

GORDON.

BY ERIC MACKAY.

UP of the fierce and far Soudan,
Where set the sun on Kordofan,
There came, as cometh the hurricane's breath,
The terrible news of Gordon's death,
And with it a cry, foredoomed to die,
In shudders of shame from earth to sky
Right over the land from North to South,
From the gate of the West to the morning's
mouth.

Up from the desert, at flush of morn,
Again the terrible news was borne;
And women and men, with looks of fire
And lips that muttered a word of ire,
Broke out in prayer on the desolate air
For the soul of the great man murdered there:
O, God! forgive us the wrongs we have done;
For he was true as the earth to the sun!

Where shall we find a faith more just,
An ampler life, a larger trust?
He went his way as man may go
Whose honour is firm for friend and foe!
And over the roar of the Sixth Cascade,
And over the shriek of a town betrayed,
And over the sign of the setting of Mars,
He read his run among the stars.

OASIS IN THE SOUDAN.

THE Soudan is one of the most sterile and desolate regions in the world. Often for a distance of three days, journey the traveller passes over burning sands, and has to carry all the water he requires in leather bags. The British troops used indiarubber bags, and one of the most heroic acts ever recorded is that of a body of the British Guards cutting their way through a host of the Arabs to the Nile to procure a supply of water for their comrades, engaged in a fierce conflict with the enemy. A large portion of the Guards were slain in their heroic attempt, but the survivors fought their way back and, in all probability, by their timely succour saved the army from destruction.

The picture shows one of these oases which at long intervals dot the desert. Wherever there is a well or spring of water, the vegetation springs up and converts a barren desert into what seems by contrast with the surrounding sterility almost a paradise. The feathery foliage of palm makes a grateful shade and they furnish copious supplies of food. Frequently a village springs up and the white domes of the native houses add picturesqueness to the view.

General R. E. Colton, formerly a bey in Egypt, contributes the opening illustrated article in the *March Century*, from which we quote the following description of a portion of the present seat of war: "He who has never travelled through the desert cannot form a just idea of that strange and marvellous region, in which all the ordinary conditions of life are completely changed. It is essentially a waterless land, without rivers, creeks, rivulets, or springs. Once away from the Nile, the only supply of water is derived from deep wells, few, scanty, and far apart. Long draughts are frequent. When I explored the great Arabian Desert between the Nile and the Red Sea, it had not rained for three years; and when I travelled over the Suakim route and through Kordofan, no rain had fallen for two years. Between the twenty-ninth and nineteenth degree of latitude it never rains at all. Water becomes precious to a degree beyond the conception of those who have never known its scarcity. Members of the Catholic mission at El Obeid, where water is much more plentiful than in the deserts, assured me that, the summer

before, water had been sold as high as half a dollar a gallon by the proprietors of the few wells that had not dried up. When long draughts occur, the always scanty crop of doura fails away from the Nile, and the greater parts of the flocks and herds perish, as well as a considerable part of the population. It follows naturally that when undertaking a journey through the desert, the paramount question is water. A supply must be carried sufficient to last to the next well, be it one or five days distant. It is usually carried in goat and ox skins suspended from the camels' pack-saddles. These are the water-bottles of Scripture, which become leaky from wear, and always lose a considerable portion of their contents by evaporation. The first thing after reaching a well is to ascertain the quantity and quality of its water. As to the former, it may have been exhausted by a preceding caravan, and hours may be required for a new supply to ooze in again. As to the quality, desert water is generally bad, the exception being when it is worse, though long custom enables the Bedouins to drink water so brackish as to be intolerable to all except themselves and their flocks. Well do I remember how at each well the first skiff was tasted all around as epicures sip rare wines. Great was the joy if it was pronounced '*moya helwa*, sweet water; but if the Bedouin said '*moosh tayib*, not good, we might be sure it was a solution of Epsom salts. The best water is found in natural rocky reservoirs in deep narrow gorges where the sun never shines. As to 'live springs,' I never saw more than half a dozen in six thousand miles' travel."

HER OBEDIENCE.

FAR out on the Western prairie lived little Jane Austin with her father and mother. The place might have seemed lonely to some people, for there were no houses in sight of her home, nor any neighbours within several miles, but the three who lived there were quite contented; and when, a few months before my story begins, a baby came to gladden the household with his presence, their happiness was complete.

The house itself more was not much than a cabin. It had been roughly put together at a time when skilled labour was not to be had; but it had served for a shelter, and now, when prosperity had rewarded years of toil and carefulness, it was to be replaced by a larger and better dwelling. The plans had been drawn, the estimates made, and one bright summer morning, Mr. Austin set out for the nearest town to purchase the lumber for it.

His wife was not afraid to be left alone with the children. She was a courageous woman, calm and self-possessed at all times, and her little daughter had inherited the same traits. There was much to be done about the house, and the two were very busy. The time passed quickly. The second day was drawing to a close, when Mrs. Austin noticed signs of a change in the weather.

"We must fasten all the doors very securely to-night," she said to Jane, as they went together to the barn to feed the cattle. "I think there will be a storm before morning."

Dark clouds were gathering on the western horizon and before they went to bed the wind was blowing in fitful,

violent gusts that rattled seriously the timbers of the old house. Still no thought of great danger entered their minds, though Jane said to her mother, after she had lain down in bed beside her,—

"I shall be glad when the new house is built, mamma, for the wind won't make such a noise then."

"Yes," said Mrs. Austin, "I think we shall all enjoy it; but try to go to sleep now, dear, in spite of the noise."

Acting upon her own advice, she laid her head on the pillow and was soon unconscious of all around her. How long she slept she did not know, but she was awakened by the slamming of a door. She listened for a moment, and then feeling sure that the wind had forced open the outer door of the kitchen, she arose, and slipping on her shoes, went down stairs to fasten it. There she found that she was quite right in her conjecture. The slight bolt had given way, and the door was swinging back and forth at the will of the wind.

But she was quite equal to the emergency. Lighting a lantern, and getting a hammer and some nails, she pushed the heavy tool-chest against the door, and standing on it, securely nailed a piece of wood across from one door-post to the other. Satisfied that all was safe, she turned to go up stairs, when, with a roar, like that of some wild beast, the tempest smote the house. There came a fearful crash, that almost stunned her and made her heart stand still.

What had happened? Had the roof been carried away? Had the stone chimney fallen and crushed it in? The next moment, in a lull of the wind, she heard her child's voice.

"Mamma, where are you? What is the matter?"

She rushed up stairs, calling, "I am here, my darling! I am coming!"

But when she reached the bed-room door, she could go no further. She had left it open; it was now nearly closed, and some obstruction prevented her from moving it. She held up the lantern and looked through the open space.

What a scene met her gaze! The baby's crib in one corner stood untouched; but the chimney had fallen, and crashing through the roof, had made havoc of all else. Where her own head had lain on the pillow, a huge beam rested, and just beyond it she could see the white face and dilated eyes of her little girl.

"Janie," she gasped, "are you hurt? The roof has fallen in."

"No, mamma," said the child, "I am not hurt at all, but I can't get up. Something is holding me down."

The mother looked again, and now she could see that the stones and rafters had fallen in such a way as to imprison the child completely without injuring her. Oh, to be beside her! to rescue her from her perilous position! for who could tell but that some slight jar might loosen the whole mass, causing it to fall and crush the child?

But the door was immovable, and the poor woman clasped her hands in agony, realizing her own powerlessness.

"Janie," she said, presently, "listen to me, and try to be my own brave little girl. You must not move; if you do, you may be hurt. If you will keep quite still, I hope you will be safe. I can do nothing to help you, my darling" (and here the mother

almost broke down), "but I can go for help if you will promise me not to stir while I am gone."

"Yes, mamma," said a quivering voice. "I will try not to be afraid if you will leave me the light."

"No, dear," said the mother, "I cannot do that, for fear of fire; you are much safer without it. You must believe that God can take care of you in the dark."

"Yes," said the child, gravely, "I know; but, O mamma! if baby should cry?"

"Never mind baby, dear. He cannot get out of the crib. It will not hurt him to cry a little, and I will be as quick as I can. Now we will ask God to be with you."

The mother knelt down and said aloud, "O my Father, I pray thee keep in safety my darling children, for Christ's sake!"

And the child's voice answered, "Amen."

There was no more hesitation now. Mrs. Austin knew what she must do, and that there was no time to be lost. Throwing on some articles of clothing that hung in a closet on the landing, she hurried to the stable.

Her husband's saddle-horse was there, a creature as gentle as he was fleet of foot. She had him saddled and bridled and was on her way in a few moments.

The storm was over, and in the western sky the waning moon shone with a feeble light. She urged the horse to his utmost speed, for she was a fearless rider, but it seemed to her that the three miles she had to go were a hundred at least. Midway she met with an obstacle. A huge tree had been blown down directly across the road. She dismounted, and devoutly thankful that the snake-fence was one she could pull down, she tore the rails from their places, led her horse around, made another opening and proceeded.

The village was reached at last. Stopping at the first house, where the blacksmith lived, she knocked loudly at the door.

In a few moments a voice asked, "Who is there?"

"Mrs. Austin. We have had a fearful accident. My husband is away. I have come for assistance."

In a moment more the door was opened, but she would not go in.

"No, let me tell my story here. I must go back at once to my children."

In a few words she told her story. "You will need," she continued, "three or four men to help you, and, above all, a ladder long enough to reach the upper window; there is no other way of getting into the room. Now I will go back. I know I need not ask you to make all the haste you can, Mr. Green."

For answer the blacksmith turned to his son with orders to rouse the neighbours, while he himself at once left the house to harness his team and get ready the necessary tools.

Back the mother hastened along the weary way, trying to still the agony at her heart with the hope that no injury had come to her children.

The day was beginning to dawn when she reached her own gate. What what was it that fell upon her listening ear? A child's voice singing, actually singing,—

"God shall charge his angel legions
Watch and ward o'er thee to keep."

For the first time Mrs. Austin burst into tears. She hastened up the stair-