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A MONTH went by. Lust, robbery, and murder ruled in Omdurman. The river thickened with its pollution, the trees within the walls sickened of its poison, the bones of the unburied dead lay in the moat beyond the gates, and, on the other side of the river, desolate Khartoum crumbled over the streets and paths and gardens where Gordon had walked. The city was a pit of infamy, where struggled, or wallowed, or died to the bellowing of the Khalifa's drum and the hideous mirth of his Baggaras, the victims of Abdullah. But out in the desert—the Bayuda desert—between Omdurman and Old Dongola, there was only peace. Here and there was “a valley of dry bones,” but the sand had washed the bones clean, the vultures had had their hour and flown away, the *débris* of deserted villages had been covered by desert storms, and the clear blue sky and ardent sun were over all, joyous and immaculate. Out in the desert there was only the life-giving air, the opal sands, the plaintive evening sky, the eager morning breeze, the desolated villages, and now and then in the vast expanse, stretching hundreds and hundreds of miles south, an oasis as a gem set in a cloth of faded gold.

It would have seemed to any natural man better to die in the desert than to live in Omdurman. So thought a fugitive who fled day and night through the Bayuda desert, into the sandy wastes, beyond whose utmost limits lay Wady Halfa, where the English were.

Macnamara had conquered. He had watched his chance when two of the black guard were asleep, and the Khalifa was in a stupor of opium in the harem, had