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The Weekly Messenger

A CATASTROPHE IN THE SOUDAN.

The dynamite explosions have been quite thrown into the shade, for a time, by the news that spread from the Soudan over the whole civilized world in the latter part of last week. A rumor was heard that Khartoum had fallen and that General Gordon was in the hands of the rebels. Reports like this have been spread so often that people at first took no notice. But when the fact was officially announced by the War Office in London, and there seemed no doubt of its truth, the whole of Britain was in an uproar.

It seems that Colonel Wilson, who was sent in a steamboat up the Nile as soon as General Stewart reached that river's banks, arrived at Khartoum on the 28th of January. Instead of being welcomed by the besieged garrison, his steamboat was fired at from the city, which he found in the possession of the rebels. Returning down the river, the vessel was wrecked, and the party only escaped with their lives to an island, where they some time remained. A messenger having brought the news to the main body of the army, it was telegraphed by Lord Wolsley to London.

The city had been captured only two days before Colonel Wilson's arrival; but little is yet known of how the disaster occurred. It is almost certain that Khartoum was not taken by fair fighting, for the last message received from Gordon was that he could hold out for years. The most reliable report is that Faraz Pasha, being left in charge of the ramparts on the 26th, opened the gates and admitted the enemy. The Mahdi's entrance was obtained by treachery; but afterwards, it is thought, there was a battle in the city itself between his troops and those who remained faithful to Gordon. As to the fate of the hero himself, the greatest anxiety is felt, but no accurate news is likely to be obtained for some time. Many believe that Gordon was killed. But there are also rumors that he is defending himself, with some faithful troops, in a fortified building in the heart of the city. It is very confidently asserted, by those who profess to know the Mahdi best, that if he was able to catch Gordon alive he has done so, and keeps him as a most valuable hostage.

A great outcry of indignation against the government was the first result of the news in England, because the relief expedition had not been sent before. But the feeling subsided when it was seen with what energy the Government were now acting. Lord Wolsley has been given *carte blanche* to do as he considers best in the Soudan, and he will at once push on to try and rescue Gordon if he is alive, and to put down the Mahdi's rebellion in any case. A far larger army than that now in the Soudan will be necessary to do this, and not only are troops being sent with all haste from England, Malta and Gibraltar, but Indian native lancers will sail in a week or so from Bombay. A large force will land at Suakin, on the Red Sea,

and march across the desert to the Nile. The hot and unhealthy season is coming on, and the campaign will be anything but an easy one.

The effect of this victory—although General Gordon was really the only British subject in Khartoum—may be very serious for the little British army under General Stewart at Metemneh, as well as to all others who remain favorable to the Egyptian or British cause in the Soudan. Many tribes will probably gather around the successful flag, and it is even feared that the Mohammedans of far distant lands will be moved to believe this "false prophet" a true one. The European nations are agreed that Britain must crush this Moslem rebellion, for the safety of the continent of Europe itself. Italy has come out bravely, and her friendship with Britain has been cemented by this disaster into an alliance. She will very likely assist with her own troops in restoring order in North Eastern Africa. One Ministerial paper at Rome says: "England is a friend who has rendered us great services and never asked us for a man or a penny. It is our duty and to our interest to unite with her."

Colonel Wilson, who had taken refuge with his men at Gubat, was visited on the 29th of January by a messenger from the Mahdi, who said that Gen. Gordon had adopted the Mahdi's uniform. The courier brought the following message from the Mahdi:—"I call upon you to surrender. I shall not write again. If you do not become Mohammedans I will wipe you off the face of the earth."

Lord Wolsley has issued the following proclamation: "To the notables and inhabitants of the Soudan—England has sent me with an army to restore peace, not to collect taxes nor injure anyone. I will pay you for all supplies and guarantee to execute Gen. Gordon's promises. Only those deserving punishment at our hands will receive it. I call upon you to submit, and not listen to evil advisers. Come into my camp and see my officers. No one shall harm you either coming or returning." Lord Wolsley says: "Although El Mahdi's irregulars are reported to be gathering round the point where the English are wrecked, no suspicion of treachery is entertained. The wreck of the steamers was due to the hurried retreat in the night and the altered currents of the river, which had fallen two feet in a day."

Later news gives the welcome information that Colonel Wilson and his party have been rescued by a steamer under command of Lord Charles Beresford. The steamer had to run the gauntlet of a heavy fire from the banks of the river, but in every case defeated the rebels, the soldiers behaving with the greatest pluck and determination.

Lord Wolsley telegraphs that on Thursday of last week General Earle had a skirmish with a large Arab force at Shakooob Wells, and utterly defeated them. The Arabs lost thirty killed, and the British captured a number of rifles, camels and cattle, besides six prisoners.

Prisoners taken by the British say that the Mahdi told his men that the British were few in number, that their weapons were

harmless, and that the English soldiers would fly at the sight of the Arab spearmen. The majority of the rebels were compelled to fight or suffer cruel treatment. The Mahdi threatened to deprive them of food for forty days, saying if they survived it they would be exempted from military service by Allah's will and left unmolested. Five thousand of the Mahdi's best troops and many of the principal Sheikhs were killed, wounded or disheartened in the two recent battles. Many emirs are lying at Metemneh wounded. The Mahdi had twenty-two guns before Khartoum, commanded by proteges of Ismail Pasha, who had been taught artillery practice at Cairo. Nearly all the sharp-shooters were deserters from Hicks' Pasha's army.

The force, at present under command of Lord Wolsley in the Soudan now numbers about 8,000 men, in three divisions.

A proposal has been made to raise a Canadian regiment for service in Egypt, and many volunteers are sending in their names to Ottawa.

A GRAND ALLIANCE.

The *Pall Mall Gazette*, one of the most advanced Liberal Newspapers of the British metropolis, advocates a political alliance between Great Britain and the United States, and says the American Republic at last is beginning to have a foreign policy. The doctrine of complete isolation, so long maintained by American statesmen, has perished. Mr. Kasson's presence and activity at the Congo Conference must be taken as a portent of things to come. America will continue to exert a great and increasing influence in the work of pacifying Africa. The Republic will ere long claim admittance into the European areopagus whenever questions pertaining to interests outside the boundaries of the European continent are dealt with. England's duty, the *Gazette* contends, is to make the most of this great fact. Blood is thicker than water. The United States is England's natural ally. After the federation of the British Empire there will remain for British statesmen no task comparable in importance to that of the conclusion of an alliance between Great Britain and the great Republic which has sprung from England's loins. This alliance will be as close and useful to the two great English speaking peoples as that between Austria and Germany.

Mr. Gladstone himself, in a letter written to an American friend last September and published a few days ago, expresses himself still more confidently as to the future. He says that such an alliance of all the English-speaking peoples will come in the plain course of nature; that no great effort will be needed to bring it about, and only the stupidest and strongest efforts can prevent it.

THE MORE bigoted Roman Catholics in the Province of Quebec are making a fierce attack on the education authorities—conservative Catholics though they are—and demand an Education Bill that recognizes especially the rights of the Church.

A PIRATE'S HIDDEN TREASURE.

The *London Standard* says that an expedition is about to start from England, in search of supposed hidden treasure. The primary mover is an inhabitant of South Shields, who as bookkeeper and cashier has for many years been in a large steamship owner's office on the quay-side. A ship's captain who has traded to the Tyne for some years was the first person to obtain the plans and papers relating to the hidden treasure from an "old salt," who was ill and living in poor circumstances, and consented to hand over the documents on receipt of pecuniary relief. He had seen the wealth carefully hidden, and in fact was, in his younger days, one of the pirates who plundered the vessel from which it was taken. The papers remained in possession of the captain for some time during which he endeavored to get a vessel bound in the direction of the island to call and inspect the place. He succeeded at last in persuading the owner of a ship bound for Rio Janeiro to allow the captain to call at the island of Trinidad, on the South American coast, where the wealth is hidden. If on reaching the island an inspection of the spot be satisfactory, means will be used to get at the treasure without delay, but should the enterprise on the island be a failure, then the ship will proceed to Cape Town, where the coals will be sold and discharged, and where it is expected a homeward charter will be secured, so that the loss on the venture, if expected, will not be great.

RACING A RAILWAY TRAIN.

An exciting race occurred in Nevada, the other day, according to the *Virginia Enterprise*. Several of Hock Mason's men were at Wabuska, the other day, to say good-by to one of their number who was going North. Just as the train was fairly under way the departing vanguard shouted back that he had left his overcoat. A short search resulted in finding the article, and a hurried discussion arose as to the best way of restoring it to its owner, when it was suggested that had they been quick enough one of them might have caught the train on his horse. The suggestion was like a flash of fire to powder. One glance after the fast-disappearing train and Dan Farley was in the saddle, plunging both rowels in his steed, and away and away, over ditches, through the sagebrush, up the hills and down the hollows, riding as though for dear life, like a madman, or, more reckless still, like a thorough-blooded cowboy. It was a hard run, but in about a mile and a half Dan overhauled the train and the conductor slackened speed so that he could deliver the coat. It is needless to say that Dan rode a good horse and that it was an exciting spectacle to those who saw it. A horse race would be a tame affair in comparison.

A RELIGIOUS FANATIC in Indiana beat his wife and her father to death because she suggested that he could do more good for his sick children by building a fire than by praying for their recovery.