object should be restored.

The "magic stool" meant nothing to Gordon. His primary object was not to conquer but to open up the country. Conquest would not, of itself, have meant the death-knell of slavery. He was convinced that a proper exploration of the land was an essential prerequisite to an attack on the economic support of slavery. He did not permit his thoughts to deviate from this central conception of his mission, and he tarried in the land of the Mrooli only long enough to remark that "a miserable country, full of mosquitoes, is the much vaunted Mrooli". But it was cold in those parts, for the very next day, before leaving for Foweira by canoe, he noted that "it is very cold this morning, and it forced one to put on a great coat". This drop in temperature was due to the altitude.

It is somewhat difficult to understand why Gordon turned back instead of carrying through his original plan. He had written as late as 8th January : " I want to push on to the lake (Victoria Nyanza) to hoist the flag and to enable the *Khedive* to claim its waters." The most plausible explanation is that his liver went to pieces, and that, notwithstanding the tenacity of purpose which was characteristic of him, he was but mortal and could not throw off the intellectual torpor and temperamental depression engendered by a sluggish liver.

Before we reject this theory and fall back upon the more convenient charge of inconstancy which has so often been made against Gordon, it may be well to read what he wrote to his sister but a few days earlier :—

" This is a horrid climate. I seldom, if ever, get a good sleep. It is a very great comfort to feel that God will rectify one's defects in this life, and make right all mistakes, also that He governs everything. Is it my present temperament, or is it truly the case that things go untowardly more in this land than anywhere else? . . . Every, *every* thing seems to go wrong. It may be my liver which makes me think this. . . . Oh ! how I wish I had finished this work. I have yet two months of weariness ; shall I get through it ? Who knows ?" <sup>1</sup>

As soon as Gordon had returned to Duffi he again spoke of his liver. Here are his words :—

" You will understand my grief at not having surveyed the gaps in the Victoria Nile. Whether I shall do so or not I do not know. . . . If I were well I would do it, but I keep day by day feeling my liver more." He wrote in this strain on 10th February. Six days later he added : " Out of sorts again with bleeding from the nose (not plague) ; nearly suffocated last night with blood."

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of General Gordon to his Sister*, p. 119.

While still at Duffli Gordon wrote a letter to Khairy Pasha, which emphasizes the importance he attached to the navigation of Lake Victoria. It is written in French. Its opening paragraphs may well be translated in full. They read as follows :—

“ There is one thing that Egypt should watch with a jealous eye : the navigation of Lake Victoria by boats of powers other than Egypt.

“ I have already written to you that after the unfurling of the Egyptian flag (which will shortly be an accomplished fact) Egypt should maintain her possession of Lake Victoria and prevent that lake being navigated by boats not authorized so to do by Egypt.”<sup>1</sup>

But, liver or no liver, Gordon had pulled himself together by the end of February. He left Duffli on 7th March. On the 8th he wended his way down to the Fola Falls in order to complete his survey. “ Such a walk ! ” he observed. “ There were ravines and gullies in abundance, and the ground was covered with loose stones. I never was so tired, but I finished the map.” Stimulated by this work, he was able to write a few days later :—

“ Is it not odd that since I left Foweira, where I was so unwell, I have been quite well—in fact as well as I ever was ? Whether one gets acclimatized all of a sudden or not, I do not know, but in my case it has been so. The mosquitoes are terrible here just now—burning Keatings insect powder does them but for a time ; carbolic acid powder is quite useless. I sit in the evening under a mosquito-curtain, but it is very hot in it. Of one’s existence the time between sunset and sunrise is the most trying.”

In another letter to his sister Gordon describes how these mosquitoes carry on their campaign. “ The proboscis is formed like a bayonet with a hinge at the bend ; they turn it down for perforation and press

<sup>1</sup> Royal Egyptian Archives, Abdine Palace, Cairo, Provisional File No. 8199.

on it with their head, muscles, and chest. I am very susceptible of their bite or dig ; the least touch of the ' bayonet ' makes a lump." <sup>1</sup>

After several inspection trips along the lower stretches of the Nile, Gordon reached Labore on 4th July. He had ordered, for service on Lake Victoria, a 108-ton steamer which he had named the *Khedive*. He was once again in excellent fettle, and was able to write : " All my worries, with the return of my health, have disappeared. I am now preparing for the taking to pieces, at Moogie, of the *Khedive* and the putting of her together on Victoria Lake. This might, if He wills it, be accomplished in April next, and would secure the lake to the *Khedive*."

He left Duffi on 20th July with the steamer and two life-boats, and found the river " horrible, full of endless papyrus isles ", with a fringe of papyrus for ten or twenty yards along the banks. Eight days later he arrived at the debouchment of the Victoria Nile into Lake Albert, " after a night spent in the lake, owing," to quote his words, " to my stupidity. The entrance is masked," he continued, " by a mass of papyrus isles. There is no current at all, and it is a most miserable looking place. The people are quiet and well disposed to us. I saw a herd of elephants to-day feeding quietly and looking so happy. They pitch grass into their mouths with their trunks, as you would chuck water from your mouth into a basin. What a wilderness this is up here—not a sound to be heard, and so lifeless, and apparently miserable. . . . I propose (and God disposes) to go up from here to Foweira and then map that part ; to go then to Mrooli, and thence to Urundogani and to Cossitza (Ripon Falls) ; hoist the Egyptian Flag there on Victoria Lake, and then map the River from Cossitza to Urundogani ; and thence to Mrooli. From

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of General C. G. Gordon to his Sister*, p. 120.

Cossitza to Urundogani is forty miles by land—the river not being navigable. From Urundogani to Mrooli it is navigable, and I have done that part between Mrooli and Foweira. Then the Nile will be completed.”<sup>1</sup>

“Then the Nile will be completed.” To accomplish this result, which meant so much for his warfare on slave-raiders, Gordon had to tax his powers of endurance almost to breaking-point. He wrote on 6th August :—

“I am nearly dead. To map the river for eight or ten miles I have had to walk, in pouring rain, through jungle some eighteen miles ; but it is done, at any rate, and I am quite sure no one will ever do it again. . . . It is terrible walking.” And on 7th August he added :—

“We went a weary hot march of fifteen miles, the path being about three miles from the river which I have mapped in from the ravine in which it runs.” The next day it was the same story, and he said :—

“We got over fifteen miles to-day—terrible work. Such a country of ravines and gullies. As we got in down came a deluge of rain, and we have all our things wet. Poor men, it is terrible work for them. No one knows the country. I have never had such fatigue. It has utterly prostrated me—a deadly coldness and emptiness at the stomach makes you feel inclined to drop. Fifteen drops of chlorodine, however, set me up. What misery ! and what for ?”

But the next day being bright he was again early on the trek and covered 15 miles, only to do  $14\frac{1}{2}$  the day after. He covered these latter  $29\frac{1}{2}$  miles by literally forcing his way through a pathless jungle. “It has been terrible work,” are his own words, “for what with wild vines and convolvuli and other

<sup>1</sup> An unofficial letter to Khairy Pasha, 28th July, 1876, confirms Gordon's arrival at Magungo. Royal Egyptian Archives, Abdine Palace, Provisional File No. 8189.

creepers, you sometimes get bound hand and foot. I have had several severe falls, shaking my poor liver terribly."

Onward the Christian soldier marched, and on 13th September he recorded :—

"Got over twenty miles to-day. The mosquitoes in the morning were terrible on one's neck ; passing a tree a hornet flew out and struck me on the nape, and made me suffer in both shoulders. He had let the whole caravan—two hundred people—pass him, and selected me—the only white of the party. The heat is terrible ; however (D.V.), one-and-a-half day's march will complete my journey and then I turn northwards."

The next day he was able to write :—

"Got over seventeen miles ; the first six of which were through a dense jungle, with large creepers and fallen trees right across the path ; a complete entanglement with constant marshes and mosquitoes in myriads. I did not feel at all comfortable ; when we had gone four miles I heard a shout and a crash of loads thrown down, and then a volley about twenty yards in the rear of me. About ten or twelve of those irrepressible vermin had made an attack on the porters. They threw their *assegais* but only wounded one man. This sort of work is much more dangerous for me, humanly speaking, than regular war would be. These blacks can throw their lances fifty yards with a sure aim ; and, as the path is very narrow and the bush very dense, one is not comfortable. Besides which I have not overmuch confidence in the troops or officers with me. However (D.V.), it will be over to-morrow. I do not carry arms as I ought to do, for my whole attention is devoted to defending the nape of my neck from mosquitoes."

On 15th September Gordon turned back near Nyamyongo, having definitely settled the question raised by Dr. Schweinfurth's inquiry. No note of

exultation crept into his letters. All that he did was to complete his survey by accurately recording where landing-places were to be found in that mass of papyrus and marsh which marks the bed of these stretches of the Victoria Nile. Having done this, he worked his way by steamer to Magungo, which lies at the point where the Victoria Nile joins Albert Nyanza, only to leave a day later for Chibero, one of the Lake ports. He recorded that :—

“The Lake was pretty calm, but the swell was perceptible ; in the evening we got rolled about a good deal, which showed me that it is not a very safe thing to be on this lake with inexperienced sailors, who do not know what rough weather is, and who may not moor the steamer well.”

After having thus completed the exploration of the headwaters of the Nile :—

(1) By the discovery of Lake Ibrahim, through the untiring efforts of his American Chief of Staff, Lieutenant-Colonel Charles Chaillé-Long ;

(2) By the survey of that stretch of the White Nile lying between Duffli and Magungo, through the tenacity of his English *aides*, Chippendall and Watson ;

(3) By the circumnavigation of Lake Albert, carried through by his Italian right-hand man, Romolo Gessi ; and

(4) By his own tracing of the Victoria Nile from Magungo to Foweira, Gordon felt that the time had come for him to return to Cairo. He was worn out and needed rest. He had accomplished the impossible. No man who was not the very embodiment of perseverance, tenacity, and constancy could have inspired such zeal in others and have done so much himself.

As Gordon's steamer pushed its way through the White Nile the natives gave him a parting shower-bath of arrows. Two of the darts fell in the steamer,

but nobody was hurt. By 29th October he had reached Khartoum. He was delighted to see English sparrows there. But the letter in which this is mentioned added :—

“ I have been terribly attacked here by cavalry (sand flies), infantry (tortoises), and artillery (opal-coloured insects), and have suffered a good deal especially from the artillery whose attacks are something fearful. You feel the wounds for days ; and yet there are not many in action, but ill-naturedly they attack much ground. I feel sure if you were wounded by an ‘ opal ’ you would feel it for a week at least.”<sup>1</sup>

On the day that Gordon thus wrote to his sister of his insect bites in such warlike tones, he said in another letter :—

“ I have telegraphed to Cairo to say that I hope to come down for a time ; but I have not said anything about coming home yet. I want to see my way clear first. Comfort-of-Body—a very strong gentleman—says ‘ you are well ; you have done enough ; go home ; go home and be quiet and risk no more ’. Mr. Reason says, ‘ What is the use of opening up more country to such a Government ? There is more now under their power than they will ever manage. . . . ’ But Mr. Something (I do not know what) says, ‘ Shut your eyes to what may happen in the future, leave that to God, and do what you think will open the country thoroughly to both Lakes. Do this, not for H.H., or for his Government, but do it blindly and in faith.’ An oracle also says, ‘ Let your decision rest on the way H.H. is disposed ; if he desires you to stay, then stay ; but if he seems indifferent, then do not hesitate, but go away for good.’ ”

“ Comfort-of-body,” “ Mr. Reason,” “ Mr. Something,” and “ the oracle ” appear to have held a conference shortly before Gordon reached Luxor on his way north. The cause of the discussion was the lesson

<sup>1</sup> *Letters of General C. G. Gordon to his Sister*, p. 135.

taught by the fate of Ismail Pasha Sadik. Gordon's own pen can best tell what brought these four heads together. "When I was in Cairo in February, 1874," run the minutes of this meeting, "I was delayed in my departure by the fêtes given by H.H. in honour of his daughter's marriage with the son of the Finance Minister, Ismail Pasha Sadik, who was one of his four great Pashas or *Muchirs*, the others being Chérif Pasha, Tewfik Pasha (his son), and Khairi Pasha, the keeper of his seal. . . . When, a few days ago, I got to Korosko, I heard this: 'a dahabeyah, with the windows nailed up, had passed up with soldiers all around it and at the door of the cabin. Two colonels were on board, and twenty-five soldiers. It went on to Wady Halfa, where camels were waiting for the inmates of the dahabeyah.' Who do you think was in it but my friend Ismail Pasha Sadik? According to what I picked up, it appears that the Khedive himself drove down with him to the Cairo arsenal about 11th November; went over a steamer which had her steam up; went with him into the cabin, and, leaving the cabin, said to him '*Restez ici*'. Ismail Pasha Sadik tried to follow him but was prevented. The Khedive got into his carriage, and Ismail Pasha Sadik steamed off without a single thing or servant, up to Asswan, where he was put on board the dahabeyah and the windows nailed up. At Siout a single box of clothes, sent from Cairo, was put on board, and then the poor man was, with no servant or food, going on a journey which in all my strength and health I find a terrible one. He tried, by setting fire to the cushions of the dahabeyah, to smother himself; but the fire was smelt and put out, and since then eight soldiers watch him day and night. He is allowed no light or cigarette; he eats very little, has only bread and dates, and is ill. I do not vouch for the mode of his arrest, but this is what I heard."

After having thus described what happened to the Viceroy's famous *Mufattish* Gordon added :—

“ How God works ! When I was going up to the Sudan he was all-powerful ; when I am coming down few would envy his lot. Poor man ! Poor man ! He was a Turk, had charge of the stables of Abbas Pasha and Said Pasha (the predecessors of the present Khedive), and was made Minister of Finance by the latter. He is believed to have made millions out of the loans. What an affair ! Everyone speaks in bated breath of it. I have (D.V.) made up my mind to serve H.H. no more.”

Three days later Gordon wrote from Cairo :—

“ I arrived here to-day at seven in the morning, twenty days from Khartoum. I called on Cherif Pasha, who is Minister for Foreign Affairs, and he was very civil ; but I do not think he relished telling the Khedive I would not stay in his service. It appears H.H. was quite right in exiling Ismail Sadik Pasha.”

Gordon arrived in London on 24th December, 1876. He had oysters for lunch that day—such, at least, is the treat he had promised himself when he was still in Central Africa.

CHAPTER IX  
RETURNS TO THE SUDAN

GORDON'S Christmas holidays had barely ended when he received a telegram from the Khedive in French. It said :—

“ My dear Gordon Pasha :

“ Mr. Vivian has shown me the dispatch in which you directed him to inform me that circumstances do not permit you to return to Egypt. I was greatly surprised to hear this after our conversation at Abdine during which I flatter myself that I made you see the necessity of your continuing the work which we began together and asked you to take up your post in Egypt again. As we parted you said : ‘ *Au revoir.*’

“ I, therefore, can but attribute your telegram to that first impression of most natural satisfaction which you felt on finding yourself once again at home. I refuse to believe that a gentleman like Gordon desires for any reason whatsoever to retract the promise which he has given me. Therefore, my dear Gordon, I cannot consider your telegram and I shall expect you according to your promise.

“ Your affectionate

“ Ismail.”<sup>1</sup>

This telegram is impregnated with the very personality of the Khedive. The most charming of men, he cast his spell over Gordon and based his appeal to him upon an argument which was unanswerable. He addressed himself to a gentleman's sense of honour. And in doing so Ismail gave indisputable proof of the sincerity of his campaign

<sup>1</sup> *Letters from General C. G. Gordon to his Sister*, p. 136.

against the slave trade. Had his devotion to the cause of slavery "Regulation" weakened in the very slightest, he had in Gordon's retirement an ideal opportunity to rid himself of an embarrassing idealist. He knew in January, 1877, where his officer stood, and that he could be depended upon to wage a persistent, relentless, and sane warfare on slave *razzias*. He understood perfectly the objective envisaged by the soldier whom he trusted. It was because he was willing to adhere to the campaign destined, by the operation of economic laws, eventually to stamp out domestic slavery, that he insisted that Gordon should return to the Sudan.

On receipt of the Khedive's telegram Gordon put himself in the hands of the Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, His Royal Highness the Duke of Cambridge, who told him that it was his duty to yield to the Viceroy's insistence. He therefore telegraphed that he would go back to the Black Country on condition that he was made Governor-General of the entire Sudan. He had been so much thwarted in the best part of his work by Ismail Pasha Yacoub, the Governor-General of the Sudan, that he was reluctant to assume his old duties as long as the Khartoum officials, led by their chief, could continue to make his task supremely difficult. It was because he knew that if he asked for Ismail Pasha Yacoub's decapitation he would be placing the Khedive in a most embarrassing position that Gordon preferred to tender his resignation.

Gordon, to quote his own words, "had successfully checked slave-driving in his own province, but he could do nothing to stop it in the extensive Sudan district where Khartoum is the headquarters of the system."<sup>1</sup> The mapping of the sources of the Nile was an important step in opening up Africa to civilization. Gordon was not blind to the importance

<sup>1</sup> Op cit., p. 203. All quotations in this chapter are from this volume.

of that contribution to the warfare upon slavery, but that bolt had been shot, and it was from Khartoum alone that its practical effects could be controlled. It was a great deal to ask of Ismail that he should oust an Egyptian from a post which was coveted by Egyptians. It meant calling upon the Khedive to affront the bureaucracy of his own country, and this in order to facilitate an attack on an institution which was part of the traditions of Islam. It was because Gordon was genuinely fond of the Khedive that he was reluctant to put his friend in a most invidious position.

As soon as Ismail caught the significance of Gordon's proposal he did not hesitate an instant. He took his decision with his eyes wide open, after having thus had a second golden opportunity to get rid of the anti-slavery champion. He did so, moreover, knowing that his stand would cost him the implacable hatred of the slave-trading aristocracy of his capital, the subtle hostility of the civil servants of his realm, and the latent animosity of the radical section of Islamic thought which looked upon Gordon's anti-slavery activities as an impingement upon a bulwark of Muslim life.

This was not all. Not only was Ismail Pasha Yacoub's head thrown into the basket, but Gordon's authority as Governor-General of the Sudan was enlarged and his territorial jurisdiction expanded. Following the lead given in 1874 when the Briton first came to Egypt, the monarch and he thrashed out matters together, and their understanding was put into the shape of a letter addressed by the Khedive to his officer. It bore date 17th February, 1877, and read :—

“ Setting a just value on your honourable character, on your zeal, and on the great services that you have already done me, I have resolved to constitute the Sudan, Darfur, and the provinces of the Equator into one great province, and to place it under you as

Governor-General. As the country which you are thus to govern is so vast,<sup>1</sup> you must have beneath you three *wekils* (or deputy governors): the first for the Sudan properly so called, the second for Darfur, and the third for the shores of the Red Sea and the Eastern Sudan. . . . There are two matters to which I would draw your attention: the first, the suppression of slavery, the second, the improvement of the means of communication.

“As Abyssinia, for a great distance, lies along the borders of the Sudan, I beg you when you are on the spot to look carefully into the state of affairs there; and I give you power, should you think well, to enter into negotiations with the authorities of that Kingdom, to the end that a settlement of the matters in dispute between us and them may be arrived at.”

It will be observed that the Khedive stressed “the suppression of slavery” and “the improvement of the means of communication”. The latter, of course, was but a phase of the economic strangulation of slavery. But Gordon preferred to devote his attention, first of all, to straightening out Egypt’s relations with Abyssinia. It was all very well to carry on an active fight against slavery, but internal reforms could not safely be attempted while frontiers were menaced. The relations between Abyssinia and Egypt were more than strained. In the interests of the accomplishment of his mission, Gordon accordingly hurried to Massawah in order to smooth out the Egypto-Abyssinian controversy.

He reached the town on 26th February. His observant eye soon discovered that the war had

<sup>1</sup> The length of the province was 1,640 miles, the breadth irregular but averaging about 660 miles. This territory is larger than the British Isles, Portugal, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, and pre-War Germany and Austria all combined. At the present moment the flag of Egypt does not wave in undisputed sovereignty over an inch of this vast area. Its place is taken by the Anglo-Egyptian condominium, and by the banners of Italy, Belgium, Abyssinia, and England.

pressed very heavily on the Abyssinian frontier peasantry. The Ethiopian army was made up of savage and undisciplined troops, who, having no regular commissariat, had pillaged right and left, friend as well as foe. As this had gone on for nearly eighteen months the Abyssinian rural districts were nearly ruined and their inhabitants were anxious for peace. To make Gordon's work easier the Khedive made him a *Muchir* or Marshal. "So," observed the Governor-General, "I and the Duke of Cambridge are equals. He has sent me the uniform ; the coat is worth £150, covered with gold lace."

Gordon failed to tell us whether the costly garment fitted him. He hastened, on the other hand, to describe his journey from Massawah to Keren. His route lay over an undulating desert country, skirting the Abyssinian mountains. On the night of 18th March he wrote :—

"There was a herd of dog-faced baboons sitting on the edge of the gorge watching us ; they have a regular mane, and look as if they were tippetted. They grunt and bark in an extraordinary manner. The little ones have no tippets. As among us, constant quarrels go on among them, in which we hear the little ones yelp. Now that I am launched again into these solitudes, and with these extraordinary animals (the camels), I think over my position. I have sent to offer Johannis<sup>1</sup> four conditions and I hope to see Aloula, his great general, near Senheit. If I succeed there I go on to Khartoum, and thence, after a short stay, to Darfur, which is, they say, in revolt ; but I do not believe it. Nothing could exceed the kindness of all the Khedive's dispatches. He has put Zeila, Berberah, and Harrar under me. 'Ask of me and I will give thee to the half of my kingdom.'" And elaborating this theme of the Khedive's confidence in him, Gordon added :—

<sup>1</sup> Johannes, King of Abyssinia.

“ I feel as if I had naught to do with the Government. God must undertake the work, and I am for the moment used as His instrument. I am not one jot, or I suppose I must say, only very, very slightly elated by the honours and power given me ; and this elation arises from a feeling of satisfaction that H.H. has confidence in me. I think how many would be weighed down by this immense charge ; how they would shrink from accepting it without some help, for fear of their reputation. But for me I must give the question a thought. I feel sure of success ; for I do not lean on my own understanding, and He directs my path. The events of the future are all written, and are mapped out in all their detail for each of us. The Negro, the Arab, and the Bedwin’s course—their meeting with me, etc.—is decreed. How can man claim praise for anything that he does ? ”

When Gordon reached Keren, he was met by a large body of Abyssinian troops in the pay of Egypt. Four of their officers were jet black Sudanese who had served under Bazaine in Mexico. Among those who came forward to meet him was “ a man with a very white face, dressed as the Abyssinians are, viz. in a sheet wrapped around him.” Gordon could not make him out, and addressed him in French, receiving to his surprise, in the Queen’s English, the reply : “ I am an Irishman. My name is Macilvrey. I came out here with Consul Cameron.” But neither black officers nor Irish Abyssinian subjects could help Gordon to any appreciable extent in his solution of the Egypto-Ethiopian muddle. The best thing that he could do was to mark time and keep matters from coming to a head. His new and vast province demanded his attention. He could not tarry in Abyssinia longer than was absolutely necessary to secure his frontiers from immediate attack.

As Gordon hurried across country to Khartoum he stopped for the day at a place called Katarif. “ There

was a great fête," according to his notes, "as we came into this settlement, and I noticed a very odd thing. There were a number of men in regular chain-shirts of links, with a gorget; they reached to their feet. They had helmets of iron, with a nose-piece and fringe of chain-armor. They rode on horses which had a head and cheek defence, and were covered with a sort of quilt of different colours that reached down to their feet. It reminded me of the fêtes at Charlton, where they used to represent the ancient tournaments. All their swords were like the ancient Crusaders'—straight, two-handed, and cross-hilted. Evidently these people have not changed since the Crusades."

A letter written by Gordon while his mind was still dominated by this atmosphere of bygone days shows how strongly he was committed to slavery "Regulation" as opposed to "Prohibition". He spoke of stopping slave-raids, but said nothing about suppressing domestic slavery. Here are his exact words. They bear the date of 22nd April, 1877:—

"With terrific exertion, in two or three years' time, I may, with God's administration, make a good province, with a good army, and a fair revenue, and peace and an increased trade, and also have suppressed slave-raids; and then I will come home and go to bed, and never get up again till noon every day and never walk more than a mile."

But while it was thus Gordon's ambition not to walk more than a mile a day, the very next morning he set out on a camel trek which averaged 45 miles a day, during which biting beetles in myriads made his life hideous. On the last night of this portion of the journey there were at least eighty large beetles on his night-shirt—pyjamas were unknown to his generation—when he lighted his candle.

As soon as Gordon reached Khartoum he began to elaborate his plans for slavery "Regulation". His words deserve careful attention. They are a permanent

memorial to his abiding common sense and the sanity of his idealism. Had the world at large grasped how Gordon felt upon these crucial subjects either British public opinion would not have forced the Gladstone Ministry to send him to the Sudan after the death of General Hicks or the English nation, having insisted upon his nomination, with full knowledge of his attitude towards slavery, would have compelled Her Majesty's Government to nominate Zobeir and thus, perhaps, have saved Gordon's life. Fate willed, however, that what he wrote on 4th May, 1877, should be known to but a small circle. The Anti-Slavery Society does not appear to have caught the significance of his words. Yet they were perfectly clear, and were published to the world in 1881. There is nothing open to misconstruction about such language as this :

“ I have no easy task before me, but (D.V.) I have solved the difficulty. My scheme is not yet matured or approved. You have little idea of the great difficulty, and the many questions involved in it, viz. in domestic slavery. First, I have to disband some 6,000 Turks and *Bashi-Bazouks*, who are the frontier guards, and who must be replaced, for they let the caravans pass. You might as well order the sea to stop the caravans as these men. Now, think of disbanding suddenly 6,000 men. You must do it neatly : you must see to replace them with trustworthy men. Let me ask, who that had not the Almighty with him could do that ? I have the Almighty with me and I will do it. Second, consider the effect of harsh measures among an essentially Musulman population carried out brusquely by a Nazarene—measures which touch the pocket of everyone. Who that had not the Almighty with him would dare to do that ? I will do it. . . . As Solomon asked, I ask wisdom to govern this great people ; and not only will He give me it but all else besides. And why ? Because I value not the ‘ all besides ’.”

Having thus unbosomed himself, Gordon went on to say that :—

“ I am quite as averse to slavery and even more so than most people. I show it by sacrificing myself in these lands, which are no Paradise. I have naught to gain in name or riches. I do not care what man may say. I do what I think is pleasing to my God, and, as far as man goes, I need nothing from anyone.”

Gordon having thus planted his feet firmly upon the ground, thought of the Khedive and of the criticisms which had been directed against that Monarch. He wrote that :—

“ The Khedive never had directly gained any revenue from slaves. I now hold his place here ; and I, who am on the spot with unlimited power, am able to judge how impotent he, at Cairo, is to stop the slave-trade. I can do it with God’s help and I have the conviction He had destined me to do it ; for it was much against my will that I came here again.”

After thus insisting that he had been chosen by the Almighty to stop the slave trade and after saying nothing about domestic slavery, Gordon continued :—

“ It is only my firm conviction that I am only an instrument put in use for a time that enables me to bear up ; and in my present state during my long, long, weary rides I think my thoughts better and clearer than I should with a companion. Any European would be a disadvantage at present. They are not always wise, are apt to be too energetic, and would thus get me into scrapes. I have upset so many vested interests, that the only people I can count on are the *Ulema*, to whom I gave back all their ancient privileges, which had been taken away from them by Ismail Pasha Yacoub.”

After having thus given proof of his keen psychological insight by making it to the interest of the intellectual and religious aristocracy of the capital to support his administration, Gordon gave

further evidence of the practical trend of his mind by working out a scheme of slavery control which had nothing intolerant about it, but was, in reality, as well conceived a device for suffocating slavery and depriving it of vitality as the brain of man could have evolved. It was Machiavellian in its subtleness, simple in its mechanism, and innocuous in its form. It was just the type of life-extinguisher than an idealist who was primarily a realist was best fitted to invent. Here is what is said of a measure which reveals him as a statesman with the deftness of touch of a master legislator :—

“ I hope I have solved the slave question, by recommending to H.M. Consul-General, Mr. Vivian, the following scheme : 1st, By enforcing the law which compels runaway slaves to return to their masters, except when cruelly treated. 2nd, By requiring masters to register their slaves prior to 1st January, 1878. 3rd, By not enforcing law No. 1 if not so registered. 4th, By stopping all registration of slaves after 1st January, 1878.”

Gordon's own words show the idea which he had at the back of his mind when he proposed these rules. He said :—

“ By this I prevent, after 1st January, 1878, any new slaves being considered as property, which they are rightly considered to be until either the masters are compensated or a term of years has elapsed—we here being in the same state now as the West Indian colonies were at the passing of the Abolition of Slavery Act.”

It was, nevertheless, in dealing with foreign slave-owners that Gordon gave the outstanding example not only of his clearness of vision but of a shrewdness which amounts to canniness. He spoke of “ the European holders of slaves in these parts ”. But his worldly-wise sixth sense visualized more particularly those Christians and Jews—and, perhaps, a few

Muslims—not only of Egyptian birth but of Egyptian ancestry, who, established in Egypt for generations, managed then—and still manage—by some hocus-pocus to acquire foreign protection. These men, who to all outward appearance were Egyptians, who lived as Egyptians, and who had no stake in any land other than Egypt, nevertheless had foreign passports, and were, technically speaking, what the French call *ressortissants* of foreign nations. Blended into the local landscape, they were not amenable to local laws, and grew rich by fattening upon the special privileges which their position made available to them. Such a manifest anomaly filled Gordon with disgust, and he went in search of these parasites. His first Khartoum letter thus deals with them :—

“ I also meditate an attack upon the European holders of slaves in these parts. If they declare that they are foreign subjects I mean to liberate their slaves ; if they say they are Egyptian subjects I shall tax them heavily. Europeans come here, hold slaves, cultivate the ground and pay no taxes. I won't have this.” Then, with that quickness of perception which always distinguished him from his fellows, he foresaw that the Anti-Slavery Society interests would probably criticize him for not taking even more severe measures. He therefore showed that he was prepared to brave such attacks, fully conscious of their driving force, for he added :—

“ You will think I might do more. I cannot. Slaves are, to all intents and purposes, property until their owners are compensated, or till a certain number of years has elapsed. We cannot compensate, but we can decree their liberation after a certain number of years.”

Gordon, after having thus defended himself, consolidated his position by insisting once more upon his fetish. It was that “ Slave-hunting must be put down ”. Just as Cato of old kept ever repeating “ *Carthago*

*delenda est*”, so did the Scotsman always insist that “slave-hunting must be put down. But,” he continued in this memorable letter, “when men see that they have no more hold over slaves acquired after 1st January, 1878, they will not buy them. At any rate, slaves acquired after that date can run away, and the Government will not force them to go back. I consider this will succeed.”

Gordon had been greatly impressed by Ismail’s trust in him. Knowing that the procedure outlined in this letter meant the eventual death-knell of domestic slavery in Egypt, he thought that it was but fair to the Khedive to add :—

“ I feel that I have been most unjust to the Khedive, knowing, as I now do, the great difficulties in abolishing slavery. That the question of domestic slavery is no easy one, the debates on the abolition of slavery in our colonies will show. There it was a question of colonies only ; here it is a question of home interests. You are no doubt better versed than I am in the history of our Abolition of Slavery. Men possessed slaves ; to liberate them without compensation was ruin to the owners, and our people, feeling that to do so would be robbery, did compensate them. Now in our case England dealt only with a colony. The question did not affect us directly ; but still she gave compensation. How different is this case ! Here slavery abolition touches everyone. How can you deal with it so as to avoid a servile war or a rising of the people ? You must either pay compensation or you must allow a term of years in order that slavery may die out.”

It was a statesman who wrote these lines. Broadness of vision, boldness of conception, and deftness of touch are their predominant characteristics. But modesty and self-effacement—Christianity in its purest sense—were the touchstones of Gordon’s very nature. His pen, accordingly, glided easily from such

expressions of statecraft to the words of a man of God. He wrote :—

“ I have an enormous province to look after, but it is a great blessing to me to know that God has undertaken the administration of it and it is His work, not mine. If I fail, it is His will ; if I succeed it is His work. Certainly, He has given me the joy of not regarding the honours of this world, and to value my union with Him above all things. May I be humbled to the dust and fail, so that He may glorify Himself. The greatness of my position only depresses me, and I cannot help wishing that the time had come when He will lay me aside and use some other worm to do His work. You have reached your happy eventide. I would that the head of my life-day was over, but He will aid me, and not suffer me again to put down anchors in this world.”

## CHAPTER X

### INSPECTS DARFUR

AFTER he had fixed the broad outlines of his anti-slavery campaign, Gordon looked round for a moment in order to get his domestic bearings. He found that he was "guarded like an ingot of gold", and that the etiquette of the Palace was most irksome. "If I get up," he wrote, "everyone does the same. It is a misery, and I now feel what work princes must go through. I take advantage of their ignorance to say to the *sheikhs* 'Now, old bird, it is time for you to go'; they are delighted."

While Gordon was endeavouring to learn the ropes of Egyptian etiquette, the sister of Ismail Pasha Yacoub, his predecessor, brought home to him the plain fact that Oriental women are powers in the land—or, at all events, in the household. It seems that the Pasha took his removal with fairly good grace, but that when his sister heard the news "she broke all of the windows of the Palace—some hundred and thirty—and cut the divan in pieces out of spite."<sup>1</sup>

Gordon does not tell us what he did to get this belligerent lady out of the Sudan. He says nothing of having had the windows put in order. If he did it certainly took him months to do so, as it is very improbable that there were then 130 panes of glass in the entire Sudan. He passed straight on to more important problems, and records that he did away with flogging and arranged that anyone who had a grievance could drop a petition in a kind of lion's mouth rigged up at the entrance to his palace. He

<sup>1</sup> Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 230. Unless otherwise indicated, all statements of fact in this chapter are based upon this work.

also made immediate arrangements to leave for his inspection of the province of Darfur.

Gordon drew up for himself a schedule of ninety-seven days of camel-riding. He felt that the exercise would do him good, for, as he expressed it :—

“ I am a sufferer from the courash of Baker, a kind of eczema. It is very trying, just as if you were being bitten by mosquitoes all night. Baker says that it comes from the water. It attacks the extremities—the itching is intolerable at night. Truly this country is no Paradise ! Suffer as people may in England, it is one comfort that those who are well do not suffer. Here, whether you are well or ill, you have enough physical sufferings to make you realize your feebleness.”

Gordon had barely started on his long journey when he felt it his duty to record that “ the Khedive is exceedingly kind to me in every way, and I will use my very life to aid him ”. And after having thus renewed his expressions of esteem for his chief, the Governor-General brought out the fact that he had been mistaken in assuming, when on his way to Khartoum, that Darfur was not in revolt. His more recent information was that not only was the province up in arms but that the garrisons of Fascher, Dara, and Kolkol were besieged. Some two years later Gordon thus laconically described the situation :—

“ You know all about the Darfur affair, when Hassan Pasha had some 16,000 men and *I relieved him* with 300.”

But if his presence played a preponderating part in putting down the revolt in Darfur, he had his hands full when wrestling with the slavery problem as there presented. He thus summed up the situation :—

“ The immense difficulty there is in causing this slave traffic to cease has now come home to me. I wish one of the Anti-Slavery Society, capable of understanding the question, would come here and give me a solution of it. I have complete power—civil as well

as military. No one would say a word if I put one or ten men to death ; and therefore I must be considered entirely responsible if the slave-trade goes on ; but here is my position. Darfur and Kordofan are peopled by huge Bedwin tribes under their own *sheikhs*, who are rather more than semi-independent. The country, for the most part, is a vast desert, with wells few and far between, some of which are only known to these tribes. Some of these tribes can put from 2,000 to 6,000 horse or camel-men into the field ; and a revolt, as I know to my cost, is no small thing in such a country. Now these tribes raid on the Negro tribes to the south, or else exchange cloth for slaves with the Bedwin tribes beyond even the pretended boundary of Egypt. The slaves thus enter the Egyptian territory four or five at a time. Nothing could prevent their coming in a hundred at a time, for we have no range of sentinels on our border like the Cossacks of Russia."

We have no difficulty in grasping what was running through Gordon's mind as he wrote this report. No better proof of the subordination of the idealist to the realist in him need be adduced than such language as has just been quoted. It is obvious that he recognized the practical difficulties with which he was confronted in fighting slavery in Darfur and Kordofan. Had he been an Abolitionist in the sense in which the equally high-minded Lloyd Garrison, the equally high-principled Wendell Philipps, or the equally high-spirited John Brown, were abolitionists, he would have refused to accept the realities of life, and, by attempting the impossible, would have paved the way for letting hundreds of slaves into Egypt in the vain hope of keeping out a paltry half-dozen. He had no great industrial "North" and no inexhaustible supplies of Irish and German immigrants whom he could turn into soldiers to fight for the cause of human liberty. He therefore

looked the facts in the face and complacently accepted a leak in a pipe as something infinitely preferable to an avalanche.

After having emphasized the radical difference between "the slave caravans of a hundred at a time" and "little caravans of four or five at a time", Gordon set his jaw as fire flashed from his soulful eyes, and wrote, with a ring of sincerity that carries conviction :

"I therefore say that the large caravans, with the *sheybas*,<sup>1</sup> will cease, and I consider have ceased ; but that it is impossible to prevent slaves passing down in small numbers with the petty merchants ; and I do not think it will ever be prevented until the frontier of Egypt extends up to the Negro frontier—if then."

A letter written by Gordon to his sister on 7th June, 1877, shows that in his heart of hearts he was convinced that by putting down the revolt in Darfur, he had really injected the virus of dissolution into the octopus of slavery. In fact, in his letter to his beloved Augusta, he spoke of "the deathblow I think slavery has received", and he continued in a tone so typical of his spiritual exaltation that his words are almost a portrait of his soul :—

"It would be a long story to tell of this accomplishment, and you will know it more completely in a future life. Praying for the people whom I am about to visit gives me much strength, and it is wonderful *how something seems already to have passed between us* when I meet with a chief (for whom I have prayed) for the first time. . . . I have really no troops with me, but I have the Shekinah, and I do like trusting to Him and not to man. Remember, unless He gave me the confidence and encouraged me to trust Him, I could not feel it, so I consider in this confidence I have the earnest of success."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A *sheyba* was a heavy yoke that was fastened to the neck of slaves, writes Dr. Schweinfurth in *Darkest Africa*, vol. ii, p. 414.

<sup>2</sup> *Letters of General C. G. Gordon to his Sister*, p. 140.

Had Gordon been a sectarian, in the sense of adhering so uncompromisingly to a cult as to refuse to see good in any form of worship that was not his own, the intensity of his faith as portrayed in this letter might possibly have tended to warp his liberalism and to convert a zealot into a bigot. The line of demarcation between an intensely religious man and a blind partizan is sometimes—though far from always—shadowy. What made Gordon's spiritual uplift so all-compelling in its influence was not only the nobility of his outlook upon life but the ingrained fairness of the man. One incident will suffice to drive this point home. It shows that while Muslims looked upon him as being a militant Christian *marabout* they loved him for his religious convictions. It appears, writes Gordon, that :—

“ When the Egyptians seized the country they took the mosque here (at Dara in the Darfur district) for a powder magazine. I had it cleaned out and restored for worship, and endowed the priests and the crier, and had a great ceremony at the opening of it. This is a great *coup*. They blessed me and cursed Zobeir Pasha who took the mosque from them.”

There was practical politics in Gordon's act. This is obvious from his reference to his “ great *coup* ”. But the next lines of the same letter show that the political strategist had a heart which rose above mere tactical exigencies. It continues :—

“ To me it appears that the Mussulman worships God as well as I do, and is as acceptable, if sincere, as any Christian. What caused the lot to fall on those who occupy the ‘ Hill ’ to be born in Christian lands, while others are born in Mussulman lands ? ”

It was such statements as these, and not considerations of expediency, that won for Gordon that secure place in the hearts of the Muslim blacks which enabled him, all alone in the Sudan, to hold his power for month after month in the face of the Mahdi.

And the mention of that *Sheikh*, who finally wore down the Scotsman's almost superhuman resistance, calls attention to the fact that his next letter begins with the ominous words : " Still waiting ! "

Such seems ever to have been his lot in the Sudan. Had he been superstitious, instead of being merely a believer in Predestination, this continuous, never-ending waiting would have driven home to him the lesson, that the gods were seeking to warn him that one day he would wait in vain and find a bloody grave because " too late " had already been inscribed in the ledger of his life. His exact words on 24th July, 1877, were :—

" Still waiting ! I expect the troops which went out on an expedition in two days' time. I have no news from Fascher or from Shaka, and am worn to a shadow with doing nothing for days and days."

Three days later Gordon heard of his expeditionary force. It had had a two days' battle. It had run into a flock of Gallabats or " petty merchants on donkeys. It is they that take the slaves from those who make the raids. They are the vultures."

Notwithstanding all that Gordon had said in June as to the days of large slave caravans being over, this expedition captured 210 slaves. The Governor-General was no doubt greatly surprised to have received this emphatic proof that he had been too optimistic. His notes fail to disclose how he felt. All he remarked was that :—

" These 210 are either slaves which were owned by the tribe, or else these are Furs, i.e. natives of Darfur. If they are Furs then they are Mussulmans and ought to be set free ; if they are slaves who have been possessed by the vanquished tribes then they need not be given back."

Gordon's practical mind was in a quandary. His heart was rent in twain. " It is a sad sight to see the poor little starved creatures looking so wistfully at

one," he remarked, only to add "what can I do? I could only address the Arabs with me, and tell them that if they took Mussulmans as slaves they did it against the command of the Qurân; and I took sand and washed my hands in order that they might see I put on them the responsibility of the decision. What could I do? Poor souls, I cannot feed or look after them. I must leave it to God, who will arrange all in kindness. . . . I declare solemnly that I would give my life willingly to save the sufferings of these people; and if I would do this, how much more does He care for them than such imperfection as I am."

Gordon played his cards admirably. Notwithstanding his appearance of confiding innocence and of trustful simplicity, he was a reader of the hearts of men. He understood how to make the sons of the desert yield to his wishes without seeking vainly to impose his authority. When he imitated Pontius Pilate and washed his hands, his eyes were riveted upon those who surrounded him. He drove home the significance of his gesture in a way which carried, not a command from a Nazarene, but a message from Allah. He was therefore able to record later on the same day that :—

"I am glad to say my Arabs have decided on letting the captives go free. They went, 235 of them, arm-in-arm like a long string. They did this to prevent the vultures, the Gallabats, taking them as slaves, which they wanted to do. They were some poor little wretches, only stomachs and heads with *antennæ* for legs and arms. I wonder whether life is to them as precious as it is to us. The enormous stomachs are from grass feeding."

It would seem from what Gordon wrote at this time that word had drifted through to him that the Anti-Slavery Society was not enthusiastic about him. This caused him to say that he would like to receive the publications of that body and to comment that

“ people think you have only to say the word and slavery will cease ”.

“ Of course, I must let time soften the ill effects of what is written against me in the papers, on account of my purchasing the slaves now in the possession of individuals in order to obtain the troops necessary to put down slavery,” he wrote, “ I need troops—how am I to get them but thus ? If I do not buy these slaves, unless I liberate them at once, they still remain slaves, while when they are soldiers they are free from that reproach. I cannot liberate them from their owners without compensation, for fear of a general revolt. I cannot compensate the owners and then let the men go free, for they would only be a danger.”

Had Gordon wanted to do so he could have added a still stronger argument in support of his point of view. He might have quoted an official letter written on 16th November, 1865, by Chérif Pasha, then Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, to Charles Hale, Diplomatic Agent and Consul-General of the United States of America at Cairo. The Egyptian statesman said that :—

“ In virtue of a principle made applicable as long ago as the reign of Muhammad Ali all slaves enrolled under the flag become free with rights of freedom.”<sup>1</sup>

Gordon had, in all probability, never seen this particular letter, but he knew the principle enunciated in it. Yet he feared that his close friends would be annoyed by the attacks of the Anti-Slavery Society, for he said :—

“ I want you to understand this, for I doubt not people will write and say : (1) ‘ Colonel Gordon buys slaves for the Government ’; (2) ‘ Colonel Gordon lets the Gallabats take slaves.’ To No. 1 I say : ‘ True, for I need the purchased slaves, to put down the slave-dealers, and to break up their semi-independent bands.’ To No. 2 I say : ‘ True, for I dare not stop

<sup>1</sup> Records American Consulate, Alexandria, Egypt, No. 758, 1865.

it to any extent for fear of adding to my enemies, before I have broken up the nest of slave-dealers at Shaka.' I should be mad if I did. We should not, if at war with Russia, choose that moment to bring about any change affecting the social life of the Hindoos. The slaves I buy are already torn from their homes, and whether I buy them or not, they will, till twelve years have elapsed, remain slaves. After twelve years they will be free, according to the Treaty. It is not as if I encouraged raids for the purpose of getting slaves as soldiers. But people will, of course, say : 'By buying slaves you increase the demand and indirectly encourage raids.' I say : 'Yes, I should do so, if after buying them, I still allowed the raids to continue, which, of course, I shall not do.'

We see from Gordon's language that, while he was intensely religious, he had the combative spirit of Saint Paul. There was nothing of the retiring Saint John in him. He had the energy, the fire, the militancy of a Crusader. But behind all his combativeness loomed ever the constructive genius which he had inherited from the race of hard-headed merchants who made up his maternal ancestry. He looked at every problem from the point of view of a practical man of affairs, however mystical may have been his religious reaction to it. So, while ever conscious of the ethical and economic aspects of the slavery question, he never ceased to accentuate the routine, humdrum, matter-of-fact phase of the issue. He was in the wilds of Africa. He was not seated in a comfortable armchair before a cosy fire studying an abstract problem. He was face to face with a living reality which translated into terms of flesh and blood, of men and women, the theories which read so well in print, sound so convincing in the pulpit, and make such admirable propaganda for home consumption. He accordingly wrote :—

“ This slave question is most troublesome and difficult to manage. A number of the slaves who were

taken in the last raid made near here on the sly by the Gallabats refuse to go back, for they find they are better fed with their new masters than they were with their old."

What was Gordon to do when faced with such a situation? The London Anti-Slavery Society had possibly never envisaged an issue of this kind. Yet to the man on the spot it represented a concrete, routine, pressing problem. His own words applied to a similar subject should be cited. They show that there was nothing impulsive, headstrong, or whimsical about Gordon. They demonstrate, on the contrary, that he carefully pondered all the many sides of his mission and that he took his decisions promptly not only because he was a soldier but also because the subject suddenly presented to him was, in many cases, one which he had earnestly considered for days and days. There was something of the Daniel Boone in Charles George Gordon. The Kentucky pioneer was always repeating "Be sure you're right, then go ahead". Such was invariably the line of conduct followed by the Scotsman. Not caprice or fleeting fancy, but deep thought and settled convictions were the spark that put his dynamic personality into action. The words that follow bring this out:—

"One thing troubles me. What am I to do with the three or four thousand slaves, women, and children, that are now at Shaka if we take it? I cannot take them back to their own country. I cannot feed them. Solve this problem for me. I must let them be taken by my auxiliaries, or by my soldiers or the merchants. There is no help for it. If I let them loose they will be picked up, in every direction, for an escaped slave is like an escaped sheep—the property of him who finds him or her. One must consider what is best for the individual himself, not what may seem best to the judgment of Europe." And after thus approaching the consideration of the impending problem from

a point of view which probably had never struck an Abolitionist, Gordon went on to say : “ It is the slave who suffers, not Europe.”

It is clear, then, that the Governor-General’s heart was in the right place. It was attuned, not to the tempo of a *solfeggio*, but to the gamut of the scale of humanity. His intellect caught the message of his love for mankind and inspired him to write : “ There is not the slightest doubt but that if I let the slaves be taken by my soldiers, by the tribes, or by the Gallabat merchants, instead of there being a cessation of the slave caravans there will be a great increase of them for two or three months, and a corresponding outcry against me. But, at any rate, the slaves will go by frequented routes, and will not die on the road. I could let the matter solve itself, i.e. let the slaves stay as they are, and let the owners run the cordon as they best can ; but I should thus cause the slaves to undergo great suffering, and perhaps cause the death of one-half of them. Shall I be cowardly and do this, for fear of what ill-informed Europe may say ? ”

Anyone who knows Gordon has no difficulty in divining his answer to this question. His reply has no apologetic note in it. It is that of a fighter, of a combatant who is angry but whose ire is that of righteous indignation, kept under control by a mind which rises above passion. Here are his words :—

“ No, I will legitimize their transport and let them say what they will. There are the slaves ; around them the hungry vultures, and only one man to protect them, and that man has no means of feeding them or of sending them back to their friends. Had I a strong man to help me, who could stay at Shaka and see each slave personally, and ask him his wish, it would be better ; but that man is not forthcoming, and there is only one man who could do it, viz. Burton ” (the African traveller).

Gordon then forgot he was the Governor-General,

and sought to place himself in Burton's shoes. We read :—

“ Strange to say, these wretched slaves have their likes and their dislikes. Some would sooner go with the Gallabat merchants, some with the tribes, and some with the soldiers. They are of different minds. Even if they could, they would not go back to their desolate homes ; if they did, they would be attacked by more powerful tribes, and be made slaves to them. Their own country is probably a desert, their people dispersed, and the land run over with weeds. It would be a long time ere they could get their crops again.”

And while thus considering what he should do when the responsibility of dealing with so many slaves should be thrust upon him, Gordon looked further into the horoscope of the future and observed :—

“ It makes one wink to think how on earth the slaves of all of these Bedwin tribes are to be freed in twelve years! Who is to free them? Will Great Britain? When the trees hear my voice and obey me then will the tribes liberate their slaves. The only thing the Government can do is to prevent their getting new ones.”

## CHAPTER XI

### FINISHES HIS INSPECTION

WHILE Gordon was thus meditating what he should do when in possession of Shaka, he had other problems of a nature which called for more immediate decision. His cavalry returned one afternoon bringing in some prisoners, among them a well-known chief, who, overcome by thirst, had surrendered. The Governor-General pardoned the rebel, and sent him to tell his tribesmen to give up their spears and come and drink.

The swearing of the forgiven leader to fealty was somewhat curious. A Qurân was sent for and a clean cloth. The holy book of Islam must not be touched by "unclean" hands, though it came out of the insect-infested breast-pocket of one of the True Believers. It was opened, and a passage read, which the penitent repeated. He then washed his hands in the sands of the desert, recited some other words, and the ceremony was finished.

The night which followed was very windy. The gale drove a number of scorpions into Gordon's tent. He managed to kill six of them, two of which were 5 inches long. It is obvious that his sleep was disturbed, between the wind whistling without and scorpions running about within. But the hemmed-in capital, Fascher, summoned him to hurry forward, and he lost no time getting under way. After an abominable march through 30 miles of quagmire, he reached his objective on 18th August as darkness fell. He had 150 men with him. He relieved 600, and two days later, after a most fatiguing ride, he arrived at Kario. This time a thunderstorm welcomed his coming. His camp was a veritable pigsty, and misery stalked around

him. Political unrest had played its part in bringing about this poverty. Gordon hoped that by re-establishing the rule of law and order he could help to alleviate the lot of those who surrounded him.

Having done everything that could be done to that end, the Governor-General made his way to Dara. He covered the distance of about 85 miles in a day and a half. About 7 miles from that place, while still in the desert, the expedition ran into a swarm of flies which annoyed Gordon and his camel so much that he annihilated space and outran the others. "Upwards of 300 flies were on the camel's head," he wrote, "and I was covered with them. I suppose that the queen fly was among them. If I had no escort of men I had a large escort of these flies. I came on my people like a thunderbolt. As soon as they had recovered, the salute was fired. My poor escort! Where is it? Imagine to yourself a single, dirty, red-faced man on a camel ornamented with flies—arriving in the divan all of a sudden. The people could not believe their eyes."<sup>1</sup>

The Orient revels in pomp and solemnity. It is dangerous, in those parts, for a potentate to descend from his pedestal. But Gordon, of course, was above all ordinary rules. He was *sui generis* or, as the Arabs say, *foq el kanun*—above the law. But it is hazardous to press matters too far. The Scotsman was too good a psychologist to attempt to do so. Under the pressure of these flies he had brushed aside conventionality and had ridden pell-mell into Dara. His own pen can best describe how he followed up this unceremonious entry.

"No dinner after my long ride, but a quiet night, forgetting my miseries. At dawn I got up, and putting on the golden uniform the Khedive gave me, went out to see my troops, and then mounted my horse, and

<sup>1</sup> Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 271. All other citations in this chapter, unless otherwise stated, are from this work.

with an escort of my robber *Bashi-Bazouks*, rode out to the camp of the other robbers three miles off. I was met by the son of Zobeir—a nice-looking lad of twenty-two years—and rode through the robber bands. There were about 3,000 of them—men and boys. I rode to the tent in the camp; the whole body of chiefs were dumbfounded at my coming among them. After a glass of water I went back, telling the son of Zobeir to come with his family to my divan.”

It took sheer nerve on Gordon's part for him to beard this bandit chieftain in his den. The name of Zobeir will subsequently play a large part in our story, as we trace the tragic end of the Governor-General. For the moment, suffice it to say that that chief and his son were powers in the land, whereas Gordon was a lone white in a sea of blacks, and had nothing to fall back upon in the long run other than his strength of character and the prestige of his great name.

“But,” as Gordon himself put it, “they all came, and sitting in a circle I gave them in choice Arabic my ideas: that they meditated revolt; that I knew it; and that they should now have my ultimatum, viz. that I would disarm them and break them up. They listened in silence and they went off to consider what I had said. They have just now sent me a letter stating their submission and I thank God for it. They have pillaged the country all around, and I cannot help it. I feel very sorry for the poor people, for they were my allies at Wadar, and through their absence with me their possessions were exposed to the attacks of these scoundrels. What misery! But the Higher than the Highest regardeth it and can help them. I cannot.”

It appears, however, that Zobeir's son sought to break his plighted troth. And, to add to his deceit, he asked for robes to be given him, such as were generally bestowed as a mark of favour. Gordon flatly refused to comply, and told the young man some

very plain truths. Those who were present were completely taken aback by such frankness. "The chiefs are disgusted with me for not using treachery," is the way Gordon summed up the situation, "but I will not do it *coûte que coûte*. Even putting aside moral considerations, *it never pays*."

Gordon thus held his own at a moment when he had not the least confidence in his officers or in his men. He feared that he would have to make his "Absalom", Zobeir's son, a prisoner, together with his three adherents, for "the little chap is very irate—in fact furious". But the youthful traitor preferred to decamp. Four chiefs and 1,400 men accompanied him to Shaka. Ten of his lieutenants and 1,500 of his soldiers refused to follow him and adhered to Gordon's colours. The net result was that the young rebel saw that he had over-reached himself. He accordingly wrote the Scotsman a letter which the latter thus summarizes :—

"He was my son (undutiful enough I thought) and I his father, etc., and would I give him a government? I have replied to him that I am glad to hear he gives in, but that until he either goes to Cairo to salute His Highness or else shows some other proof of his fidelity, I would never give him a place, even if refusing it costs me my life."

This summary refusal to trust a man who had broken his word brings out the fact that Gordon proclaimed :

"I want in each Governor three qualities : (1) Courage ; (2) Honesty ; and (3) Kindness. I find men with No. 1 who lack No. 2 and No. 3. I find men—few, it is true—with Nos. 2 and 3 who lack No. 1. I cannot find one man with the three qualities. No. 1 is never very prominent."

But if Zobeir's son failed to get the office, he was, nevertheless, forced to bite the dust. This caused Gordon, as he approached Shaka, to write :—

"There are some 6,000 more slave-dealers in the

interior, who will obey me now that they have heard that Zobeir's son and other chiefs have given in. You can imagine what a difficulty there is in dealing with all these armed men. . . . Would you shoot them? Have they no rights? Are they not to be considered? Had the planters no rights? Did not our Government allow slave-trading? Do you know that cargoes of slaves came into Bristol harbour in the time of our fathers?"

We have here but one more proof of how hard Gordon strove to understand the other man's point of view. All that he asked in return was that his attitude towards slavery might be grasped. It was, as he expressed it at this same date, 11th September, 1877:—

"I will do what I like and what God in His Mercy may direct me to do about domestic slavery; but I will break the neck of slave-raids even if it cost me my life."

With such sentiments inspiring him, Gordon entered "the slave-nest Shaka". "Only one foreigner—an American named Mason—had ever been there before." Gordon had already made up his mind regarding the treatment he would mete out to the slavers. He found the town "full of slaves" and left there saying: "I hope that the Shaka business is satisfactorily disposed of, but looking at the mass of slaves there it will be a long time ere that work is ended." And as he wended his way toward El Obeid, he could not help smiling as he wrote:—

"*Entre nous* I think I am conveying from Shaka to Obeid a caravan of slaves. I cannot help it. One man says that the seven women who are with him are his wives! I cannot disprove it. There are a number of children—the men say that they are their offspring! When you have got the ink which has soaked into blotting-paper out of it, then slavery will cease in these lands."

The practical difficulty which confronted Gordon

in his fight against slavery is exemplified by an incident which happened to him the day after he ran into this man with seven wives. Here is his version of it :—

“ This morning I came on a caravan of slaves, which is accompanying me—some sixty or eighty men, women, and children chained. What am I to do ? If I release them who could care for them or feed them ? Their homes were too far to send them to ; so I decided to make the slave-merchant take off their chains as scandalous, and then to leave them with him. He, looking at them as valuable cows, will look well after them. Don Quixote would have liberated them, and made an attempt to send them back some forty days’ march, through hostile tribes, to their homes—which they would never have reached. The slave-merchant had done no harm in buying them, for it is permissible in Egypt, and he had not taken them from their homes. The only remedy is to stop slave-raids on the frontier ; and this will only be done when I have put the slave-traders’ *seribas* under my own people. You must stop it at its source. Once the slaves have left the source it is useless to try. The frontier is the place on which to stop it.”

The same letter which tells us that Gordon was not a Don Quixote but a strong-minded Briton gives us also an insight into certain of the hardships which became part of his life :—

“ The water on the way consists of pools of rain. Caravan A comes and drinks and bathes in it ; then Caravan B comes and does the same ; then Caravan C, and so on. It is dreadful ; but I have given up all ideas of this sort. I have no pleasure in eating or drinking and do both to keep myself alive ; and, with these ideas, it makes little matter if the water is a solution of blacks or not.” He drew a moral from all this. Only a born optimist could have written :—

“ If I were fastidious, I should be as many weeks as I am now days on the road ; I gain a great deal of

*prestige* by these unheard-of marches. It makes the people fear me much more than if I were slow. I consider that the camel, though wonderful in endurance, has been overrated in this respect ; they cannot go ten days consecutively without being considerably distressed. Six days is the average for good camels."

Gordon was, perhaps, unfair to "the ships of the desert". He was no ordinary man. The reputation of camels was and is based upon their adaptability to the use of ordinary mortals, not to the demands of such an exceptional person as the Governor-General. Yet on 23rd September this human machine with a heart of gold was forced to record :—

"I am tired out to-day—what with the camel riding, the troubles of the government and the incessant work. No Sundays ever come to me now ; it is every, every day the same thing—work from morning to night, either on camel or in my tent. I calculate that when I get to Obeid I shall have ridden on camels 2,300 miles since I left Massawah in March (that is to say in six months) ; and what a great many more I have to ride ere I finish this year." Such a feat of endurance performed under the most trying climatic and physical conditions once more brings out the fact that Lytton Strachey and Sir Richard Burton were absolutely mistaken in inferring that Gordon was a periodical and secret drinker. No man could have lived through what he did who was not temperate and abstemious. He was forty-three years of age when he gave such proofs of resistance, and he had already spent many years out of England.

Gordon appeared, however, to attach no importance to his exceptional stamina. He mentions the subject merely incidentally. He passes on to speak once again of slavery, remarking that :—

"There is no doubt I could stop the slave-gangs

in one way—viz. by telling the tribes to capture and keep all gangs that pass. They would soon do it, but would use no discrimination and would plunder everyone ; besides which I think the slaves would prefer servitude with the Arabs of the town to servitude with the Bedwins.”

We see that Gordon kept continually harping on the same theme. He wanted to do the right thing by the slaves. He thought in terms of men and women, not of theories and institutions. Here is a story that he tells :—

“ When I was in my hut at Edowa a big black woman crept in. I did not see her come in, but heard her sobs. She could not stay with the Bedwin she was with : so I sent for the man whose slave she was, gave her thirty dollars, and made her give them to him. She then chose another master and had her way. She was a huge woman and had a nice black face.”

Another incident illustrates the same point. It is best told in Gordon’s own words :—

“ When nearing the end of our long weary march I noticed a very small black boy in the path who could not get out of it. As he looked quite a scrap to be left thus in the road, I immediately suspected something ; and on going on I came across a lad with a chain of slaves, and I noticed a number more chained together under some trees. My little friend, who had been put on the croup of my clerk’s camel, denied belonging to the slave-party ; but it was evident that he did so, and that the slavers had pressed their march when they heard I was coming, and the little chap was left behind. . . . Well, I got the whole gang together and told them to go on to the watering place ; for, poor wretches, they would otherwise have been kept there in the sun out of my way. Now, what was I to do ? I could not with the three men undertake the convoy of them to Obeid ; and when there how much better off would they be ? The little chap, perched up behind my clerk, said to him :

‘ Give my master a piece of cloth for me. I should like to stay with you.’ Poor little soul ! He valued himself at a dollar, which is the price of the piece of cloth he named. He said this in quite a ‘ chirpy ’ way, as if he did not think anyone would give more for him. I shall pay for him.”

We are not told how much was given for “ the little chap ”. All that we know is that the deal was made. “ The little boy is like a spider with legs like a fly,” is Gordon’s description of the child. “ He is about seven years of age. He has just come up to return me a biscuit of which he does not approve ; he wants some *dhoora*, which I have not got.” The exigent boy then fades out of the picture, and Gordon, with merely a period to mark the change of subject, goes on to say :—

“ I have not yet made up my mind what to do about the slaves and the slave-question ; but I mean to stop, and that at once, the slave-markets at Katarif, Gallabat, and Shaka ; next, I must prevent the raids on the black tribes near the Bahr Gazelle, for which I have given orders.”

But while thus shaping his policy Gordon recognized the fact that it is public opinion even more than the strong arm of the law which enforces legislation. He was definitely committed to a programme of slavery “ Regulation ”. He was alive to the outstanding difficulties of his task, for he wrote :—

“ In all previous emancipations either there has been a strong government to enforce obedience, or a majority of the nation wished it. Here, in this country, there is not one who wishes it, or who would aid it even by advice. I know there are many who would willingly see the sufferings of the slave-gangs cease and also the raids on the Negro tribes ; but there they would stop. Besides this, the tenure of slaves is the A B C of life here to rich and poor ; *no one* is uninterested in the matter.”

When Gordon spoke of " here " he referred to the Sudan and, more particularly to the Province of Darfur. He meant to, and did, bring out that the economic existence of the Black Country was tied to the chariot-wheels of slavery. This fact, thus emphasized by Gordon, should constantly be borne in mind. It explains the financial unrest which the Mahdi capitalized in 1881 and in the years which followed. It shows that the religious rising which drove Gordon to his grave was born of economic laws rather than of sectarian fanaticism. It demonstrates that, with that keen discernment so characteristic of him, he put his finger on the sore spot in the Sudan when he said that " the tenure of slaves is the A B C of life here to rich and poor."

On 3rd October Gordon reached El Obeid, that town of tragic memory so indissolubly associated with the sad fate of General Hicks. The Governor-General " had a warm reception from the people who were much surprised at the finale at Shaka. I have had to put my trust in God ", continues the writer, " much more than my flesh would have wished—things were so black that human help was evidently useless. Do you know that with a sedentary life people seldom realize the leaning on God, except in sickness or in trade losses—indeed, only when they see *man* cannot help them ? "

It was in this spirit of deeply religious fervour that Gordon returned to Khartoum on 15th October. " The six elephants which had come up from Cairo since I left salaamed me on my arrival," is all that he says of his entry into his capital.

While he had been away on his tour of inspection a Treaty had been entered into between England and Egypt which gave concrete expression to his policy of slavery " Regulation ". Article II of this pact read :—

" Any person engaged in the traffic of slaves,

either directly or indirectly, shall be considered guilty of stealing with murder.”

A decree of His Highness the Khedive was couched in these terms :—

“ Article I. The sale of slaves from family to family shall be prohibited. This prohibition will take effect in seven years in Cairo and in twelve years in the Sudan.

“ Article II. After the lapse of this term of years any infraction of this prohibition will be punished by an imprisonment of from five months to five years.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H. W. Gordon, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

## CHAPTER XII

### SUMMONED TO CAIRO

GORDON was a shadow when he reached Khartoum. But, however emaciated he may have been, within less than a week he was again on the move. This time his tour was planned to cover Berber, Dongola, Wadi Halfa, Asswan, thence across to Berenice on the Red Sea, from that point to Massawah, from there to Bogos, and, by way of Massawah, back to Khartoum.

He had a hard time of it at his capital before getting away. "I hung, at eighteen hours' notice, a noted murderer, which will tend to keep this town quiet for some months," wrote the mild-mannered man. "You can have little idea of the amount of work I have to do, and I never have a Sunday or a day of rest. . . . Were it not for the very great comfort I have in communion with God, and the knowledge that He is Governor-General, I could not get on at all."<sup>1</sup>

One of Gordon's besetting difficulties was that he could not go out without people running after him with petitions asking for their sons to be released from prison. He refused to allow them to be beaten away, as had formerly been the rule. "Your brother is much feared, and I think respected, but not over-much liked," is how he analysed the situation. "His refusals are most definite, and very strongly couched. 'Never,' is the answer to many requests, shouted with a loud voice, and followed with: 'Do you understand?' and 'Have you finished?' The people of the Sudan tremble before your brother. Sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Hill, *op. cit.*, p. 292. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations in this chapter are from this work.

I take my watch and say, 'Now you may talk for an hour.' They do talk for a long time, then I say, 'Have you finished?' They begin again. At last, worn out (for I give them no answer till they say they have finished), I say, 'I will not hear of it.' Then they begin again, and when they own to having finished, I give them the same answer. They then give up and go away. I am a Job for patience in these matters."

It might have been thought that such longanimity would have made Gordon many friends, but he was, perhaps, correct when he said that he was respected but not "overmuch liked". The reason for this was the perennial slavery question. "The tenure of slaves" was, as he expressed it, "the A B C of life" in the Sudan. His reform measures, salutary and conservative though they were, struck at the pockets of the people of Khartoum. "The fêtes (which were called for by his arrival) were somewhat damped by the knowledge that" he "was hatching something about slaves". The proclamation carrying the Khedivial ukase into effect and giving force to the Anglo-Egyptian Anti-Slavery Treaty was scheduled for 3rd November. The people knew it. It touched their purses. It made them lukewarm in their welcome to their Governor-General.

But if this lack of sympathy with Gordon's anti-slavery policy damped the people's enthusiasm for him, it did not dull the sense of recognition of his all-pervading kindness. To them, Government signified paternalism. It meant even more than that. It implied that the chief of State was a patriarch and that their worries were his responsibilities. "The people are most unreasonable," wrote this most forbearing of men; "they expect me to do the Governor's work, and to investigate all squabbles. One man writes that he and his wife have quarrelled, that his neighbour has interfered, and that he wants me to investigate the case. Men telegraph to me, from hundreds of

miles off, to say their slave has escaped ; will I see to it. Now they have a Governor on the spot, as good a one as I can get, and yet they will not go to him."

When Gordon was on his inspection tour of the Darfur district he said something about camels. Of these supercilious-looking beasts, as he was *en route* from Berber to Dongola, he wrote thus :—

"Only gentlemen camels travel ; the ladies stay at home looking after their families ; the boy camels travel with their fathers for a year or so, but carry nothing, so as to accustom them to their work." And after having expounded this bit of desert lore Gordon added :—

"I was very tired last night, and felt as if I should fall off of my camel ; you have but little idea how fatiguing it is. The quiet of the desert is something wonderful—you never hear a sound ; the camel's cushion foot makes no noise ; and the air is perfectly pure."

On 15th December Gordon reached Senheit or Keren and decided to set out for the camp of Walad el Michael, one of the Abyssinian leaders. "The road over two mountains was simply fearful," he wrote. "It was terrible work indeed to scale the last. The camp of Walad el Michael and his brigands is on a sort of plateau on an immense mountain. He has fully 7,000 men here all armed with muskets. They were all drawn up to receive me, and his son met me on the road. Michael was ill, or pretended to be ; I was met by a troop of priests with sacred pictures."

These Christians played a sorry part in the slavery trade. According to the report of the collector of the customs at Gallabat, the frontier Abyssinian town, King Johannes levied blackmail of nearly £20,000 a year upon the slave caravans which passed that strategic point.<sup>1</sup> Their Muhammadan neighbours hold these Oriental Christians in contempt. "Every

<sup>1</sup> *Egypt as it is*, by J. C. McCoan, London, Cassell, Petter & Co., 1877, p. 370.

one at Senheit," said Gordon, "was dead against my coming here, but they could not explain the grounds of their fears, and a sort of instinct kept me to my resolution to face the difficulty. *I do try to think and try to put in practice* that God is the supreme power in the world and that He is Almighty; and though 'Use-your-judgment' people may say 'You tempt God, in putting yourself in positions like my present one,' yet I do not care. . . . If He wills me to fail, so be it."

After having thus found consolation in religion for whatever evils might befall him, Gordon sought in sleep repose for his tired limbs. But the filth of the Abyssinians caused him to be tormented all night with fleas. To make matters worse, a number of priests sang hymns near him, to exorcise him, as he said. But these were fastidious fleas. They like cold, bracing air, and do not descend from the summit of the mountains. They cannot stand hot weather.

Notwithstanding fleas and hymns, Gordon was at his post of duty at an early hour the next morning. He had a long conversation with Michael and urged the chieftain to make peace with King Johannes and beg that monarch's pardon. This latter condition, however, the bandit leader at once said was impossible. He asked, on the contrary, "for more districts to plunder, and Gordon compromised with him by agreeing to pay him £1,000 a month."

Two days later Gordon, that most mild-mannered of men and most Christian of soldiers, did not hesitate to write :—

"How I hate these Abyssinians, Walad el Michael, etc. Their Christianity is only in form, for they seem very little more civilized than the Equatorial tribes. I would care but little for Johannes were it not for the European Governments." And, thinking of the Muslims over whom he ruled, the Governor-General added :—