

ago, and the abandonment of which to other hands cost Eng^land an enormous sacrifice of blood and treasure. Every point in the ascent of the Nile from Assouan to its sources has acquired a dramatic interest in relation to British exploration, administration or warlike achievement that throws the ancient history of that famous river into the shades of oblivion. Of that interest Khartoum, where Gordon watched and waited and died, is the central stronghold. He first set foot in that fatal city on the 18th of March, 1874, and was received with protestations of friendship by the Governor, Ismail Yakoob. From there he issued his first decree as Governor of the Equator. He then set out for Gondokoro, bearing the Khedive's firman, and, after a good deal of locomotion, he succeeded in organizing his province, stationing his lieutenants, raising a native military force, putting down the slave trade and making his name respected. In order to assure the last result, he convinced a venal generation of his own utter integrity by declining to accept more than £2,000 salary, though he was offered £10,000. He wished them to know that neither self-advancement nor self-enrichment was his aim. During his three years' governorship at the Equator he served a rough apprenticeship for the higher responsibilities of Governor-General of the Soudan. After three more years of journeyman work he could then say that through the whole extent of the Soudan no man could lift his hand without the Governor's leave. By what combination of qualities he attained so complete a success in that great wild region may be conjectured from two incidents in his career. When the Chinese treacherously slew the rebel chiefs to whom he had pledged his honor for their safety, he wept like a child. Yet Statin Pasha saw him in the very thick of a battle with "those horribly plucky Arabs" coolly light a cigarette. It

was by his fearlessness, his stern sense of justice, his sympathy with the colored races in their conflict with wrong, his unshakable firmness, and his splendid courage that he won such an ascendancy over the minds of the Soudanese. That such a man should have been trapped and held and slain in his own old stronghold was a reproach to barbarism, a disgrace to civilization.

How did it come about? How did it happen that all his successes in the regions of the Upper Nile were made to pass for naught, and in the irony of untoward fate to contribute to his death? What influences had been at work between 1879, when he left the Soudan orderly and prosperous, and 1884, when he undertook the mission from which he was never to return? It would be a mistake, doubtless, to regard Gordon as a man whose judgment never erred. He obeyed suggestions from within, and impressions, of which no one else knew the source, and sometimes himself but vaguely. Though often clear and practical, he did not always pursue a direct or consistent course, as is shown in his varying attitude towards the slavery question and towards Zebehr, whose son he had put to death. But no mistake of his is of the slightest moment in comparison with the blunders and the crimes of those who rejected his counsel and betrayed his confidence. How far he was right in defending Ismail against those who supplanted him it is needless to ask, but that he was correct in his estimate of the influences that had caused the revolution in the Soudan cannot well be disputed. There is no doubt that Gordon had hardly withdrawn from the Soudan when the corruptions and exactions which the Soudanese identified with Egyptian rule began to recover their predominance, so that discontent and resistance to official injustice soon spread from centre to circumference.