

In 1877 Gordon rode 3840 miles on camels; the effects of which he thus describes :

"From not having worn a bandage across the chest, I have shaken my heart or my lungs out of their places, and I have the same feeling in my chest, as you have when you have a crick in the neck. In camel-riding you ought to wear a sash round the waist and another close up under the arm-pits; otherwise all the internal machinery gets disturbed. I say sincerely that though I prefer to be here sooner than anywhere else, I would sooner be dead than lead this life. I have told my clerk, to his horror, to bury me when I die, and to make the Arabs each throw a stone on my grave, so that I may have a good monument. It is strange, fatalists as they are in theory, how they dislike any conversation like this; they consider it ill-omened, though they agree that it is written when we are to die."

This kind of life continued for another year. In July, 1878, Gordon thus writes from Khartoum:—

"We have taken twelve caravans of Slaves in two months, which is not bad; and I hope to stop this work ere long. I intercepted a letter from a man up in the Bahr Gazelle, saying he had a lot of Slaves, but he could not find a way to send them down. So I have come down on him, and on those to whom he wrote. . . . If I can, I will stop this Slave work."

In September he writes again:—

"The sight of these ninety Slaves was terrible. I did not see them; but a friend of mine says that there were few over sixteen years of age—some of them had babies, some were little mites of boys and girls! Fancy, they had come over 500 miles of deserts, and were a residue of four times their number. It is much for me to do to keep myself from cruel illegal acts towards the Slave-dealers; yet I think I must not forget that God suffers it, and that one must keep to the law. I have done the best I can, and He is Governor-General."

Gordon was now getting heartily sick of his work, the difficulties of which were greatly aggravated by the manner in which he was thwarted at head-quarters. In one letter he states that the Khedive never punished the men whom he sent down to Cairo, but that they appeared at his balls with the greatest coolness!

To pass away the time we find him taking the clocks to pieces in order to mend them, and complaining that he was quite beaten by a cuckoo clock. The dulness of his position was something intolerable, and he thought that a labourer's lot was much to be envied.

Questioning some of the chiefs of Darfour he learns to his horror that one-third of the population of that country has been carried away into Slavery. On this he thus comments:—

"When one thinks of the enormous number of Slaves which have passed into Egypt from these parts in the last few years, one can scarcely conceive what has become of them. There must have been thousands on thousands of them. And then again, where do they all come from? For the lands of the natives