

"Thus he spent the next six years of his life: in slums, hospitals, and workhouse, or knee-deep in the river at work upon the Thames defence."

After spending a year or two in the scene of his former labours as English Commissioner on the Danube, he was asked to undertake the administration of the Soudan. This office he accepted, but refused to take more than £2,000 per annum; scarcely enough to cover his expenses. This portion of his life certainly possesses more interest for Englishmen at the present moment than even the history of his brilliant exploits in China.

SIR SAMUEL BAKER.

Gordon's great precursor in the difficult task of bringing the Soudan into order and subduing the Slave-hunting hordes was Sir Samuel Baker, whose remarkable journey to the Lake districts is so graphically described in his *Ismailia*, published in 1874. Encouraged by the warm support of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, who visited Egypt in 1869, the Khedive Ismail appointed Sir Samuel Baker to the command of a large force with which he was "to strike a direct blow at the Slave-trade in its distant nest." The firman contained amongst other clauses the following:—"To subdue to our authority the countries situated to the South of Gondokoro; to suppress the Slave-trade, to introduce a system of regular commerce; to open to navigation the great Lakes of the Equator, and to establish a chain of military stations and commercial depôts throughout Central Africa," &c. A rather large commission, and one that taxed the resources of the commander to the fullest extent. How well Sir Samuel Baker executed his task, and how he opened up the Nile country as far as the Lakes, is well told in his two interesting volumes. He returned to Cairo in August, 1873, after an absence of more than four years; and in February, 1874, Gordon took up the work, commenced by his energetic and courageous predecessor.

GORDON IN THE SOUDAN.

The Soudan is, strictly speaking, a mere geographical expression, its real meaning being *The Country of the Blacks*, and is equivalent to the former name of Nigritia, given to that part of Africa which extends from the Red Sea to the Atlantic. The Egyptian Soudan, with