

GENERAL KITCHENER'S REMARKABLE CAREER.



PRESENT Sirdar, or Commander-in-Chief, of the Egyptian army is barely forty-seven years of age. He is an Irishman and hails from county Kerry. There is an old proverb current in the west of Ireland to the effect that if Kerry cattle are small Kerry men are big—big in stature, big in muscle and big in brain and understanding. Horace Herbert Kitchener

is no exception to this rule, for he stands a trifle over six feet in his stockings, and a smarter or braver soldier never drew breath.

Like the late General Gordon, Kitchener is a Royal Engineer officer; and he made his first acquaintance with the East in 1874, when he was despatched to Palestine in charge of a surveying expedition. Prior to this, however, he had seen plenty of active service, having fought as a volunteer in the Franco-German war.

In 1882 his chance came. He was engaged in a surveying expedition in the neighborhood of the Dead Sea, when news was brought by Arab runners of the total destruction of Hicks Pasha's army of 10,000 men by the forces of the Mahdi. The intelligence created the wildest excitement among the native tribes, and the greatest consternation in the minds of the rulers of Egypt. All communication with the disaffected districts was cut off; but a pretty clear record of the advancing tide of Mahdism was kept by the ever-widening area of telegraphic silence, as station after station fell into the hands of the conquerors.

In this crisis it became absolutely necessary that someone upon whom the Government could rely should penetrate to the Mahdi's camp, and discover what were his plans, and the exact means he possessed for carrying them out. It was a service of infinite danger. Not death alone, but death preceded by the most fiendish tortures that Oriental cruelty should suggest, was the certain fate of a detected spy.

LIFE AS A SPY.

"They will roast you alive, or flog you to death as they did So-and-so and So-and-so," urged one of the officials who knew of his intention; but Kitchener pooh-poohed their warnings. A few days later an Arab date-seller set out from Korti. It was the young Engineer officer, who thenceforth became lost to civilization for the space of some years.

An account of what he saw and suffered during that terrible time would fill a volume. Three times in one week he was fired at by wandering bands of robbers, and over and over again he was wounded. Only a short time back, while dining, a Dervish Remington bullet fell on his plate from the back of his throat, where it had long lain imbedded.

At Omdurman he witnessed the execution of a supposed spy by flogging. The unfortunate man was whipped until the flesh hung in shreds from his body, and his whole back, from the shoulders to the loins, was one vast gaping wound. Then he was taken down; rock-salt, seasoned with a liberal allowance of the strong red pepper of the country, was rubbed into his hurts, and after being fastened face downwards in the blazing sun, he was left to die. He lingered for nearly forty hours in indescribable anguish.

That Sir H. Kitchener escaped a similar fate is due to his wide and intimate acquaintance with Eastern habits and modes of life. Needless to say, he speaks Arabic like a native, and is, in addition, conversant with every "batt"—i.e., local dialect—spoken between Cairo and Khartoum.

As a proof of this may be mentioned an incident that occurred during Gen. Wolseley's advance up the Nile. One dark night two suspicious-looking characters were caught prowling round the camp,

and confined in the guard-tent. Half an hour later the patrol stumbled upon a third Arab stranger, who was quickly arrested and sent to keep his compatriots company. No sooner was the new arrival thrust inside the tent than an animated dialogue commenced, and was continued for the best part of an hour. At the end of that time the flap of the tent-door was quietly lifted, and Kitchener stepped out. "I am going to the General's quarters," he explained to the astonished sentry; "see that you keep a sharp eye on those two scoundrels in there. They are Dervish spies." A short whispered consultation, followed by a few brief directions, and the affair was settled. At daybreak next morning the two Arabs were marched out a little way into the desert, forced to dig their own graves, and then shot.

THE WORK OF REORGANIZATION.

The omnipresence and ubiquitousness of General Kitchener has long been an article of faith among such of our Tommies as have had the good luck to see active service in Egypt. "Throw a stone at a nigger, and you'll hit the Sirdar," they say. This proverb also dates back from Wolseley's campaign. Kitchener was working in disguise among the fellaheen on the river bank when a soldier threw a piece of sandstone at him, inflicting a nasty scalp wound. The next morning the too-accurate marksman was paraded at the orderly-room, and taught that even a "bloomin' nigger" possesses rights.

Kitchener dearly loves his work. To him the Egyptian army owes everything. Ten years ago the fellaheen soldiers of the ancient land of the Pharaohs were a byword and a reproach wherever their name was known. Five thousand of them, under Baker Pasha, broke and fled before the Dervishes at El Teb after the fashion of a flock of frightened sheep. Hundreds allowed themselves to be speared to death without ever attempting resistance. Military men were in despair.

"The Egyptian is a coward to the backbone, and he will never be anything else. Centuries of oppression and injustice have broken his spirit," so said one famous authority.

"Not so," urged Kitchener. "Give him a chance. The same blood courses in his veins as runs in those of the wild Arabs of the desert. Discipline, discipline, discipline—that is the one thing needful."

So, with the Khedive's firman in his pocket, and a strong belief, amounting almost to a conviction, in the excellence of his new materials, he set to work. In twelve months he had completely reorganized the Egyptian army. The indiscriminate use of the whip was strictly forbidden; peculation, bribing and corruption were put down with a stern hand; and every individual officer and man was made to feel that the eye of a master was upon him.

A MARVELLOUS TRANSFORMATION.

Swift to recognize merit, and possessing vast and arbitrary powers, he allowed no one nor anything to stand in the way of the task he had set himself to accomplish. One of the first officers to be superseded was a personal friend and a relative of the Khedive. As far as possible he avoided having recourse to extreme measures, but when the time came to act he did not shirk his duty. In one day no fewer than three general officers, who refused to resign their commissions, were tried by court-martial and cashiered.

Slowly and surely the result of his measures was seen in the increased efficiency of the force he commanded. The privates no longer cowered and shrank away when passing one of their officers. The officers began to take an intelligent interest in the welfare of their men. The first real test of his work took place at Joski, when, on August 3rd, 1889, the Egyptian cavalry, supported by the 20th Hussars, successfully withstood the repeated desperate charges of Wad-el-Njumi's fanatical spearmen. When it is reflected