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THE STORY  
OF  
THE SOUDAN.

BY  
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# THE STORY OF THE SOUDAN.

(*Told from the Parliamentary Papers.*)

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FRIENDS,—The thoughts of England have been turned much during these latter weeks to the Soudan, and as there is the profoundest and most widespread ignorance concerning that vast country, it may, I think, be helpful at the present crisis if I take it as the subject of my lecture this morning, and try to throw some light on that dim strange land.

The country now named the Soudan embraces the whole of Nubia, as well as Kordofan and Darfour. It stretches from Assouan on the first cataract on the Nile southwards as far as the equator; on the east it is bounded by the Red Sea, the kingdom of Abyssinia, and the districts inhabited by the Caffre and Galla tribes; on the South stretch vast deserts inhabited by Gallas, Somalis, and others, who “do not encourage travellers,” and which are “practically almost quite unknown.” (“Report on the Soudan,” by Lieutenant-Colonel Stewart, p. 7 Parliamentary paper, “Egypt, No. 11, 1883.” This document will henceforth be referred to simply as Report). On the West is the Libyan desert inhabited by Bedouin Arabs, and the boundaries are undefined, but run between the 22nd and 30th parallels of longitude. In length about 1650 miles, and at its broadest part from 1200 to 1400 miles, it forms a country, according to General Gordon, covering an area larger than that of France, Germany, and Spain put together, or larger than our Indian Empire.

In this enormous district there are naturally vast differences of race, soil, and climate. “Between Assouan and Khartoum, beyond the narrow strip of cultivation along the Nile, the country is almost a desert, and inhabited by nomads belonging, it is said, to aboriginal tribes. A low range of broken and barren hills separates the Nile valley from the coast. Another low range to the west shuts out the Nile from the Desert of Bayuda. The

climate is dry and enervating. The summer heat is excessive . . . . To the country west of the White Nile, between the parallels of Khartoum and Kaka (about  $11^{\circ}$  latitude) the general appearance is that of a vast steppe, covered with low thorny trees (mimosa, gum-trees, etc.) and prickly grass. Occasionally low groups of bare hills are met with. The villages and the patches of cultivated ground are few and far between. Water is scarce, and stored in wells and trunks of baobab trees. In the extreme west of the Darfour Province the country greatly improves in appearance. The hills are more lofty and continuous, and the cultivation is luxuriant. In summer the heat is excessive. From September to May the climate is dry, with no rain. The rainy season lasts from about the middle of May to the end of September . . . . East of the White Nile, and for some degrees south of the parallel of Khartoum, the country is a well-cultivated and a well-watered plain . . . . From the parallel of Kaka ( $11^{\circ}$  north) to that of Gondokoro ( $5^{\circ}$  north), the country is a perfectly level plain, with huge marshes on both banks of the Nile and the Bahr Ghazelle. South of the Gondokoro to the equator the country becomes more and more mountainous. The forests are everywhere very extensive, and with a large variety of trees, fruit-trees, etc. Water is everywhere abundant, and owing to it the climate to the west of the Nile is unhealthy. The heat is very great" (Report, pp 7, 8).

Taking this description as accurate, we cannot wonder at General Gordon's estimate of the Soudan as a whole: "The Soudan is a useless possession, ever was so, and ever will be so . . . . No one who has lived in the Soudan can escape the reflection, 'What a useless possession is this land.' Few men also can stand its fearful monotony and deadly climate" (Parliamentary paper, Egypt, No. 7, 1884, pp. 2, 3).

Turning to the history of the Soudan, we find that Arabs, crossing the Red Sea from Arabia, settled there in 700 and 800 A.D. These intermarried with the native negroes, and became "known collectively under the name of Fung," and the Fung kingdom spread far and wide. The pure-blooded negroes were constantly attacked by the more warrior mixed race, and were carried captive into slavery; these settled in villages and cultivated the ground, while the Fung tribes were mostly nomadic, their wealth consisting in these slaves, cattle, camels, and horses. In

1786 this Fung kingdom perished by intestine wars, and general anarchy prevailed, tribe fighting with tribe for the supremacy. In 1819 Mehemet Ali, then ruler of Egypt, "wishing to introduce the benefits of a regular government, of civilisation, and *at the same time to occupy his troops* (the italics are mine), ordered his son Ismaël, with a numerous army of regulars and irregulars, with many learned men and artisans, to invade the country" (Report p. 4). Ismaël was murdered, in revenge for his barbarities, but from that time forth the Soudan was claimed as subject to Egypt, and the former anarchy continued, with such additional disorder as was imported by the Egyptian governors. In 1874 Colonel (now General) Gordon was appointed by the Khedive Governor-General of the Equatorial Provinces. Two years later he was raised to the Governor-Generalship of the Soudan.

In August, 1881, a remarkable personage appeared on the scene, Mahomet Achmet, the Mahdi. He proclaimed himself sent from God as the foretold prophet, to raise Islam, and to drive the infidels before him. The people were superstitious and credited his mission; they were miserable, and hoped it was true. To understand the welcome given to him, you must listen to what Colonel Stewart tells us of the administration of "justice," and of taxation under the Egyptian rule. In each province there is a chief town, and here was established a court, consisting of a president and eight members. At Khartoum was a Court of Appeal, and all very serious cases were carried to Cairo. Both the Court of First Instance and Court of Appeal might only inflict imprisonment up to a certain maximum. But "although these courts are thus tied down as to the amount of imprisonment they may award, there is no limit as to the length of time to which they can keep a case pending, so that practically an accused person can be kept in prison awaiting trial for a period perhaps considerably exceeding that to which he could be legally sentenced if guilty of the crime of which he is accused . . . With reference to this point, there are now in the Istinaff Court seven cases pending, and in the Malhalla Court (of Khartoum) eighteen to twenty-one. The oldest of these cases dates back twelve years. It is presumably worse in the provinces." Colonel Stewart alleges "General ignorance of the president and members . . . The members being unpaid, and having other business to attend to, are with difficulty induced to attend in sufficient



numbers to form a court . . . . Their decisions are liable to be biassed by their enmities and friendships. Probably bribery and corruption exert a considerable influence." He further speaks of "the ease and facility with which false testimony can be procured" (Report, pp. 11, 12). The *raison d'être* of a government being to administer justice, I consider that the utter failure of the Egyptian rulers on this head justified the Soudanese in revolt. When invaders seize and cannot administer, surely the invaded may throw off the forcibly imposed yoke.

But this was not all. The governors who could not govern could tax, and used their power to wring the very last piastre from the burdened and suffering people. One instance given by Colonel Stewart is eloquent of the system. Jaafar Pasha, Governor-General, fixed a certain tax at 500 piastres. "This officer stated openly that he was quite aware the tax was excessive, but that he had fixed it at that rate in order to see how much the peasant would really pay, and that he hoped after three years' trial to be able to arrive at a just mean." He was, however, removed long before his three years were over, and his successors, either through ignorance or indifference, allowed the tax to continue. In the Report just quoted a melancholy account is given of the ruin this excessive taxation brought on the country. Many were reduced to destitution, others had to emigrate, and so much land went out of cultivation that in 1881, in the Province of Berber, there were 1,442 abandoned sakiyes (waterwheels) and in Dongola 613" (Report, p. 14). This is not wonderful when we learn that a commission found on examining: "two sakiyes irrigating fair average land . . . . that the net returns, exclusive of taxes, were for one sakiye 391 piastres, and for the other 201" (Report, p. 15). As Jaafar Pasha had put a tax of 500 piastres on each sakiye, and as in addition to this there were other taxes raising the taxation to 607 piastres per sakiye, it is hardly surprising that the people found it cheaper to abandon them, and with this abandonment necessarily went the non-cultivation of the ground.

In a despatch forwarded home on January 20th, 1883, Colonel Stewart says: "The chief means of oppression is through the tax-gatherer. All over the country is a class of small officials, on salaries from 200 to 400 piastres, who have the very responsible duty of collecting the taxes. These officials are irregular soldiers (Bashi-Bazouks),

Turks, Tunisians, Dongolauroi, etc., the former race perhaps predominating. As there can be but little supervision over such an immense area, these men have it pretty much their own way, and squeeze the people to their hearts' content. I have heard of instances where the Bashi-Bazouk on his small salary maintains twelve horses, twenty servants, and a number of women, and this in places where the payment for the water for his cattle alone would have cost more than three times his salary. It is no uncommon thing for a peasant to have to pay his taxes four or five times over, without the treasury being any the richer" (Egypt, No. 13, 1883, p. 4). "One oetroi farmer actually defended himself on the ground that for every piastre he took others stole dollars; that he robbed the poor, but did not meddle with the wealthy; that I showed great ingratitude in finding fault with him, after his hospitable reception. . . . I think there can be no doubt that the whole local government is in league to rob and plunder" (Egypt, No. 22, 1883, p. 7). "They (the Bashi-Bazouks) appear to consider themselves in a conquered country, and that they have a right to take anything they choose" (p. 9).

It was to these people, oppressed and burdened, high-spirited and smarting with a sense of wrong, hating and despising their Egyptian rulers, and longing for the return of their old freedom, that the Mahdi appeared as a messenger of deliverance and of independence. Little wonder that they crowded to his standard, and hoped that the disorder and civil war in Egypt might facilitate their own struggle for freedom. Lord Dufferin on April 2nd, 1883, wrote to Lord Granville his belief "that the recent disturbances were mainly to be attributed to the misgovernment and cruel exactions of the local Egyptian authorities at Khartoum, and that, whatever might be the pretensions of the Mahdi to a divine mission, his chief strength was derived from the despair and misery of the native population" (Egypt, No. 13, 1883, p. 54). So also Colonel Stewart said that "the real cause of the rebellion was misgovernment and oppression, and that all the Mahdi did was to apply a lighted match to the fully prepared tinder" (Egypt, No. 22, 1883, p. 6).

During 1882 almost constant conflict seems to have been going on in the Soudan; the various towns garrisoned by the Egyptian troops became more and more imperilled; "rebels" appeared and disappeared, cutting off stragglers,

fighting when fighting at advantage was possible, vanishing when hardly pressed. Colonel Stewart on January 5th, 1883, described their tactics: "I am constantly hearing of small fights and of the slaughter of a few rebels. The rebels attack, are driven back, and disperse to reassemble on the following day" (Egypt, No. 13, p. 9). So troublesome was the aspect of affairs that on October 2nd, 1882, Sir E. Malet forwarded to Earl Granville a memorandum from Sir Charles Wilson stating that "it would be advisable to send two English officers to the Soudan to report on the state of the country and the steps which will be necessary to insure its pacification"; to this Sir E. Malet added: "I do not think we can possibly be in a position to form a correct opinion as to the state of affairs in the Soudan unless we obtain information from agents of our own, and I therefore beg to recommend Sir Charles Wilson's suggestion of sending officers to your lordship's favorable consideration" (Egypt, No. 1, 1883, p. 31). Lord Granville assented to the proposition, giving permission to "send Captain Stewart to the Soudan to report of the state of that district" (p. 35). He was, however, careful to guard against the idea that England had any responsibility for the state of affairs in the Soudan, and on November 3rd he wrote to Lord Dufferin (p. 48): "Her Majesty's Government are not prepared to undertake any expedition into the Soudan," and again on November 7th to Sir E. Malet (p. 50): "I have to inform you that Her Majesty's Government are unwilling to take any responsibility for the proposed expedition or military operations in that district. They assent to Colonel Stewart and the two other officers named proceeding thither to make enquiries, but it must be distinctly understood that these gentlemen shall under no circumstances assume to act in any military capacity."

But why, under these circumstances, send English officers into the Soudan at all? Why make enquiries which were to lead to no results? The time was not suitable for enquiries of merely historical interest, and what was the sense of sending English officers into a district where fighting was going on, if England had there no responsibility? Confusion was rendered the more likely, and misconception the more probable, by the presence of other English officers in the Soudan who were fighting in the Egyptian army. Was it likely that these officers, some fighting as Egyptians, others surveying operations as



Englishmen, would hold no communications with each other? Was it likely that they would miss so fine an opportunity of dragging England into the *mêlée* on the side of their adopted country?

That which happened was exactly what might have been expected. On December 10th, 1882, Colonel Stewart had reached Berber, and telegraphed to Sir E. Malet that a reinforcement of 800 men had reached Khartoum and that all was safe (p. 91). He continued to send home detailed reports on military matters as well as on the causes of Soudanese discontent. On March 2nd, after a long report on military affairs, he remarked: "I expect Colonel Hicks to arrive either to-morrow or the day following" (Egypt, No. 13, 1883, p. 54), and he telegraphed on the 10th from Khartoum: "General Hicks arrived here on the 2nd inst." (p. 26). Colonel Hicks during March—he is called Colonel and General indifferently—telegraphed to Lord Dufferin accounts of his proceedings at Khartoum, as though Lord Dufferin were his employer, and Lord Dufferin sent on the telegrams to Lord Granville. At last Lord Granville took alarm, and though he had hitherto accepted copies of Colonel Hicks' telegrams without protest, he wrote on May 7th the following letter to Mr. Cartwright: "I notice that in your despatch of the 10th ultimo you inclose a telegram from General Hicks to Sir E. Malet, on the subject of the military operations in the Soudan. I understand the whole of that telegram, with the exception of the first sentence, to be a message from General Hicks to General Baker, and I presume that it was addressed to Sir E. Malet because General Hicks found it convenient to forward it through Colonel Stewart. But it is unnecessary for me to repeat that Her Majesty's Government are in no way responsible for the operations in the Soudan, which have been undertaken under the authority of the Egyptian Government, or for the appointment or actions of General Hicks" (p. 65).

But the situation was becoming complicated; English General Hicks, General Baker, General Wood were irresponsible; English Colonel Stewart and Sir E. Malet were responsible; General Hicks, irresponsible, "found it convenient" to telegraph to General Baker, irresponsible, via Sir E. Malet, responsible, and with the help of Colonel Stewart, responsible. No wonder the position of the English became rather difficult to understand. Lord Dufferin's position complicated matters even more, for General Hicks telegraphed to Lord Dufferin on May 3rd about his victory



on April 29th, and his intentions, and asked Lord Dufferin to "communicate to Baker Pasha and ask him to send to War Office" (Egypt, No. 22, 1883, p. 1). Ten days later he telegraphed again, and Lord Dufferin having left Cairo, Sir E. Malet forwarded the telegram to Cherif Pasha, saying that "although General Hicks finds it convenient to communicate with Lord Dufferin or with me, it must not be supposed that we indorse in any way the contents of his telegrams. It is, I am sure, unnecessary for me to repeat to your Excellency, that Her Majesty's Government are in no way responsible for the operations in the Soudan which have been undertaken under the authority of His Highness' Government, or for the appointment or actions of General Hicks" (p. 27). Nevertheless, on June 5th, Sir E. Malet telegraphed to Lord Granville, sending on a telegram he had received from the General, in which the latter asked what troops could be sent to him by the Egyptian Government, and Sir E. Malet in forwarding this told Lord Granville that it was "impossible for the Egyptian Government to supply the funds demanded for the Soudan," and remarked that "a question arises as to whether General Hicks should be instructed" to narrow the sphere of his operations (p. 27). Here, again, if "Her Majesty's Government are in no way responsible for the operations in the Soudan," why should Her Majesty's officials accept telegrams on military details, and take into consideration the giving of instructions to the commanding officer?

On August, 1883, the East Soudan joined in the insurrectionary movement, and "Osman Digna, the Vizier of the Mahdi," summoned the sheiks to follow him in the war (Egypt No. 1, 1884, p. 13). In this district Tewfik Bey was holding Sincat, and defending it with remarkable courage and ability. Meanwhile things were going from bad to worse. Captain Moncrieff, British Consul at Suakin, left his post at the end of October, with 500 Egyptian soldiers, who were endeavoring to relieve Tokar. Sir E. Baring, on the ground that he could not "do any good, whilst he may do harm, by joining the Egyptian troops," telegraphed to his superior officer to instruct Captain Moncrieff to "return to his post at Suakin, and remain there" (p. 83), an English ship being sent to Suakin to protect British subjects. Unfortunately, Captain Moncrieff's rashness proved fatal to him; before the message of recall could reach him, the Egyptian troops whom he had so injudiciously and improperly accompanied, had been attacked

by the Arabs near Tokar, and Captain Moncrieff fell in the battle.

During October and November no news from General Hicks reached Cairo. On November 19th, Sir E. Baring telegraphed home that great anxiety was felt as to the general's fate, and added: "I think that it is not at all improbable that the Egyptian Government will request Her Majesty's Government to send English or Indian troops"; to this Lord Granville promptly replied: "We cannot lend English or Indian troops. If consulted, recommend abandonment of the Soudan within certain limits" (p. 93). On November 22nd, news arrived: "A fight took place at Kuz, between rebels and Egyptian troops; rebels in great numbers. During two first days rebels suffered great loss; Mahdi, seeing this, advanced with his regular troops from Obeid, all well armed. Fighting continued from 2nd to 5th November, when Hicks' whole army was destroyed" (p. 94).

If the Government had now remained true to their declarations that they would accept no responsibility for General Hicks, all might yet have been well. The Arabs would have driven the Egyptians out of the Soudan, and would have regained their freedom. Unhappily Lord Granville hesitated. On November 1st he had instructed Sir E. Baring that the English force in Egypt was to be reduced, and only 3,000 men were to be left in Alexandria (p. 19), the duty of preserving civil order being remitted into the hands of the constabulary under General Baker. But at the request of the Egyptian Government, after General Hicks' defeat, although he had refused to lend English troops, he practically did so by countermanding the order for withdrawal (Nov. 25th), thus setting free the Egyptian forces to carry on the iniquitous war. At the very same time that this help was given, the parrot-phrase was repeated: "Her Majesty's Government can do nothing in the matter which would throw upon them the responsibility of operations in the Soudan" (p. 98).

"And saying she will ne'er consent,  
Consented."

Lord Granville next bent his efforts towards forcing the Egyptian Government to surrender the Soudan. At first, as we see above, he only directed Sir E. Baring to recommend that course "if consulted." On December 13th, he no longer awaited consultation, but wrote: "Her Majesty's

Government recommend the Ministers of the Khedive to come to an early decision to abandon all territory south of Assouan, or at least of Wady Halfa" (p. 131). Cherif Pasha, however, declined to adopt this course: "His Highness' Government could not adopt the decision to abandon territory which they regarded necessary for the safety and even existence of Egypt" (p. 146). Accordingly Cherif Pasha made vigorous efforts to send forth another army. Zebehr Pasha was communicated with, and directed to raise some negro regiments, with which to proceed to Suakin; Sir E. Baring, fearing that "the employment of Zebehr Pasha may not improbably attract attention in England," very justly urged: "Up to the present time [Dec. 9th] the whole responsibility for the conduct of the affairs in the Soudan has been left to the Egyptian Government. It appeared to me that, under present circumstances, it would not have been just, whilst leaving all responsibility to the Egyptian Government, to have objected to that Government using its own discretion on such a point as the appointment of Zebehr Pasha" (p. 137). Baker Pasha was also called on for aid, Zebehr being placed under his orders, and on December 17th, he was nominated "to take command of the operations which have for their object the pacification of the region lying between Berber and Suakin" (p. 161).

Lord Granville, however, remained resolute against these proposed measures. On January 4th, 1884, he wrote to Sir E. Baring that the English Government "see no reason to modify their conclusions," and at last he claimed on behalf of England the absolute right to dictate the Egyptian policy, declaring that it was "indispensable" that the "advice" tendered by England "should be followed," and declared that, in view of "the responsibility which for the time rests on England," the Government must "insist on the adoption of the policy which they recommend, and that it will be necessary that those ministers and governors who do not follow this course should cease to hold their offices" (pp. 175, 176). Rather a change this from the repudiation of responsibility, and the advice which was to be tendered "if consulted."

On this the Cherif Pasha Ministry resigned, and the more flexible Nubar Pasha accepted office, entirely concurring "in the wisdom of abandoning the Soudan" (p. 181).

Meanwhile Baker Pasha had reached Suakin, and on



the 18th January he left Suakin to endeavor to relieve Tokar. His troops were of the most wretched description; many were carried in irons on board the steamers in which they were embarked, weeping and praying to be left in peace at home. With such troops, undrilled, half-armed, filled with fear of the Soudan and its wild tribes, the failure of his expedition was fore-doomed. On February 5th, Sir W. Hewett telegraphed from Suakin that the Egyptian army under Baker Pasha had been defeated, and that he intended to land "men to take charge of town and allay panic" (Navy, Egypt, c. 3890). Upon this all the "non-responsibility" was suddenly dropped, and all the previous policy reversed. Lord Northbrook telegraphed to Sir W. Hewett to ask how many men were wanted to relieve Sinkat and Tokar by arms (p. 8); Sinkat fell on February 12th and on the same day Sir W. Hewett was ordered to "try by native messenger, at any expense, to tell garrison [of Tokar] they will be relieved by British troops before end of month" (p. 9). On the same day the Adjutant-General telegraphed to the general officer commanding in Egypt: "Force to be collected at Suakim with the object, if possible, of relieving Tokar garrison," and desiring "the greatest publicity to be given to the determination to relieve Tokar by British soldiers" (c. 3889, p. 314). Tokar, however, surrendered before we reached it.

Why this sudden, this extraordinary change? Why should British troops have been sent to relieve Tokar, after they had been so long and so steadily refused? Was it done to pacify the factitious cry raised by the idlers in the London clubs, the loudly proclaimed sympathy with Pashas Hicks, Baker and other English adventurers in Egypt? It was said that England should step in to avenge Hicks and to save the others. Why? Free-lances, who hire themselves out to foreign Governments and degrade themselves into leading savages against savages in brutal and barbarous warfare, should be left to the companions they have deliberately chosen. The hired bravos should lose all rights of English citizenship, and should take the risks with the gains of their ignoble trade.

It is not necessary to trace in detail the brief and shameful campaign. As we invaded without reason, so we slew without ruth. In two frightful battles some 6,000 Arabs were killed and some 18,000 wounded; Arabs fighting on their own soil, in defence of their own land, fighting with dauntless bravery, with splendid self-devotion, but, to



quote from a war-correspondent: "they never reached our square; they were mown down in layers as they came." Who is answerable to humanity for that awful slaughter? at whose door flows that river of uselessly shed human blood? We penetrated into the wilds as far as the chief village of Osman Digna; the women and children had wisely fled, and only mud huts remained, "not worth a lucifer match." These we burned "to show we had put our foot there"—beautiful mark of English civilisation—careless that while not worth a match to us, they were the homes of the natives of the land, and dear to them as ours to us. When we had performed all these horrors, we left the Soudan again, having quenched many brave lives, broken many hearts, left many maimed for life, and beyond this—Nothing. Our retreat was as inexplicable as our advance. Having protested we would not go, why did we go? Having gone, why did we return with nothing settled?

While all these events were passing in East Soudan, a most curious tale, the *dénoûment* of which is still unreached, was being told in the central part of the country—the mission of General Gordon.

On December 1st, 1883, Lord Granville telegraphed to Sir E. Baring: "If General Gordon were willing to go to Egypt would he be of any use to you or to the Egyptian Government, and if so, in what capacity?" The reply came promptly: "The Egyptian Government is very much averse to employing General Gordon, mainly on the ground that the movement in the Soudan being religious, the appointment of a Christian in high command would probably alienate the tribes who remain faithful." On January 10th, 1884, Lord Granville again telegraphed: "Would General Charles Gordon or Sir C. Wilson be of assistance under altered circumstances in Egypt?" The Egyptian Government again refused. On the 15th Lord Granville tried again, and on the 16th the Egyptian Government gave way, and "would feel greatly obliged if Her Majesty's Government would select a well-qualified British officer to go to Khartoum." On this Gordon was appointed (Egypt, No. 2, 1884, pp. 1, 2). His instructions were to report "on the military situation in the Soudan, and on the measures which it may be advisable to take for the security of the Egyptian garrisons still holding positions in that country, and for the safety of the European population in Khartoum. You are also desired to

consider and report upon the best means of effecting the evacuation of the interior of the Soudan," and "you will consider yourself authorised and instructed to perform such other duties as the Egyptian Government may desire to intrust to you" (pp. 2, 3). A most extraordinary mission, in which an Englishman is to try to serve two masters, and is to receive orders from London and Cairo indifferently.

General Gordon's view of the situation had at least the merit of clearness: "My idea is that the restoration of the country should be made to the different petty Sultans who existed at the time of Mehemet Ali's conquest, and whose families still exist; that the Mahdi should be left altogether out of the calculation as regards the handing over the country; and that it should be optional with the Sultans to accept his supremacy or not . . . the arsenals . . . should be handed over to the Sultans of the states in which they are placed . . . Her Majesty's Government will now leave them as God has placed them; they are not forced to fight among themselves" (Egypt, No. 7; 1884, pp. 2, 3).

Why, with such a policy accepted by the Government, we should have tried to destroy Osman Digna, a man of one of these ruling families, and why we should call those rebels in East Soudan to whom in Central Soudan Gordon, our accredited agent, was proclaiming freedom from the Egyptian yoke, it is impossible to say. If the Government understands its own policy, it is a pity it does not explain it, for most certainly no one else can see any coherency or consistency in it.

General Gordon arrived at Khartoum on February 18th, and one of his first acts was to recognise the slave trade. He issued the following proclamation: "To all the people; my sincerest desire is to adopt a course of action which shall lead to public tranquillity, and knowing your regret at severe measures taken by government for suppression of slave traffic, and seizure and punishment of all concerned according to Convention and Decrees, I confer upon you these rights, that henceforth none shall interfere with your property; whoever has slaves shall have full right to their services, and full control over them."

General Gordon at the same time proclaimed Mahomet Ahmet, the Mahdi, as Sultan of Kordofan, and telegraphed (still on Feb. 18th) to Sir E. Baring recommending Zebehr Pasha as his own successor at Khartoum: "As for the man, Her Majesty's Government should select one above all

others, namely Zebehr. He alone has the ability to rule the Soudan, and would be universally accepted by the Soudan" (Egypt, No. 12, 1884, p. 72). Sir E. Baring endorsed the recommendation: "I believe Zebehr Pasha to be the only possible man" (p. 73). To this Lord Granville replied that "The public opinion of this country would not tolerate the appointment of Zebehr Pasha" (p. 95); Gordon shortly answered: "That settles question for me. I cannot suggest any other. Mahdi's agents active in all directions" (p. 115). Sir E. Baring, in forwarding this telegram to Lord Granville, urged strongly that some clear policy should be adopted; two courses were possible, he argued: to evacuate the Soudan and leave it to anarchy; or to set up a capable governor acceptable to the Soudanese and able to hold his own as Sultan independently: "Whatever may be said to the contrary, Her Majesty's Government must in reality be responsible for any arrangements which are now devised for the Soudan, and I do not think it is possible to shake off that responsibility. If, however, Her Majesty's Government are unwilling to assume any responsibility in the matter, then I think they should give full liberty of action to General Gordon and the Khedive's Government to do what seems best to them. I have no doubt as to the most advisable course of action. Zebehr Pasha should be permitted to succeed General Gordon. . . I think General Gordon is quite right when he says that Zebehr Pasha is the only possible man. I can suggest none other, and Nubar Pasha is strongly in favor of him. It is for Her Majesty's Government to judge of the importance to be attached to public opinion in England, but I venture to think that any attempt to settle Egyptian questions by the light of English popular feeling is sure to be productive of harm, and in this, as in other cases, it would be preferable to follow the advice of the responsible authorities on the spot" (pp. 114, 115). Colonel Stewart advanced the same opinion (p. 137). General Gordon repeatedly telegraphed, pleading and urging that Zebehr should be sent: "I tell you plainly it is impossible to get Cairo employés out of Khartoum, unless the Government helps in the way I told you. They refuse Zebehr, and are quite right (may be) to do so, but it was the only chance" (March 1st, p. 152). "The sending of Zebehr means the extrication of the Cairo employés from Khartoum, and the garrisons from Senaar and Kassala. I can see no possible way to do so except through him" (March 8th, p. 145). The

General was evidently intensely depressed by the refusal of the Government to follow his advice; on March 9th and 10th, he sent telegram after telegram, begging for definite instructions, urging that there was no use in holding out at Khartoum if nothing was to be done, that all the roads were being closed; "you must give a prompt reply" (p. 161). Leave Khartoum he would not till the safety of those surrounding him was secured; "how could I look the world in the face if I abandoned them and fled?" (p. 156). At last he seems to despair; he will send all the white troops and employés to Berber with Colonel Stewart, and will "ask her Majesty's Government to accept the resignation of my commission, and I would take all steamers and stores up to the Equatorial and Bahr Gazelle Provinces, and consider those provinces as under the King of the Belgians" (p. 161). The last telegram from him was dated April 8th, and of this Sir E. Baring says: "he evidently thinks he is to be abandoned, and is very indignant." Apparently, however, General Gordon does not at present regard himself as in immediate danger; his chief difficulty is that he sees no prospect of improvement. At last on April 23rd, Lord Granville appears to have realised that it was the duty of the Government to ensure General Gordon's safe retreat from Khartoum, and telegraphed asking what force was "necessary in order to secure his removal" (Egypt, No. 13, 1884, p. 15).

That he should be removed is clear. Gordon went to Khartoum as an English agent, and whatever blunder was committed in sending him, England's honor would be stained by allowing him to perish at his post. And his rescue should be effected as rapidly as possible, and so an end put to the weary vacillations of our policy. We ought never to have interfered, and the sooner we cease interfering the better. Enough blood has been shed; enough ruin has been wrought. Nothing that Lord Beaconsfield ever did was worse than our bloody incursion into East Soudan, and well may Radicals blush for the conduct denounced in Opposition and practised in Government. The least that can now be done is to prevent further mischief, leaving the Story of the Soudan to take its place in history with those of the Transvaal, of Zululand, and of Afghanistan.